MSW Program Information

Next opportunity to begin program: Fall 2016
Priority application deadline: January 4, 2016
**Accreditation**
The MSW program of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare (HBSSW) at UWM is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

**Mission**
The mission of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare is to improve lives and strengthen communities through research, education, and community partnerships. Within that mission, the Department of Social Work’s duty is to educate students to become highly skilled, culturally competent and ethical social workers and to provide leadership for the practice of social justice.

**The MSW Program Curriculum**
The path a student takes through the MSW program curriculum depends on a few different factors. Students choose two primary things that determine the specific coursework required for the completion of their MSW degree: a concentration area and a method of practice.

**Concentrations**
Physical, Behavioral, and Mental Health: This concentration is designed to prepare students for advanced social work practice involving the delivery of health, mental health and substance abuse services to individuals, families, groups and the community.

Child and Family Welfare: This concentration focuses on the study of family systems, child and family welfare/well-being, and advanced social work interventions to enhance the lives of children and families.

Gerontology: This concentration centers on the physical, psychological, and social processes of aging which includes family roles and responsibilities, social support networks, the use of health and social services, and cultural influences.

**Methods**
Direct Practice: Through this method of social work practice students focus on knowledge, skills and interventions that are delivered directly to individuals, families and groups.

Macro Practice: Through this method of social work practice the emphasis is on the knowledge and skills necessary for guiding planned change with organizations and communities, through social work roles in policy, planning, administration, supervision, program development and community practice.

Double Methods: Students who are interested in gaining knowledge and skills in both of the above social work methods areas may choose a Double Methods focus. In addition to coursework in both methods areas, Double Methods will require Field Placement practice experience in both Direct and Macro settings. Double Methods may require an additional semester of Field Placement for some students; students should consult an advisor for further information.
Specialties

The MSW program further offers opportunities to specialize in areas beyond the concentrations and methods listed above. Some specializations allow students to meet State of Wisconsin required coursework for certification in the specialty area, and others are UWM granted certificate programs.

Educational Requirements for State of Wisconsin Credentials

School Social Work – Students wanting to focus on School Social Work choose Child and Family Welfare as their primary concentration area and Direct Practice as their methods area. Electives are pre-determined and are specific to School Social Work practice topics. Courses taken for this track meet the educational requirements for certified school social workers set forth by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Substance Abuse Counseling – Students wanting to focus on Substance Abuse Counseling choose Physical, Behavioral and Mental Health as their concentration area and Direct Practice as their methods area. Electives are pre-determined and are specific to Substance abuse practice topics. Courses taken for this track meet the educational requirements for becoming a certified Substance Abuse Counselor as set forth by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS).

UWM Graduate Certificate Programs

* These certificates require an additional 7-9 credits of completed coursework beyond that required for the MSW degree

Applied Gerontology - The Graduate Certificate in Applied Gerontology (GCAG) is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully pursue or advance careers within aging services organizations or academic research in aging. The GCAG is coordinated through the Center for Aging & Translational Research (CATR).

Trauma Informed Care - The Graduate Certificate in Trauma Informed Care (TIC) is designed to provide students with knowledge to implement trauma-informed policy, supervision, and intervention within professional settings. The program is relevant across an array of professional settings including child welfare agencies, substance use treatment centers, outpatient mental health clinics, and community-based health clinics.

Non-Profit Management - Partnering with the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management, we offer social work students the option of additional coursework for a certificate in Non-Profit Management. This certificate builds on our requirements in “macro” methods (community and organizational practice) and is for graduate students primarily interested in organizational leadership and management roles.

Women's Studies - The Graduate Certificate Program in Women's Studies is designed for students enrolled in a graduate program in any field who wish to complement their training with an additional specialization in Women's Studies.
Flexibility
Students do not have to commit to being either full-time or part-time in the MSW program at UWM. Students can set their own pace through the program in a way that meets their individual needs. There are often multiple sections of required courses to choose from, including evening sections. Students who work or have significant other life responsibilities can arrange a feasible schedule through careful advising and advance course planning work with an advisor.

Field Placement
Field placement education (internship) is a critical aspect of the MSW educational experience. MSW students will participate in field placement for either 3 or 4 semesters (depending on whether or not someone has a bachelor’s degree in social work or on a person’s prior social work experience). Field placement is completed for course credit and a grade and generally requires 16-20 hours a week on average (more in summer). Two of the 3 or 4 required semesters of field placement will require that a student take at least one other course while doing field placement. Many, many field placements are established throughout the Milwaukee metro area, and far beyond, so that a student’s field placement can be arranged as close to home as possible. Night and weekend field placements are few and cannot be guaranteed.

