



School of Social Work

# MSW Student Handbook

Academic Year 2023-2024

[8/2/2023]

## **List of Faculty and Staff**

### ***Director; Professor***

Diane Hodge (540) 831-7675 WCH 222  
[dmhodge@radford.edu](mailto:dmhodge@radford.edu)

### ***Associate Director; Professor***

Susan Schoppelrey (540) 831-7692 WCH 221  
[sschoppel@radford.edu](mailto:sschoppel@radford.edu)

### ***Faculty***

Ali-Sha Alleman (540) 831-7673 WCH 224  
[aalleman@radford.edu](mailto:aalleman@radford.edu)

Matthias Naleppa (540)831-7686 WCH 210  
[mnaleppa1@radford.edu](mailto:mnaleppa1@radford.edu)

Christine Rogerson (540) 831-7683 WCH 208  
[cvrogerson@radford.edu](mailto:cvrogerson@radford.edu)

Mingyang Zheng (540) 831-5849 WCH 223  
[mzheng2@radford.edu](mailto:mzheng2@radford.edu)

Andrea Barrick (540) 831-7681 WCH 209  
[asbarrick@radford.edu](mailto:asbarrick@radford.edu)

Kerry Vandergrift (540) 831-7676 WCH 210  
[kvandergrift@radford.edu](mailto:kvandergrift@radford.edu)

### ***Admissions/Recruitment Coordinator***

Diana Joyce (540) 831-7682 WCH 213  
[dsjoyce@radford.edu](mailto:dsjoyce@radford.edu)

### ***BSW Coordinator; Assistant Professor***

Sarah Rakes (540) 831-7674 WCH 202  
[srakes3@radford.edu](mailto:srakes3@radford.edu)

### ***Field Coordinator***

Diana Joyce (540) 831-7682 WCH 213  
[dsjoyce@radford.edu](mailto:dsjoyce@radford.edu)

### ***MSW Program Coordinator; Associate Professor***

Philip Mongan (540) 831-7685 WCH 201  
[pmongan@radford.edu](mailto:pmongan@radford.edu)

***Roanoke MSW Site Coordinator***

Philip Mongan (540) 831-7685 WCH 201  
[pmongan@radford.edu](mailto:pmongan@radford.edu)

***Roanoke BSW Site Coordinator***

Elizabeth Arthur (540) 767-6193 RHEC  
[earthur3@radford.edu](mailto:earthur3@radford.edu)

***CRAFFT Coordinator – Piedmont***

Susan Taylor (540) 831-7683 WCH 255  
[staylor22@radford.edu](mailto:staylor22@radford.edu)

***Office Manager***

Cindy Whitehead (540) 831-7690 WCH 220  
[cwhitehea2@radford.edu](mailto:cwhitehea2@radford.edu)

***Fiscal Technician***

Jim Quillen (540) 831-7688 WCH 207  
[jequillen@radford.edu](mailto:jequillen@radford.edu)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Part A: Introduction to the School of Social Work

WELCOME . . . . .	6
ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK . . . . .	6
MISSION STATEMENT . . . . .	7
COMPETENCIES . . . . .	7
a. MSW Program- Generalist Competencies . . . . .	7
b. MSW Program- Specialization Competencies . . . . .	12
GRANT PROGRAM . . . . .	17

### Part B: Program Requirements

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS . . . . .	19
a. Curriculum . . . . .	20
b. Comprehensive Exam . . . . .	22
COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES . . . . .	23
a. Advising . . . . .	24
b. Elective emphasis areas . . . . .	26
PROFESSIONAL, ETHICAL, AND ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS . . . . .	26
a. RU Standards of Student Conduct . . . . .	27
b. RU Honor Code . . . . .	27
c. Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education . . . . .	28
d. NASW Code of Ethics . . . . .	28

### Part C: MSW Program Policies and Procedures

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES . . . . .	30
a. Admissions . . . . .	30
Admissions Procedures . . . . .	31

Early Entry. . . . .	32
Readmission. . . . .	34
Standard Program – Radford Campus (full-time/part-time). . . . .	34
Standard Program-Roanoke Campus (part-time only) . . . . .	34
Advanced Standing Program-Radford Campus (full-time/part-time). . . . .	34
Conditional Admission. . . . .	34
Temporary Admission. . . . .	35
b. Advanced Standing and Transfer Credits . . . . .	35
Advanced Standing . . . . .	35
Transfer of Credit from Another MSW Program . . . . .	36
Transfer of Elective Credit . . . . .	36
Life Experience . . . . .	36
GRE..... . . . .	36
Waiver by Examination. . . . .	36
c. Accommodations for Disabilities . . . . .	37
d. LiveText. . . . .	37
e. Retention in the Program . . . . .	38
Cause for dismissal (unsatisfactory grades/ethical violations). . . . .	38
Review of Professional Characteristics. . . . .	38
Review Procedures. . . . .	38
f. Student Appeal Procedures. . . . .	41
Grade Appeal. . . . .	41
Graduate Student Grievance. . . . .	47
g. MSW Awards. . . . .	52
h. Additional University Policies..... . . . .	53

---

# PART A: INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## WELCOME

On behalf of the faculty and staff of the School of Social Work, I am delighted to welcome you to the MSW program. I hope you will join us in being active, caring members of both Radford University and the region it serves. The School provides a dynamic environment for teaching and learning that strengthens and nurtures intellectual, emotional, technical, and practical knowledge and skills. Our faculty and staff encourage and support innovative scholarship, practice, and research. We strive for excellence in teaching, advising, and mentoring. Community service is an important part of our work that links the School and its resources with local communities to provide service and support in furtherance of the goals of eliminating poverty and injustice, improving community life, and solving challenging social issues. We invite you to join us as we work together to renew and strengthen clinical social work practice.

The information provided in this manual will answer many of your questions regarding the program and its structure. You will also want to familiarize yourself with the College of Graduate Studies and Research Catalog. Understanding your rights and responsibilities as presented in this Handbook and the Graduate Catalog is essential to your success in the program. Advising is an integral part of our program, and we hope you will work closely with your advisor to develop a program of study appropriate to your interests and goals. We are here to support your growth and we wish you well in achieving your goals.

Again, welcome!

Philip Mongan, Ph.D, LCSW  
MSW Program Coordinator & Associate Professor

## ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

<https://www.radford.edu/content/wchs/home/social-work.html>

Radford University borders the beautiful New River near the Blue Ridge Mountains of southwestern Virginia. Radford is situated in a dynamic mix of small cities and rural settings in the New River Valley which was settled by European immigrants who placed a high value on families and family loyalty extending to second and third cousins. The society of the region continues to be grounded in family ties. Ties to the community have also been necessary for survival and provide a sense of identification, given the strong sense of place common to the area. For African American families who make up over a quarter of the population in Roanoke where our extended campus is located, 'family' goes beyond blood into fictive kin - others who have shared the diaspora of Black families in America. One of the predominant issues in both the New River Valley and in Roanoke is the scarcity of resources, thus networking across systems becomes essential. Competent masters prepared social work practitioners must understand the role that individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations play in delivery of clinical social work skills

Consistent with the University's central focus, the School of Social Work seeks to provide the highest quality professional social work education in a context of developing the student's professional, intellectual, and ethical capacities.

## PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The Radford University School of the Social Work proudly offers both undergraduate professional social work education (BSW) and graduate professional social work education (MSW). The school and both programs subscribe to a mission that encompasses social work values and the profession's purpose. The School's mission is:

*The faculty and staff of the School of Social Work at Radford University believe that the highest quality of social work education builds on the values and ethics of the profession. We fully integrate cultural humility and strive to promote inclusion and social justice at all system levels, locally and globally. We utilize theory to guide our understanding of client systems in the socially constructed environment. Our students graduate with strong advocacy and practice skills, use evidence-based models, and have the ability to evaluate their own practice.*

*The School of Social Work prepares social work professionals who are capable of adapting their practice to meet the needs of client systems. The program context comprises a dynamic mix of small cities and rural settings. We build and maintain partnerships with the surrounding communities that are dually focused on education and service. The signature pedagogy of the School is field where course work and practice are integrated.*

## MSW MISSION STATEMENT

The MSW program 'focuses on clinical social work practice, allowing students to acquire a blend of direct practice skills coupled with an understanding and appreciation of human diversity. Our students develop the ability to practice clinically with diverse populations in a wide range of available settings. The program seeks to develop within each of its students the rich intellectual and ethical capacities necessary for skillful and compassionate social work practice' (Radford University MSW, 2021). This is based in promoting inclusion, social justice, and cultural humility. Students are asked to use theory and research to inform and evaluate practice. MSW students develop relationship, advocacy, and practice skills to serve individuals locally, nationally, or globally. The MSW mission is consistent across options.

## COMPETENCIES

MSW program—Generalist: The overarching goal of the MSW social work program at the generalist level is to introduce students to the social work perspective. Students completing the

generalist are not yet autonomous social work practitioners but have the skills, knowledge base, and perspective to pursue studies in the specialization year. Completers of the Radford University MSW generalist will be competent in the 9 core competencies:

*Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior*

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

- make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
- use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

*Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice*

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

- apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

*Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice*

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
- engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

*Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice*

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:

- use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
- apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
- use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

*Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice*

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the

role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation.

Social workers:

- Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
- assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;
- apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

*Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

*Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment

of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

- collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
- select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

*Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

- critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
- use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;

- negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
- facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

*Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
- critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

MSW program—Specialization. The overarching goal of the specialization year is to prepare our graduates to be competent, clinical social work practitioners. These graduates will demonstrate competencies in the 9 extended and enhanced competencies of clinical social work:

*Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior*

Social workers understand the regulations and laws governing the practice of clinical social work in Virginia while resolving ethical conflicts with the guidance of the NASW Code of Ethics. Social workers understand that their primary ethical obligation is to their client, but that they also have obligations to colleagues, the profession, and the broader society. Social workers reflect upon how their personal values and past experiences influence their perceptions of and interactions with client systems. Social workers engaged in clinical practice integrate advocacy in their personal and professional lives. Social workers participate in interprofessional practice. Social workers embrace opportunities for life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their clinical skills. Social workers:

- Exhibit ethical behavior and expect this of their colleagues and the systems in which they work;

- Actively prepare for client interactions to minimize any potential negative impact of their personal experiences and affective reactions on the relationship with the client;
- Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries when working with client systems;
- Challenge themselves and the systems in which they work to use technology ethically;
- Use supervision and consultation to critically examine dynamics of the social worker-client relationship that may not be readily apparent to the treating social worker; and
- Exemplify professionalism in behavior, appearance, and communication with and on behalf of clients.

*Competency 2: Engage Diversity & Difference in Practice*

Social workers understand that providing clinical services to diverse populations requires a thorough and ongoing examination of one's biases and assumptions. Social workers comprehend that delivering clinical services requires understanding the intersectionality of various systems; multiple traits such as race, age, class, culture, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, and veteran status; and discriminatory social and political practices. Furthermore, social workers know that people of diverse backgrounds have multiple strengths; thus, practitioners engage in cultural humility and clinical practice methods that promote self-determination, dignity, and personal well-being. Social workers use diverse and inclusive clinical practice approaches to address the systemic mechanisms that contribute to the oppression encountered by stigmatized populations. Social workers understand the value of working with diverse disciplines and communities to address the range of clinical need. Social workers:

- Understand the multiple diversity factors and their influence on access to clinical services and the clinical relationship.
- Understand diversity factors and their intersectionality with societal and cultural experiences, structures, and values.
- Reflect on how one's own diversity factors contribute to attitudes and biases which shape the relationship between client and social worker.
- Engage interprofessional groups and stakeholders in addressing the influence of intersectionality of diverse factors with populations accessing clinical services.

*Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice*

Social workers understand that people who need clinical services experience the full range of violations to their human rights, particularly violations to their human dignity and right to nondiscrimination. Social workers understand that communities of color, the LGBTQIA community, and people with disabilities are disproportionately represented in populations

personally impacted by social, economic, and environmental injustice. Social workers understand how those who need clinical services encounter institutional discrimination, fragmented and ineffective systems of care, and disinvestments in affordable and accessible services. Social workers identify and engage multiple stakeholders, including those with lived experiences of needing clinical services, to advocate and organize for access to resources, human rights, and social change that promote quality clinical services. Social Workers:

- Formulate strategies, using the UN Declaration of Human Rights as one framework, to champion efforts to advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice for people in need of clinical services.
- Collaborate with multiple stakeholders and constituencies to ensure that people who need clinical services have access to a continuum of care including housing, employment, healthcare, education, entitlements, social welfare benefits, and social supports.
- Engage in advocacy and community engagement to challenge and dismantle systems of oppression in an effort to promote accessible and affordable clinical services that promote human well-being.

*Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice*

Social workers use research to build knowledge about social work practice and evaluate their own practice. Social workers apply the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, as well as culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge, whether conducting their own research or interpreting the results of others' research. Social workers understand that clinical practice must be grounded in high-quality evidence that meets high ethical standards and that includes the voices of marginalized and oppressed populations. Social workers:

- Critique the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods;
- Maintain familiarity with research literature in their area of practice and apply knowledge from research to clinical practice;
- Select appropriate measures of client problems and behaviors based on knowledge of instrument design, reliability, and validity; and
- Conduct client-centered evaluations of their own practice.

*Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice*

Social workers providing clinical services recognize that federal, state, local, and organizational policies affect practice, including treatment options and availability of and access to care for their clients. Practitioners understand that historical, social, cultural, and economic influences

have produced different outcomes for clients from marginalized populations due to biased and discriminatory policy-making and implementation. Practitioners advocate effectively at the individual client level and for client populations. They recognize that professional ethics and values require us to engage and align with clients to challenge social injustice during policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

- Demonstrate leadership in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, particularly at the organizational level.
- Use skills, including interprofessional communication and relationship building, to challenge existing power structures and advocate for equitable policies.
- Engage and empower clients to advocate for policies that improve their well-being and the well-being of their communities.

*Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers engaged in clinical practice recognize the importance of rapport-building and other engagement skills in work with clients across the micro, mezzo, and macro systems. Practitioners understand the role that diversity plays in the development and maintenance of the clinical relationship, and utilize skills sensitive to those concepts when engaging with clients. Engagement in clinical practice also requires social workers to comprehend the role that their own biases and past experiences may have on the clinical relationship. Social Workers:

- Develop an understanding of what may hinder engagement with clients, as well as ways to address those potential barriers.
- Process the role that their own biases and past experiences may have on their engagement with client systems.
- Apply skills in engagement and building rapport with different individuals, families, and groups.
- Recognize the context of communities and organizations within which clients are situated

*Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers engaged in clinical practice comprehend the importance of the person-in-environment perspective, as well as systems theories and other relevant practice models on client presentation. Practitioners engage in assessment that encompasses the full scope of physical, psychological and cognitive well-being, social engagement, and spirituality. Social workers also understand that holistic assessment is an integral part to successful clinical practice. Practitioners recognize the role of culture and gender identity in assessment, as well as incorporate assessment methods that account for the developmental level of clients.

Practitioners understand the importance of accurate assessment and diagnosis for client outcomes, while understanding the strengths and weaknesses of assessment tools and diagnostic models. Social Workers:

- Recognize how their own past experiences and biases may impact assessments of clients and client systems.
- Understand the biological basis of behavior, as well as the culturally relevant and feminist critiques to the medical diagnostic process in relation to medical and mental illness.
- Demonstrate the ability to select appropriate assessment tools based upon client culture, developmental level, gender identity, and presenting problem
- Conduct biopsychosocial assessments that account for gender identity, developmental level and culture.
- Utilize assessment to create clinical treatment plans appropriate to the client's gender identity, culture, and developmental level.

*Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers engaged in clinical practice strive to meet clients where they are, and understand the person-in-environment perspective. Practitioners also recognize the importance of intervention on micro, mezzo, and macro levels, as well as utilizing interventions that are evidence-based. Clinical practice requires that social workers understand gender identity, as well as the cultural and developmental implications of the interventions they use, and remain cognizant of the need to match interventions with client needs and preferences. Practitioners also recognize the importance of inter-professional collaboration, and endeavor to bring the social work perspective to those teams. Social Workers:

- Understand how to select appropriate interventions, and are able to critically analyze the implications for gender identity, development and culture of those interventions for the clients they serve
- Implement gender-sensitive, as well as culturally and developmentally appropriate treatment plans
- Utilize evidence-based interventions with clients at the individual, family, and group level
- Identify interventions appropriate at the organizational and community level
- Engage in inter-professional collaboration in client treatment as appropriate

*Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities*

Social workers engaged in clinical practice recognize the role of evaluation in the delivery of services. Whether working with clients at the individual, family, group, organizational, or community level, evaluation should be client-centered, and focused on the goals of treatment, as well as the delivery of services. Social workers understand the difference between process evaluation and outcome evaluation, and are able to utilize both as appropriate to the situation. Practitioners also strive to use evidence-based evaluation tools when possible, and incorporate inter-professional collaboration when appropriate. Social workers engaged in clinical practice should utilize findings from evaluation to support future interventions, as well as to address barriers to treatment. Social Workers:

- Understand the role that evaluation serves in improving clinical practice outcomes, as well as removing barriers to treatment
- Identify evaluations that are gender-sensitive, as well as culturally and developmentally appropriate, to assess the process of treatment and treatment outcomes
- Utilize client-centered evaluation to assess the process and outcomes of treatment provided to clients at the individual, family, group, organizational, or community level
- Analyze the strengths and weakness of qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools, while being able to identify how personal bias, gender identity, developmental level, previous life experience, and cultural considerations can impact the results obtained by those tools

The grant program housed within the School of Social Work:

1) The School of Social Work houses the *Community Resource Adoptive and Foster Family Training (CRAFFT)*. This initiative is a statewide grant program whose primary focus is training and supporting resource, foster, kinship, and adoptive families throughout Virginia. The state is divided into six service areas and each area has a designated CRAFFT coordinator who works at a state University within/bordering the service area. The two coordinators, serving the Western and Piedmont areas of Virginia, are based in the RU SSW. The goals of the CRAFFT program are directly related to state program improvement goals that focus on better outcomes for children in our foster care system.

## LICENSURE INFORMATION

Social work regulatory boards require that social work degrees must be obtained from programs of social work that are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Both the BSW and MSW at Radford University are accredited by CSWE and therefore meet the

educational requirements to become a licensed social worker in other states. Some states may have requirements beyond the educational requirements in order to be licensed.

---

## PART B: PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The MSW Program prepares social workers for practice in a complex, rapidly changing environment. Through the carefully designed course of study social workers are prepared to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities diverse in race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, and religion. This involves learning the value of diversity and the deconstruction of oppression. Students in the standard program complete a minimum of 61 credit hours and those in the advanced standing complete a minimum of 40 credit hours. Full-time standard students can complete the program in two years. Part-time standard students can complete the program in four years in Radford and three years in the year-round extended campus in Roanoke. Advanced Standing full-time students can complete the program in one year and part-time advanced standing students can complete the program in two years in Radford.

### ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

The standard program begins with the theory courses. These courses include Human Behavior in the Social Environment I and II (SOWK 601 & 602). Theory provides a framework for the critical analysis of social work practice whether that is at the individual, family, organizational, community, or policy level. It is also the lens through which research is viewed, critiqued, and developed.

During the first year, students are introduced to the generalist perspective of social work practice. An emphasis is placed on learning and critically analyzing the knowledge, values, and skills for working with diverse individual, families, groups, and communities. In addition to theory, two practice courses (SOWK 631 & 632), a research course (SOWK 621), and a policy course (SOWK 611) are taken along with the field practicum and seminars (SOWK 641 & 642).

The specialization year curriculum prepares graduates for practice in clinical social work. The two practice courses (SOWK 783 & 784) are designed to prepare students for clinical practice at multiple levels. The research (SOWK 772) and policy (SOWK 761) courses support clinical social work practice as well. The specialization practicums (SOWK 791 & 792) are developed collaboratively to meet programmatic and individual needs. SOWK 682, Biopsychosocial assessment supports the practicum and practice work by providing students with diagnostic skills to better understand psychopathology within the biopsychosocial risk and resiliency theoretical framework. The Integrative Seminar (SOWK 785) is taken during the final academic year semester. In this course, the comprehensive exam is completed, pulling together all aspects of the academic curriculum as applied to the topic of the student's own choosing.

