

Western Michigan University  
School of Social Work  
**BSW Student Handbook**

**Introduction**

This handbook lays out policies specific to the undergraduate social work degree. This is in conjunction with university policy, [WMU current catalog](#), and the [School of Social Work Common Handbook](#).

**Mission:** The Western Michigan University School of Social Work's mission is to *become* a learner-centered school that develops social work leaders to impact social, economic, and environmental justice *through* excellence in research and practice.

**Vision:** The Western Michigan University School of Social Work's vision is to work together in respectful, inclusive, and empowering ways towards social, economic, and environmental justice through excellence in research and practice, and personal well-being for all.

This vision will be met through our action steps:

1. Strengthen students' critical thinking skills, helps them formulate a vision of a just society, and enables them to move towards the realization of their vision.
2. Prepare ethical, competent, reflective practitioners to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and institutions within a global and changing environment.
3. Foster trauma-informed, culturally responsive, anti-racist practice, and
4. Nurture a respectful, inclusive, equitable environment that maximizes the contributions and development of students, faculty, and staff members.

**Bachelor of Social Work Program Goals**

The program mission and vision are supported by its pursuit of the following BSW program goals:

1. Provide a professional education that prepares generalist practitioners to enhance, advocate, and support social, economic, and environmental justice and personal well-being for all people.
2. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, values, cognitive and affective processes necessary to work effectively with diverse, vulnerable, and marginalized populations.
3. Possess critical thinking skills, embrace social work values, and have the requisite skills needed to formulate and realize a vision of a just society.
4. Prepare ethical, reflective, and competent, generalist practitioners to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in a global and changing environment.

5. Prepare generalist practitioners who understand the connections between micro, mezzo, and macro, and are competent to work across multiple system levels to meet human need and actualize potential.

### **Program Preparation and New Student Orientation:**

Orientation is provided for all incoming BSW students prior to the start of their program. The agenda for the orientation always includes information about School policies and procedures, student services, field education, NASW membership, student organizations, scholarships and preparation for acceptance into the MSW Advanced-standing program and the Accelerated MSW program.

Orientation is mandatory. If students fail to attend or are late, they are at risk of delaying their enrollment in the undergraduate Social Work program. There are opportunities for making up this orientation.

### **The Advising System:**

The purpose of advising is to provide information about program requirements and curricular matters, professional development, and resource location and referral. School of Social Work faculty and staff are committed to assisting each student to achieve their educational goals. Advising is one important element in the educational enterprise. Academic advising occurs in the advising suite on the second floor of the College of Health and Human Services, room 2125. Career and other types of advising are done by the BSW Program Director and the Manager of Recruitment and Outreach in the School of Social Work.

During program planning, the adviser will map out any remaining Western Essential Studies requirements and required social work courses. All changes to program plans require meeting with the social work advisor in the College Advising office. All requests for determination of courses transferred in as equivalencies to courses offered in the School of Social Work, or for exceptions to course sequencing must be referred to the BSW Program Director and the Chair of the School of Social Work Curriculum Committee.

Bachelor of Social Work advising, (including general education requirements), program and curricular planning and graduation audits are accomplished through the College Advising Office. Once admitted into the BSW program, undergraduate students have access to the BSW Program Director and the Manager of Recruitment and Outreach for information about the profession of social work, advice on how to cope with problems of a general nature which interfere with the educational process, and information and referral on the topic of graduate education.

### **Social Work Curriculum Requirements**

You can find the full required curriculum for BSW students in the [current catalog](#).

## **Grading Policies: Interdisciplinary Minor and Social Work Major**

Any student who fails to meet the following criteria will be notified in writing by the BSW Program Director in the School of Social Work that he/she is in jeopardy of being terminated from the social work major.

A student must receive a “C” or higher in each required social work course to remain in the major. A student may repeat three required social work courses to raise his/her grade.

The student must maintain an overall average of 2.0 in the interdisciplinary minor. Transfer students note that courses transferring into the minor are accepted with no grade (so an “A” at a two-year college can't be used to balance a lower grade in a course at WMU).

The School may refuse to permit a student to continue in the curriculum if at any time it is deemed that the student is exhibiting a pattern of professionally incompetent or inappropriate behavior as determined by the standards of the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics governing social workers and their professional relationships with those they serve, with their colleagues, with their employing agency, and with the community. Further details on this Professional Review Committee policy and procedure may be obtained from the School of Social Work Common Handbook undergraduate coordinator.

Students having academic difficulty (e.g., on probation in the University or having trouble maintaining required grades in the major or minor) may meet with their adviser in order to develop a plan to resolve academic difficulty. The adviser may refer students to various services on campus such as the Academic Skills Lab or the Counseling Center.

## **Field Education**

Field education strives to address and create opportunities for students to develop a working knowledge of the social work profession while integrating values and skills. Through the field placement, the student is given the opportunity to test out skills and theories taught in the classroom. Differing from the classroom, however, the learning is more direct, immediate, and personal. It is an active process with emphasis on participation. The opportunity is provided for the student to deepen, extend and apply foundation knowledge. The field placement should provide opportunities for the student to assume responsibility for productive tasks within the agency, to observe, identify, and shadow social work role models in various professional roles in the agency and community, to assess his/her interest in and suitability for a career in social work or another helping profession, and to develop their direct practice skills and knowledge of community resources.