MSW students without a BSW
Students whose bachelor’s degree is in a discipline other than social work will complete both the Professional Foundation curriculum (22 semester hour credits, including 1 semester of Field Placement) and the Advanced Curriculum (34 semester hour credits, including 3 additional semesters of Field Placement). The MSW degree will require a total of 56 credit hours, including 4 total semesters of Field Placement. For full-time students the MSW curriculum generally takes 6 semesters or 24 months to complete (including summers). For part-time students the amount of time depends on the course load taken by the student per semester, but can generally be completed in 10 semesters or 39 months (including summers).

The Professional Foundation curriculum is taken prior to beginning the Advanced Curriculum for students without a bachelor’s degree in social work. The Professional Foundation consists of the following courses:

- SW 604 Social Systems and Social Work Practice 3 credits
- SW 662 Methods of Social Welfare Research 3 credits
- SW 665 Cultural Diversity and Social Work 3 credits
- SW 705 Individual Behavior and Social Welfare 3 credits
- SW 708 Social Work Methods I 3 credits
- SW 709 Social Work Methods II 2 credits
- SW 721 Field Instruction I 3 credits
- SW 750 Social Welfare Policy Development and Implementation 2 credits

Course exemptions
Students may be waived or exempted from one or more of the Professional Foundation courses based on coursework taken within the past 5 years that is substantially similar to the related course we offer through the MSW program. Students wanting to be considered for course exemption must: 1.) be
admitted to the MSW program and 2.) submit an exemption application with a syllabus from the previous coursework proving the content of the class and qualifications of the instructor.

Students may also be exempted from 4 of the Professional Foundation courses (604, 662, 705 and 750) by passing a waiver exam for each course. Waiver exams are offered to those admitted to the MSW program in both July and October each year. More information about exemption exams is offered to new students once admitted to the program.

Students may be waived or exempted from the Professional Foundation Field Instruction I placement based on approved previous field placement experience and/or approved social work employment experience of at least 2 years. Students wanting to be considered for exemption from this one semester of Field Placement must: 1.) be admitted to the MSW program, 2.) have a bachelor’s degree in social work requiring a field placement experience or by having social work employment experience for at least 2 years after the completion of a bachelor’s degree, and 3.) make an application for exemption with supporting documentation to the Field Education office of the Social Work Department.

**Advanced Standing**

Students who come to the MSW program having earned a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from a CSWE accredited program within 5 years of starting the MSW program are automatically exempt from the program’s Professional Foundation curriculum (22 credits of coursework and field placement). A student meeting this criteria begins directly in the advanced curriculum of the program. The advanced curriculum is made up of 34 semester credit hours, and includes 3 consecutive semesters of Field Placement. For full-time students the advanced curriculum generally takes 4 semesters or 15 months to complete (including summer). For part-time students the amount of time depends on the course load taken by the student per semester, but can generally be completed in 6 semesters or 24 months.

A breakdown of the Advanced Curriculum is as follows:
- 8 credits (3 courses) of Social Work Methods
- 11 credits (3 courses) of Social Work Field Placement Instruction
- 5 credits (2 courses) of SW Policy and Human Behavior specific to concentration area
- 4 credits (2 courses) of Advanced Research/Evaluation Methods
- 6 credits (2-3 courses) of general elective coursework

**Study Abroad Opportunities**

The Helen Bader School of Social Welfare offers a number of Study Abroad opportunities, including some limited international Field Placement options. Current Study Abroad programs offered include programs in the following countries:

- Austria
- South Africa
- Costa Rica
- England
Taking Courses as a non-degree student
Prospective applicants, especially those who do not have a bachelor’s degree in Social Work, may choose to take some courses before being admitted to the MSW program. This can be done with a UWM non-degree student status. A non-degree student can take up to 12 credits (4 courses) from the Professional Foundation prior to being admitted to the MSW program. Taking courses as a non-degree student does not guarantee later admission to the program and non-degree students do not always qualify for financial aid. Contact the department for more information or to talk about your specific situation (contact information at the end of this packet).

Admission

Fall semester start only
Newly admitted MSW students only start the program in Fall each year. We do not have Spring or Summer semester start options. The application deadline for starting in Fall is always the January 2nd before the Fall in which you want to start the program (i.e. want to start Fall 2015, application deadline is January 2, 2015).

Bachelor’s degree requirements
MSW applicants are not required to have a bachelor’s degree in Social Work specifically. Applicants are required to have at least 21 credits of social science coursework as a part of their prior academic record. Social science credits are generally those that are drawn from the disciplines of Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, and some others on a case by case basis. Contact the department for more information or to talk about your specific situation (contact information at the end of this packet).