Electives round out the course of study. Through the choice of electives it is possible to focus your learning in a particular direction. Courses are offered that provide the student with the potential to place an emphasis in Clinical Social Work, and School Social Work. It is also possible

to tailor an individualized program of study to gain an emphasis in child welfare, community/organizational practice, and social work with military populations.

The program of study is outlined on the following pages. The field placement is an integral part of the curriculum. This is where the theory and skills learned through the academic courses are applied. Therefore, students complete 410 clock hours in the generalist field placement (with an additional 36 clock hours in field seminar) and 600 clock hours in the specialization placement (with an additional 36 clock hours in field seminar). The Field Seminar integrates the practice experience gleaned from the placement with the rest of the academic curriculum. For more information on field, see the Field Education section of the *MSW Student Handbook*.

## **CURRICULUM**

Students who are enrolled at the Radford campus may attend on a full-time (degree paths A or C below) or part-time basis (degree paths B or D below). Students enrolled through the Roanoke site pursue a part-time option (degree path E).

Students are admitted to a cohort defined by the site (Radford, Roanoke) and their enrollment status (full-time or part-time). Students will only be permitted to change from one cohort to another with the approval of their advisor and the MSW Coordinator. Approval of such requests is contingent on available slots in the requested cohort.

### ***Radford Standard Program: full time/part-time***

#### **DEGREE PATH A: STANDARD PROGRAM, FULL-TIME (5 SEMESTERS, 61 CREDITS)**

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING
SW 601	SW 602		SW 682	SW 784
SW 611	SW 621	*Elective	SW 772	SW 761
SW 631	SW 632	*Elective	SW 783	SW 785
SW 641	SW 642	*Elective	SW 791 (5 cr.)	SW 792 (5 cr.)

Key: SW 601/602: HBSE I & II. SW 611/761: Policy I & II. SW 621, 772: Research I & II.

SW 641/642: Generalist field. SW 631/632: Practice I & II.

SW 791/792: Specialization field (5 credits each). SW 783/784: Practice III & IV.

SW 682: Biopsychosocial assessment. SW 785: Integrative seminar. Three graduate electives.

#### **DEGREE PATH B: STANDARD PROGRAM, PART-TIME (11 SEMESTERS, 61 CREDITS)**

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
SW 601 SW 611	SW 602 SW 621	*Elective	SW 631 SW 641	SW 632 SW 642	*Elective

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING
SW 682 SW 772	SW 761 *Elective		SW 783 SW 791	SW 784 SW 792 SW 785

***Radford Advanced Standing: full-time/part-time***

**DEGREE PATH C: ADVANCED STANDING, FULL-TIME (4 SEMESTERS, 40 CREDITS)**

SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
SW 678 SW 679	SW 682 SW 772 SW 783 SW 791 (5 cr)	SW 761 SW 784 SW 785 SW 792 (5 cr)	Elective Elective

Key: SW 678/679: Bridge courses for Advanced Standing students.

**DEGREE PATH D: ADVANCED STANDING, PART-TIME (6 SEMESTERS, 40 CREDITS)**

SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING
SW 678 SW 679	SW 682 SW 772	SW 761 *Elective	*Elective	SW 783 SW 791 (5 cr)	SW 784 SW 785 SW 792 (5 cr)

**Roanoke Part-time Program**

**DEGREE PATH E: STANDARD PROGRAM, PART-TIME, SATURDAY CLASSES (9 SEMESTERS, 61 CREDITS)**

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
SW 601	SW 602	SW 631	SW 632	SW 682	SW 761
SW 611	SW 621	SW 641	SW 642	SW 772	Electives (2)

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
SW 783	SW 784	SW 785
SW 791 (5 cr.)	SW 792 (5 cr.)	Elective

Key: SW 601/602: HBSE I & II. SW 611/761: Policy I & II. SW 621, 772: Research I & II.  
 SW 641/642: Generalist field. SW 631/632: Practice I & II.  
 SW 791/792: Specialization field (5 credits each). SW 783/784: Practice III & IV.  
 SW 682: Biopsychosocial assessment. SW 785: Integrative seminar. Three graduate electives.

**THE ADVANCED STANDING OPTION IS NOT AVAILABLE IN ROANOKE**

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

**Policy Statement**

A final, comprehensive examination is required of all MSW degree candidates at Radford University. The exam is provided in the Integrative seminar course (SOWK 785) which is taken at the end of the program of study for the MSW degree. Students are eligible to take the course in the semester that they complete all degree requirements or with only six hours of elective credits remaining for degree completion. The exam allows each student to focus on a chosen topic in order to demonstrate an integration of the academic curriculum and the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities of an autonomous practitioner of social work.

**Background**

As a School of Social Work, faculty members believe that the comprehensive examination is an experience that will organize and provide depth to students’ knowledge of the profession, as well as provide an evaluation of their academic and field work at Radford University.

**The purpose** of the comprehensive exam is to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the skills, abilities, and knowledge obtained in the MSW program. Since the course requires each student to demonstrate her or his ability to integrate all aspects of the curriculum, students take it at the end of their program of study.

**Comprehensive Exam preparation and content:** Students select a social problem of interest and relate the information to materials covered in core courses (HBSE, Practice, Policy, Research, Field) and related areas (cultural competence/diversity, social/economic justice, Social Work values and ethics) including assigned readings. Candidates should have a working knowledge of the basic issues, concepts, and methods of analysis stressed in these courses, particularly as they relate to their central topic. Initially a brief description of the topic is

required. Students are required to briefly indicate the central question that they are investigating. Students need to indicate how the topic, and their presentation of it, speaks comprehensively to the knowledge gained in the different areas of the MSW curriculum (i.e., HBSE, policy, practice, research) and how it deals with issues of diversity, values/ethics, and social & economic justice.

The following questions need to be considered in preparing for the comprehensive exam:

- Will a careful reader learn enough to ask informed questions? Will a casual observer walk away understanding the major findings after a quick perusal of your material?
- Ask yourself, "What would I need to know if I were viewing this material for the first time?"
- How could professional social work practice benefit from this information?

Candidates are encouraged to use their imagination and creative abilities to create work that will generate questions from raters and add to the body of knowledge. The final conclusions should leave observers focused on a concise statement of the important findings and implications. For more specific policies and information, please see the course syllabus, as well as additional handouts provided by the course instructor.