Please refer to the [field manual](#) or contact the Field Director, Marian Tripplett at [marian.triplett@wmich.edu](mailto:marian.triplett@wmich.edu) for more information.

## **SWEAP Exam:**

Students in the BSW Program will complete the SWEAP exam in their final course in their senior year. This exam is administered to BSW and first year MSW students as a measure of students' attainment of social work competencies. Students will score on the items, but the test

is not graded by the Social Work program. Students' scores on the exam will not affect student grades. Students may request to see their exam scores to gain information about their strengths and limitations. The scores of all students will be summarized and shared with the Council on Social Work Education for purposes of accreditation. No identifying information about individuals will be shared. The summary scores will be utilized to improve the curriculum of the School of Social Work.

### **Financial Aid Resources:**

#### **1. College Work-Study Program**

These state and federal programs provide work opportunities for students demonstrating financial need. <http://www.wmich.edu/finaid/undergrad/work-study/> for more information.

#### **2. Employment Opportunities**

Students interested in on-campus employment must request information by contacting the department of interest directly. Career and Student Employment Services located at <https://wmich.edu/career/students/search>

#### **3. School of Social Work Scholarships:**

The School of Social Work offers scholarship opportunities thanks to a variety of generous donors, in amounts of \$500 - \$1500. Students can apply for all scholarships in the School of Social Work simultaneously, at <https://wmich.edu/socialwork/scholarships>. These scholarship awards will be determined and announced in May and applied prior to the fall semester.

### **MSW Accelerated Program:**

Once a BSW student has obtained 60 credits with a minimum overall grade point average of 3.0 (either at WMU in the social work major or have obtained 60 credits from an institution that has a shared articulation agreement with the School of Social Work), students may apply to the accelerated MSW program. This program allows students to take 12 credits of graduate-level foundation social work classes (SWRK 6100, SWRK 6310, SWRK 6330, and SWRK 6400) in place of the traditional undergraduate social work courses. These 12 credits will count both as credits towards their undergraduate degree and as graduate credits. Interested students must apply to the graduate program by April 1 of each year to dually enroll in graduate and undergraduate social work programs the following fall. If a student is accepted into this program and maintains all standards, an offer of admissions to the graduate program at WMU School of Social Work will be automatic. If a student achieves a 3.25 GPA and receives no more than one grade below a "B" in a social work required course, then they will be offered admissions to the Advanced Standing MSW program (see graduate catalog). If the student maintains a 3.0 but does not meet the 3.25 requirements, they will continue into the Accelerated MSW program, which will require 48 graduate credit hours (12 fewer credits than a standard MSW). This allows students to secure a path to graduate school early in their undergraduate education and provides an opportunity to complete both degrees in a shorter period of time and at a lower cost.

## **NASW Membership:**

Students in the School of Social Work are entitled to full rights and privileges of membership in the state chapter and federal National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Members participate at all levels of the Association.

NASW members work with experienced professional social workers through the [Michigan NASW chapter](#) to enhance social work practice and to lobby for beneficial changes in professional standards, social policy, salary levels, and other concerns. More tangible benefits include:

- A subscription to Social Work, the NASW journal.
- A subscription to the national magazine of NASWAdvocate;
- A subscription to the Michigan Chapter newsletter (The Bridge)
- Reduced rates for NASW publications and continuing educational workshops
- Free ethics consultations

The National Association of Social Workers [Code of Ethics](#).

## **Undergraduate Student**

### **Organizations:**

#### **Eta Eta Sigma**

Eta Eta Sigma is an undergraduate student organization open to any student interested in helping professions. The Greek letters for the group are HHS, which stand for Health & Human Services. This reflects the commitment of Eta Eta Sigma members to work to improve the health and well-being of others through the direct provision of services. The organization appropriately has its leadership in the School of Social Work and the BSW Program Director as the faculty advisor. The organization meets when there is sufficient student interest. Eta Eta Sigma focuses on providing community service and providing professional and educational opportunities.

Eta Eta Sigma helps build relationships among students and provides hands-on professionally relevant experiences. Contact the undergraduate coordinator, Dr. Linda Reeser at [linda.reeser@wmich.edu](mailto:linda.reeser@wmich.edu) for additional information or to join.

#### **Phi Alpha Social Work Honor Society: WMU Theta Phi Chapter**

In 1999, the School of Social Work chartered a local chapter, Theta Phi, of Phi Alpha, the National Social Work Honor Society. Criteria for membership includes a minimum 3.0 GPA overall, a minimum of nine social work credit hours, and a standing of being in the top 35% of the BSW class. This chapter is open to both undergraduate and graduate social work students and graduates who meet eligibility requirements. The mission of this organization is to promote high standards of education for social work and to invite into membership those who have attained excellence of scholarship and distinction of achievement as students of social work. Information on Phi Alpha is provided during the spring semester by the School of Social Work. Graduating members are honored during the School of Social Work Graduation, Hooding, and Pinning Celebration.

Membership in this honor society is life-long, so students do not need to apply and be admitted more than once.

For more information about this organization, contact the BSW Program Director, Dr. Linda Reeser at [linda.reeser@wmich.edu](mailto:linda.reeser@wmich.edu).