Undergraduate GPA requirement
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee requires that any graduate program applicant have a cumulative undergraduate GPA of at least a 2.75 or above to be considered for admission. If a prospective applicant’s cumulative GPA falls below this number, there are additional criteria that may need to be met before one can be considered for admission to the MSW program or any graduate program at UWM.

Please note that cumulative GPA means the GPA that results from when all undergraduate coursework from all institutions, including all attempts at all repeated course work, are combined into one GPA score. This can often change a person’s GPA from what the transcript of their graduating undergraduate institution says – sometimes higher, sometimes lower.

If you have questions or concerns about your cumulative GPA, you may contact the program for further assistance determining if you have additional requirements to meet before applying (contact information at the end of this packet).
No graduate entrance exam required (No GRE or MAT!)
The MSW program at UWM does not require that applicants take a graduate entrance exam like a GRE (Graduate Record Exam) or a MAT (Miller Analogies Test). An exception to this could be if an applicant’s cumulative undergraduate GPA is less than 2.75. If this is the case then a graduate entrance exam might be required to be considered for admission.

What are Admission Decisions based upon?
Admission to the MSW program at UWM is competitive. Not everyone who applies gets accepted for admission. A combination of the following factors determines whether or not an applicant is rated as prepared to enter the MSW program by our faculty.

Social Work-Related Experience
The MSW degree is an advanced level education and training in social work practice. To be prepared for the MSW program, an applicant must have some social work-related experience and understand what it means to be a social worker. For this reason, our faculty require some level of social work-related professional experience, which can be from volunteer work, field placements/internships and/or part- or full-time paid employment.

Academic Record
Academic record relates to the undergraduate cumulative GPA (as described above). The majority of those admitted to the MSW program have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or above. Those admitted with GPA’s below 3.00, are generally very strong in social work experience (above) and the following two areas.

Letters of Reference
All applicants are required to submit three letters of reference; one from each of the following categories: 1.) A current or former classroom instructor, 2.) A field placement/internship or volunteer supervisor, 3.) A paid employment supervisor. Valid and well-reasoned substitutions of letters from persons outside of these categories or more than one letter from the three categories are allowed. Applicants should not provide character references, rather professional and academic references.

Statement
Often referred to as a Narrative Statement or Statement of Reasons for Graduate Study, each applicant is required to address specific questions of the MSW admissions panel in a written statement. The specific areas to be addressed include an applicant’s career goals, motivation for social work practice, and a description of the applicant’s social work related experience. The statement is an opportunity for faculty to determine how good the applicant’s fit is to master’s level social work education, as well as to assess the applicant’s ability for graduate level writing.

The Application
Applications for Fall 2016 admission will open in September 2015. Please see the program web site for the latest and most up-to-date application instructions and requirements beginning in September 2015.
To apply to the MSW program at UWM, one must access the full instructions, forms and links from the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare, MSW program application web page:

http://www4.uwm.edu/hbssw/social_work/sw_ms/msw_application.cfm

One can also find this web page by using the search terms ‘apply msw uwm’ in a search engine such as Google, Bing or Yahoo.

Financial Aid

Student Loans
The most available financial aid for MSW students are student loans. A student must be enrolled for at least 4 credits per semester to receive student loans. To determine how much you qualify for in student loans, you must file a FASFA and work with the UWM Financial Aid office.

To contact the UWM Financial Aid office:
Call: (414) 229-4541 or go to the webpage: http://www4.uwm.edu/financialaid/

Assistantships
Research, Project, or Teaching Assistantships are very limited and are not always available. When there are openings for assistantships, current students and new admits will be notified about the nature of the assistantship and how to apply for it. Assistantships will be filled on a competitive basis.

Fellowships
There are some competitive fellowships open to prospective and on-going graduate students at UWM offered through UWM’s Graduate School. Please see the UWM Graduate School’s webpage for further information about the Advanced Opportunity (AOP) and Distinguished Graduate Student (DGSF) Fellowships. http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/

Scholarships
The Helen Bader School of Social Welfare (HBSSW) offers a number of scholarship awards every Spring for the following academic year. Applications are generally open in February. See the web site for the updated dates beginning in December 2015. Most scholarships range from $500-$1000 dollars. For specific criteria and instructions about applying for these scholarships, please visit the Scholarship page of the HBSSW website. http://www4.uwm.edu/hbssw/scholarship/index.cfm

Questions
Questions or requests for individual consultation about the MSW program and/or the admissions process can be directed to:

Amy Kirby, MSW, LCSW  414-229-6486
MSW Admissions and Advising Specialist  kirby@uwm.edu