**General Policies:** Students who score "Needs Improvement" or below on two or fewer competencies will be allowed a second presentation to clarify and correct concerns outlined by their committee. This clarification presentation will occur within 7 calendar days of the Comprehensive Exam, and does not constitute a failure of the comprehensive exam. Students who score "Needs Improvement" or below on three or more competencies, and those that fail to raise all their scores in their clarification presentation to at least "Satisfactory", will fail the comprehensive exam. A student who fails the comprehensive exam may request one additional re-examination, and the re-examination must be undertaken at least 30 calendar days after the initial exam was completed. The re-examination must be completed by the end of the fall semester. Upon failure of the comprehensive exam the student must contact their comprehensive exam committee, as well as the MSW Coordinator, to develop a plan to retake the comprehensive exam and finish SOWK 785. In order to schedule the re-examination, the student must contact the MSW Coordinator and comprehensive exam committee at least 3 weeks prior to the agreed upon date. Failure to do this will result in a failed re-examination. A student who fails to pass the comprehensive exam on the second attempt will be dismissed from the degree program.

## **COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

Each MSW student at the Radford campus has a mailbox in the social work office and a Radford University email account. Classroom faculty, the School, the College, and the University will communicate vital information through email. Students are responsible for checking their Radford University email account regularly. You may exercise an option to forward your RU email to your more frequently used email account.

Computers are available for student use in the School of Social Work on the second floor of Waldron College (WCH) as well as in McConnell Library and various labs across the Radford campus. Computer labs are also available in Roanoke and both campuses have extensive wireless networks. Library resources are available in McConnell Library and through the library's website. Students are required to access the library orientation modules for review of APA format and to avoid plagiarism. For assistance with problems related to technology, the RU IT help desk can be accessed at: [helpdesk@radford.edu](mailto:helpdesk@radford.edu)

### **CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The Center for Diversity and Inclusion provides resources to the entire RU campus to support underrepresented populations. It is located in Tyler Hall, room 25.

<http://www.radford.edu/content/student-affairs/home/dean-of-students/diversity.html>

### **STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES**

Student Counseling Services exists to support students through stressful times. SCS provides quality mental health care to Radford University students by qualified professionals. The Counseling Center is located in the lower level of Tyler Hall.

<https://www.radford.edu/content/student-affairs/home/student-health/counseling.html>

### **FITNESS CENTERS**

Radford University has opened a new Recreation & Wellness Center:

<https://www.radford.edu/content/recreation/home.html>, as well as fitness options in Peters & in Muse.

### **CENTER FOR ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (CAS)**

The CAS provides equal educational opportunities for all students. RU provides reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Please view the link for additional information: <http://www.radford.edu/content/student-affairs/home/dean-of-students/disability-resources.html>

### **MSW STUDENT BODY**

MSW students at both campuses are given the opportunity to elect representatives from their class to represent their interests to the faculty. As stakeholders in the program, their voices are important to faculty decision-making. The President and Vice-President of the class are responsible for coordinating other efforts of interest to students, i.e., mentoring incoming students, community service projects, and social gatherings. Two clubs are open to students within the School of Social Work: the Association of Black Social Workers & the MSW Diversity Club (information available from student representatives or the MSW Program Coordinator).

### **Advising**

## **Purpose and Intent**

Advising serves three primary purposes:

- to provide each student with a faculty member who knows the student, who can serve as a resource and advocate appropriately for student needs;
- to monitor student progression through the program and ensure that all requirements of the MSW program and the student's individualized program of study are met; and
- to provide the School with a clear channel through which to carry out administrative functions for each student.

The intent of academic advising is to establish a supportive environment in regard to the student's strengths, interests, career goals, and current learning needs.

## **Policy statement**

Every full-time or part-time student is assigned an advisor by the MSW Coordinator. Faculty advisors are available as academic, career, and support consultants to the student on any matter of concern or interest to the student relevant to the School of Social Work and the student's functioning within the School.

## **Process and procedures**

### **Step 1**

When a student is accepted into the MSW Program as a full time or part-time student, the MSW Coordinator assigns a member of the full-time faculty as an academic advisor in the fall semester. In the case of advanced standing students, who are admitted during the summer session, the MSW Coordinator (or her/his designee) serves as the advisor for the summer.

### **Step 2**

The MSW Coordinator is responsible for assigning academic advisors and will send an advising list to faculty and staff within the first 3 weeks of the fall semester. Students meet their assigned advisors during the mandatory orientation for the MSW program. The advising list is posted within the School of Social Work.

### **Step 3**

Students complete their program of study under the tutelage of the advisor at the time of Orientation. Although the core curriculum of the MSW program of study is set, students must consult with their advisor to decide on appropriate electives to round out their program of study. ***The choice of electives is extremely important to students who wish to seek state licensures (i.e., LCSW or school social work).*** It is strongly recommended that students meet with their advisors at least once each semester, as early in the semester as possible. However, students do not have to meet with their advisor in order to register for required or elective courses.

### **Step 4**

The faculty advisor is available to the student via appointments, telephone, and/or email. In problematic situations, the student can call upon the advisor for assistance.

### **Step 5**

If a serious academic or non-academic concern is identified by either by the student or the advisor, the MSW Coordinator serves as a consultant and advocate in the process of resolving the difficulty.

### **Procedure for Changing Advisors**

Students may change advisors by contacting the MSW Coordinator to request such a change. If the student has chosen a new faculty advisor, they should make sure that faculty member is available and agreeable to the change.

### **Elective Emphasis Areas**

Students select elective courses according to their interests and abilities. All electives outside the department must be approved by the student's advisor and the MSW Coordinator; however, any social work elective at the 600 level or higher will count toward degree completion (but may not count towards an emphasis area). Students may select one of the elective emphasis areas described below, or they may individualize their program of study through their choice of electives. The following elective emphasis areas represent cohesive programs in one of three areas of practice: clinical social work, school social work, or social work with military populations. The elective emphasis areas available include:

- Clinical Social Work (emphasis in mental health, preparation for licensure): Two clinical electives and a clinical field placement are required (see MSW Student Handbook for more specific information).
- School Social Work: Two electives, SOWK 720 & EDSP 651 , are required, plus one field placement in a public or accredited private primary or secondary school.
- Social Work with Military Populations: Students who are interested in specializing in social work with military populations are required to: complete the military social work elective, plus another relevant clinical elective, and complete a concentration field placement with the military population.

Students who wish to complete more than one elective emphasis after degree completion will be required to be readmitted to RU as a non-degree seeking student. Students are advised to check with Financial Aid about eligibility before embarking on this plan of action.

### **PROFESSIONAL, ETHICAL AND ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS**

All students are held to academic and non-academic standards. Academic competence is required, so each student is required to maintain the required course grades and GPA. A student who receives two grades of "C" or lower in any work attempted at Radford University

shall be dismissed. The receipt of one C automatically places a student in the MSW program in the formal remediation process, and a remediation plan will be completed. If at any point after a student has completed 9 credit hours in his or her program of study and the student's cumulative grade point average is at least a 2.0 but less than a 3.0, he or she will be placed on probation. In accordance with the policies of the RU College of Graduate Studies and Research, if a student is dismissed from a program she or he may not enroll again in the College of Graduate Studies and Research until two academic years have passed.

