

MSW Program Information

Next opportunity to begin program:

Fall 2019

Priority applications due:

January 3, 2019

Helen Bader
School of Social Welfare
Department of Social Work



MSW

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

MSW students choose one of five specialized concentrations. The skill and knowledge bases developed through each is described below:

Physical Health: This concentration is designed to prepare students for advanced and clinical practice in a variety of health care settings. Students in the health concentration are prepared to address the multifaceted world of health care through coursework designed to expose them to issues of chronic health, health care delivery, health policy, and the social determinates of health across the life course. Health concentration students are trained in case management and assessment skills, and the role of social work in multidisciplinary health care teams. Students develop a solid understanding of how access to health systems, policies, and programs impact health. Students who graduate with a concentration in health are prepared for practice in a variety of settings from hospitals and primary care clinics, to community health settings and long-term care.

Behavioral Health and Mental Health: This concentration is designed to prepare students for advanced social work practice involving the delivery of mental health and addictions services to individuals, families, small groups, and the community. Students are exposed to issues, approaches, and technologies for application in prevention, treatment, administration, and policy. These are related to risks and problems with: alcohol and other drugs, mental health and mental illness, intimate partner violence, community violence, and other behavioral health concerns across the lifespan. Coursework provides students with knowledge, values, and skills to prepare them for professional practice in a variety of private and public settings related to mental health, addictions, and substance abuse.

Gerontology: This concentration is designed to aid students in understanding the complexity of the aging process from the perspective of the individual, family, society and social policy. The concentration will cover the physical, psychological and social processes of aging including family roles and responsibilities, cultural diversity, social support networks and the use of health and social services. Major developmental issues during the second half of life will be presented and interventions to facilitate adaptation to developmental change will be described. Course work will enable students to: understand late-life mental disorders; develop assessment skills; formulate, implement and evaluate treatment plans; and become aware of issues related to age and ageism as they influence social work practice.

Children and Families: The social work profession has a long history of commitment to ensuring the well-being of children. Furthermore, professionals recognize the family system as being significant in the lives of children. The family system, in its various forms, represents a significant social institution, essential to communities and to society as a whole. This concentration focuses on the study of family systems, child and family welfare, and interventions to enhance the lives of children and families. Students in this concentration develop the advanced practice knowledge and skills necessary to provide services to children and families in a wide variety of settings.

Community and Organizational Leadership: Often described as “macro” practice, this concentration is for students who are interested in social change with organizations and communities. Social work within this concentration is about creating social and policy change, strengthening community and organizational systems, developing leadership skills, and addressing social injustices. Students will prepare for roles in leadership and administration, program development, planning, policy, and community practice.

Double Concentration: Students who are interested in gaining knowledge and skills relevant to both macro practice techniques and a second “direct practice” concentration may choose a “Double Concentration” sequence. This sequence is a combination of Community and Organizational Leadership and a second concentration (Physical Health, Behavioral Health and Mental Health, Gerontology, or Children and Families), and may require up to an additional semester of coursework. Four semesters of Field Placement are required with two semesters of that Field experience being within a direct practice field setting and two semesters of a Community and Organizational Leadership-based field placement. Students who have interests that range from direct social work practice to more leadership social work roles will benefit from this option.

Specialties

The MSW program offers further 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 Practice Methods

11 credits (3 courses) of Social Work Field Placement Instruction

2 credits (1 course) of Advanced Social Policy

3 credits (1 course) of Advanced Human Behavior

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

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 (604, 665, 705, or 750) 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.

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 January 3rd before the Fall in which you want to start the program (i.e. want to start Fall 2019, application deadline is January 3, 2019).

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 four factors determines whether or not an applicant is rated as prepared to enter the MSW program by our faculty.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Letters of Reference

All applicants are required to submit two letters of reference. It is **strongly recommended** that one reference come from a college-level instructor. If one of your references is not a college-level instructor, you should give the rationale for this in the Education sector of your Narrative Statement. In addition to a college-level instructor, the most meaningful references are drawn from the following categories: 1). Employment: former or present employment supervisor. 2). Field Placement/Internship: Volunteer/Community Engagement/Social Justice Activity: a supervisor or coordinator. 3). Academic: a former or present college-level classroom instructor, an advisor, student support service staff, or a research assistant supervisor. Applicants should not provide character references, rather professional and academic references.

4. 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. Please visit UWM's MSW program website at <http://uwm.edu/socialwelfare/academics/msw-in-social-work/> for specific instructions. 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 2019 admission will open in October 2018.

To apply to the MSW program at UWM, one must access the full instructions, forms and links from the UWM Graduate School website: <https://graduateschool-apply.uwm.edu/>

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 2018. 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://uwm.edu/socialwelfare/academics/scholarships/>

For questions, please contact us at mswadmis@uwm.edu or 414-229-2396.

Keep an eye on our program website for updates, Information Sessions dates and times, and application instructions.

<http://uwm.edu/socialwelfare/academics/msw-in-social-work/>