Additionally, each student must abide by the *Radford University Standards of Student Conduct*, the Radford University *Honor Code*, and the *Waldron College Standards for Professional Practice Education*, and the *NASW Standards of Cultural Competence*. Further, the *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers* (NASW) provides the framework for professional social work practice and also for social work action; therefore, all social work students must follow the *NASW Code of Ethics* as they pursue their education. Students are required to read each document and should consult their advisor about any questions they may have. Students must sign an acknowledgement verifying their intent to abide by all of these standards upon admission to the MSW program. This form will be kept in the student's file.

Summaries of each document are provided below, along with a URL for the full text.

#### Radford University *Standards of Student Conduct*

All students at Radford University must abide by the *Standards of Student Conduct*. This publication includes the *Honor Code* as well as other policies governing student conduct both on and off campus. It describes the procedures for dealing with violations of the *Standards of Student Conduct*, including the student's procedural rights to appeal and the possible sanctions that may be imposed by Radford University. Additional information is available online at: <https://www.radford.edu/content/student-conduct/home.html>

#### Radford University *Honor Code*

The Radford University Honor System provides the foundation for a university community in which freedom, trust, and respect can prevail. In accepting admission to Radford University, each student makes a commitment to support and uphold the Honor System without compromise or exception. The students of Radford University believe that individuals have the right to compete fairly, to keep what they have earned, and to have others accept their word without question. Individuals have the responsibility to be honorable in their own conduct and to insist other students act honorably.

Lying, cheating, and stealing are considered to be acts of dishonor, and will, therefore, cause a student to be subject to temporary or permanent suspension from the university community. Students who commit an honor violation or any members of the Radford University community who have knowledge that a student has committed an honor violation are expected to comply with the reporting procedures.

The Honor Pledge:

"I shall uphold the values and ideals of Radford University by engaging in responsible behavior and striving always to be accountable for my actions while holding myself and others to the highest moral and ethical standards of academic integrity and good citizenship as defined in the Standards of Student Conduct."

<https://www.radford.edu/content/sga/home/HonorCode.html>

### Waldron College *Standards of Professional Practice Education*

This document sets out *Standards of Professional Practice Education* that apply to students enrolled in the Waldron College of Health and Human Services at Radford University involving the health, welfare, and safety of people across the lifespan. The Waldron College has distinct expectations of students that are in addition to those outlined in the Radford University *Standards of Student Conduct*. These standards are linked to students' abilities to become effective health and human service professionals and are provided so that students can be clear about expectations and procedures to address practice performance. The ultimate goal of the standards is to help students become successful health and human service professionals.

All students are expected to read the Waldron College *Standards of Professional Practice Education*. Students must sign an acknowledgement verifying their intent to abide by these standards upon admission to the MSW program. This form will be kept in the student's file. The Waldron College *Standards of Professional Practice Education* is found at:

<http://www.radford.edu/content/dam/colleges/wchs/STANDARDS%20OF%20PROFESSIONAL%20PRACTICE%20EDUCATION-%20SPRING%202012.pdf>

The *Standards of Professional Practice Education* addresses communication as well as interpersonal, cognitive, physical, and professional performance skills. Also covered is an overview of emotional and mental abilities necessary for professional practice. These include stress management and emotional and mental capabilities. Professional commitment, professional behavior, self awareness, and ethical obligations are covered. Finally, the sources of evidence are provided, followed by the accommodations for disabilities.

Persons who teach and supervise students, along with program coordinators, assess student academic performance and apply their professional judgment to determine if standards are being met during a student's educational career. Professional judgment is the capacity to assess a situation by applying the values and knowledge of related professionals, combined with a professional's own experience and practice wisdom. It also represents the application of knowledge, values, and skills to make decisions in an ethical and competent manner.

NASW *Code of Ethics*

---

## Preamble

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social, economic, and environmental justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

**Service social justice dignity and worth of the person importance of human relationships integrity competence**

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience. The NASW Code of Ethics is found at:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

### NASW Standards for Cultural Competence

"NASW supports and encourages the development of standards for culturally competent social work practice, a definition of expertise, and the advancement of practice models that have relevance for the range of needs and services represented by diverse client populations" (NASW, 2000b, p. 61, as cited in the Introduction to NASW Standards for Cultural Competence, 2001, p. 7. ). NASW Standards for Cultural Competence are found at:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=PonPTDEBrn4%3D>

---

## PART C: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ADMISSIONS

It is the goal of the Radford University MSW Program to prepare eligible students with an advanced professional degree, enabling them to work autonomously with expertise in clinical social work. The policy of the School of Social Work at Radford University is to provide a set of procedures to be used in determining student admission into the Master of Social Work Degree Program. In accordance with the School of Social Work's By-laws, these procedures are to govern the process and procedures of application into the program.

The admissions procedures for the MSW Program are conducted in cooperation with the College of Graduate Studies and Research of the University. These procedures are stated in Radford University's Graduate catalog:

<http://www.radford.edu/content/grad/home/admissions/graduate-catalog.html> All graduate admission information and the process for application can be found on-line at the School's website: <https://php.radford.edu/~sowk-web/> This information includes both the College of Graduate Studies and Research's requirements as well as the School of Social Work's requirements. Specific criteria must be met of all applicants seeking admission into the MSW Program. Additional criteria are also set forth by the College of Graduate Studies and Research of the University for applicants. These are spelled out in the procedures outlined below.

The MSW degree is structured to meet both the needs of full-time students and those who wish to study on a part-time basis. The main campus is located in Radford, Virginia and the extended campus part-time program is located in Roanoke, Virginia.

An advanced standing option is available for full-time and part-time students at the Radford campus who are qualified graduates of CSWE accredited BSW Programs within the past 7 years. All persons applying to the Advanced Standing program must have a minimum GPA of 2.75 for all undergraduate coursework. Advanced Standing applicants must have a 3.0 in Social Work courses. The advanced standing program is designed to begin with two bridge courses during the summer semester.

For Standard Program students, a minimum GPA of 2.75 in all undergraduate courses and 3.0 in the last 60 hours coursework is required. Students admitted into the standard program begin their program of study in the Fall semester (which begins in August).

Requests for application are processed electronically through the College of Graduate and Extended Education. Applicants submit their completed applications to the College of Graduate and Extended Education. When files are complete, they are referred to the School of Social Work. The Admissions Coordinator reviews all files for potential admission.

## ADMISSION PROCEDURES

The following information is requested from MSW applicants and is specified on the School of Social Work website.

1. A completed application for Graduate Admission for Radford University
2. Official transcripts of ALL undergraduate and graduate work
3. Three letters of recommendation, 1) from field professional, 2) academic, and 3) another academic or professional reference
4. Experience in Human Services Form
5. Curriculum Option/Degree Path Form
6. Responses to 4 personal response questions (max of 250 words each response)
7. Two copies of a current resume
8. Field Practicum Application
9. Legal/Military History form: full explanation of any positive responses

Applicant files are reviewed and rated by at least two full-time graduate social work faculty members. Faculty members are asked to give written feedback in each category as well as overall feedback at the end of the rating form. The application file along with the rating form is then returned to the Admissions Coordinator.

The applicants are rated on:

- overall GPA
- final two year GPA
- academic preparation
- experience in human services
- personal response quality/clarity and whether it exceeds maximum word count
- references (3 are required)
- suitability for the profession of social work

The deadline for submission of application materials for all advanced standing applicants is January 31. Students will be notified by March 15 regarding the admission decision.

The suggested date for fullest consideration of all standard program applications is March 1. Applicants who submit all materials before March 1 will be notified by April 15 regarding the admission decision. Standard program applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis after that time.

Full-time applicants interested in applying for a graduate assistantship award are strongly encouraged to apply well in advance of the March 1 deadline and notify the MSW Program Coordinator, [pmongan@radford.edu](mailto:pmongan@radford.edu), of their interest in an award in January of the year they apply. Please see the College of Graduate Studies and Research web-site for more information: <http://www.radford.edu/content/grad/home/cost/assistantships.html>

Expedited application review is available for those students applying for the standard and part-time standard programs who have an overall undergraduate GPA of 3.5 or above. For Advanced Standing students, the overall undergraduate GPA requirement is 3.75 or above. The process for expedited review is that one rater reviews the application to ensure it meets requirements for admission. If the application does, the applicant is approved for admission without having to be sent to a second rater. If expedited review leads to a decision to not admit, the application will then follow the standard review procedures by being assigned to a second rater, and follow subsequent policies for standard review.

Standard applicants rated as a top candidate by two raters are sent by the Admissions Coordinator to the MSW Admissions Coordinator and MSW Program Coordinator for admission status within the program. After the requisite program approvals, the file goes to the College of Graduate Studies and Research for the final admission decision.

If there is a discrepancy of five points or more between the two faculty raters, and one of the ratings is marginal or weak, the applicant file goes to a third rater. The three scores are then averaged. The points are totaled and the averages used to make decisions regarding further processing of the file. Depending on the averaged score, the applicant will either: be admitted, denied admission, or staffed by the Coordinator's committee if it continues to be rated as marginal. If an applicant's average rating is marginal, the decision about admission status is referred to the Coordinator's committee for in-depth review and final recommendation. A majority vote by those in attendance makes the final admission decision. The Admissions Coordinator facilitates the meeting and does not vote except to break a tie.

Students are notified by the College of Graduate Studies and Research and by the MSW Program regarding admissions decisions. In order to confirm acceptance of an admission offer, students must respond by completing an intent to enroll and sending in a \$500 seat deposit to the College of Graduate Studies and Research that will be applied to fall tuition.

An advanced standing applicant follows an identical process, except that, if the applicant is not granted admission to advanced standing, her application will automatically be considered for the standard program.

#### Early Entry (Seat Guarantee) Policies & Procedures

Current enrolled BSW and pre-Social Work students are eligible to apply to the Early Entry program, which – if accepted into the program – guarantees a seat for them (up to 2 years after graduating with a BSW) in either the Standard (part-time or full-time) or Advanced Standing (part-time or full-time) program. Students outside of the BSW program, or pre-Social

Work students, are currently not eligible for the program. Applications for Early Entry are accepted on a continuous basis, with no set deadline. Interested students will reach out to either the MSW Coordinator or the Admissions Coordinator to begin the process. As part of that initial meeting, the School of Social Work representative will inform the student of the Early Entry policies and procedures, and ensure the student understands that the acceptance into the Early Entry program still requires the student to formally apply to the MSW program – as well at the Graduate College – at the appropriate time (i.e. the application window immediately preceding the academic year they wish to matriculate into the program). As part of the Early Entry application, students will need to submit the following items:

1. Unofficial transcript or Degree Audit printout
  - This will include community college transcripts if student transferred in any credits to Radford University.
2. Three recommendation forms
  - These can come be academic, professional, or field references
3. Experience in Human Services Form
4. Curriculum Option/Degree Path Form
5. Responses to personal response questions
6. Current Resume
7. Legal/Military History Form
8. Plan of Study

Once all items are received, the review process will be the same as outlined above in the Admissions Procedure section. Students are eligible for the Advanced Standing (part-time and full-time) early entry if they have and continue to maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.25, and a Social Work GPA of at least 3.5. Students are eligible for the Standard Program (part-time and full-time) early entry if they have and continue to maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0, and a Social Work GPA of at least 3.25.

Students accepted into the Early Entry program will have their GPA reviewed each semester by the MSW Coordinator or their representative. Early Entry Advanced Standing students who no longer meet the GPA requirements (3.25 overall; 3.5 SOWK) will be removed from the Advanced Standing Early Entry program, but allowed to continue in the Standard Early Entry Program. Standard Early Entry Program students who no longer meet the GPA requirements (3.0 overall; 3.25 Social Work) will be removed from the Early Entry program until their GPA meets the minimal requirements. Being removed from either Early Entry program does not eliminate the student for full consideration into the Advanced Standing or Standard MSW programs when they formally apply to either program.

### Readmission Procedures

If a student was enrolled in the RU MSW program and the student left the program for any reason, the student may reapply to the program after the requisite two years imposed by the College of Graduate Studies and Research and provide a written explanation as part of the personal essay in the admission application about what provoked the departure and how that issue has been resolved. The student will notify the Admissions Coordinator by email that she/he was applied, and the Admissions Coordinator will forward that application file to all members of the MSW Committee for review and the committee will make the decision about readmission.

Furthermore, if a student was previously enrolled in the RU MSW program and he or she reapplies and is accepted, all courses completed in the MSW program at Radford University with a B or better will be accepted into his or her new program of study, subject to the six year time limit imposed on program of study completion by the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

### Standard Program—Radford Campus

The Standard Program curriculum of the MSW Degree requires the completion of 61 credit hours. Courses must be taken in sequence and year-round, allowing full-time students to complete the degree in two academic years plus the summer in-between. Before students are allowed to begin their specialization practicum, they must complete all generalist level courses. Completion of the program requires part-time students to attend four academic years plus two summers in-between. All students commence the program in the Fall semester; there is no mid-year or summer matriculation for the Standard Curriculum students.

### Standard Program—Roanoke Campus (Part-Time)

The Roanoke campus offers a hybrid part-time weekend option that allow students to attend all core classes on Saturdays. Classes are held at the Roanoke Higher Education Center; one week in person, the next week online. Students can complete the MSW program in three years (9 semesters, 61 credits) by taking courses in sequence and year-round. Before students are allowed to begin their specialization practicum, they must complete all generalist level courses

### Advanced Standing Program—Radford Campus

The Advanced Standing Curriculum of the Master's Degree program requires the completion of 40 credit hours. Courses must also be taken in sequence and year round, allowing full-time students to complete the degree in four semesters and part-time students to complete the program in six semesters. Advanced Standing students enter the program in the summer semester with Bridge courses.

### Conditional Admission

Some graduate students may be admitted to their program under “Conditional” or “Conditional-Temporary” status. This means that they must satisfy specific conditions within a specified time frame. Some conditions govern academic performance and may include earning a specific cumulative GPA as well as earning a minimum specific grade in all courses attempted. If admission conditions are not satisfied within the indicated time frame, the graduate student will be dismissed from their program. Complete details about the “Conditional” and “Conditional-Temporary” policies can be found in the Graduate Catalog that corresponds with your matriculation year (i.e., the academic year in which you started your program). Not every first-semester graduate student is subject to admission conditions. If you are unsure of your admission status, or the academic performance conditions you may be held to, contact your program coordinator or advisor, or review your official acceptance letter from Radford University’s Graduate College.

### Temporary Admission

Students may be admitted on a Temporary basis if they meet all the requirements of the department and the College of Graduate Studies and Research but the bachelor’s degree has not been conferred at the time of admission. An official transcript must be received within 30 days of the start of the term of initial enrollment. Non-compliance with this policy results in dismissal. Temporary students will not qualify for financial aid until the official transcript is received.

## ADVANCED STANDING AND TRANSFER CREDITS

### Advanced Standing

Students who are graduates of baccalaureate social work programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education may be admitted to the Advanced Standing Program if the BSW was completed no more than 7 years prior to application for admission to the MSW Program. Advanced standing status is not awarded automatically due to the competitive nature of the program and limited slots available. Applicants are required to meet the admissions criteria; however, strong applicants generally exceed the minimum requirements. They must have a minimum GPA of 2.75 in all undergraduate courses and 3.0 in social work courses. All advanced standing students enter in summer semester and are required to successfully complete two three credit transition courses.

Applicants who do not meet admission requirements for the advanced standing program will be evaluated for possible admission to the standard program.

Following successful completion of SOWK 678 and SOWK 679, defined as receiving a B- or better in both classes, Advanced Standing Students follow the same curriculum as offered to all specialization-level students in the full-time or part-time program. A student who earns C in either Bridge course, may be considered for admission into the Standard Program, if desired.

### Transfer of Credit from another MSW Program

With the approval of the MSW Coordinator, a student may have up to 20 generalist year graduate credits (see the RU College of Graduate Studies and Research Catalog) recognized from an accredited social work program to apply toward their official program of study. These courses must have been taken no more than 6 years prior to applying for graduation. Only social work courses from an accredited MSW program can be used to substitute for the required coursework in the program. Courses must be comparable to the Radford University MSW Program and must have been completed with a grade of B or better. Coursework offered towards graduation with an MSW must have been completed within the past 6 years. Credit for courses earned by correspondence, by examination, or by extension at other institutions is not accepted. Only first year MSW courses can be transferred; second year courses must be completed in the Radford University School of Social Work. Students transferring in MSW generalist credits may be required to take the advanced standing bridge course.

### Transfer of Elective Credit

With the approval of the MSW Coordinator, at admissions, students may transfer in up to six elective graduate credits outside the School or University. The coursework must have been completed no more than 6 years before date of graduation with a grade of B or better. Credit for courses earned by correspondence, by examination, or by extension at other institutions is not accepted.

### Life Experience

Students are not given credit for life experience, including practice experience.

### GRE

Students who are concerned that they may be denied admission due to a GPA close to the minimum set by the College of Graduate Studies and Research, but who have the potential to become professional social workers, may take the GRE to help illustrate their academic potential. Students are also encouraged to take additional undergraduate courses in order to demonstrate their academic potential.

### Waiver by Examination

Waiver by examination provides a mechanism for students to demonstrate knowledge they have acquired through previous educational experiences. Students who have been accepted into the MSW Program are given the opportunity to test out of four courses: SOWK 601: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I; SOWK 602: Human Behavior and the Social Environment II; SOWK 611: Social Welfare Policy I; SOWK 621: Basic Research Methodology

Passing these examinations does not provide credits toward the degree (sixty-one credit hours); however it does allow students to take extra electives. Students cannot challenge a course that has already begun nor can they challenge a course they have already completed. A passing grade of "B" or better on the challenge examination will be recorded as a "P" on the transcript. Unsuccessful attempts at challenge examinations will not be recorded on the transcript and may not be repeated.

Two challenge exam dates will be offered; the second Wednesday of August for SOWK 601 & SOWK 611; and the second Wednesday in January for SOWK 602 & SOWK 621. Students will have 3 hours to complete each exam. No study aids, books, notes, computers, calculators, cell phones or other internet-capable devices may be present during testing. Students will be held to the RU Honor Code. Notification of test results will be made by email after five business days.

Applications are available from the MSW Program Coordinator upon admission to the program. Deadline to apply is the last day of July prior to the fall semester of admission for the fall semester exams and the last day of fall semester (prior to exam week) for the spring semester exams.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES**

<https://www.radford.edu/content/cas/home.html>

No otherwise qualified student shall, on the basis of disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in the Waldron College. A student with a disability may be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and be eligible for reasonable accommodations that will provide an equal opportunity to meet the academic criteria related to professional behavior and scholastic performance. It is important to note that Waldron College Departments and disciplines have published technical standards that must be met to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of clients in various field settings; these standards may affect accommodation.

Any otherwise qualified student with a protected disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must notify the Radford University Center For Accessibility Services (CAS) and provide documentation as needed. The CAS makes recommendations for accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to contact the CAS and to propose accommodation requests to the appropriate instructor and School Director. The Schools within the Waldron College will review issues of appropriateness and accommodation. An initial assessment, subsequent plan, use of outside experts (including the CAS), and periodic checks between the Schools of the Waldron College and the student are appropriate courses of action in making accommodations.

Accommodation requires a signed agreement with the faculty member that is appropriate and does not compromise standards of behavior required for success in the professional discipline.

## **LIVE TEXT**

LiveText is an assessment system that has been adopted by over 500 universities across the country. It is a very valuable technology tool that provides you with a powerful way to access, assess, and document your own efforts. There are a number of benefits for students including:

- Tools for Enhanced Organization and Productivity
- Unlimited File Storage Capabilities
- Access to Digital Resources and Course Management Tools

- Development of Personalized e-Portfolios

LiveText is provided through a private vendor and it was selected based on (1) the quality of assistance the LiveText company can provide in implementing the system, (2) the quality of support services for students, and (3) the opportunities for students to create and maintain portfolios as a professional tool after leaving RU. We believe the portability and long-term usefulness of LiveText will be a strong benefit to both our programs and students. It will support faculty efforts to evaluate the program on an on-going basis.

LiveText works on a system where students make a one-time purchase for membership, good for up to five years. Once you have purchased a membership for one course, you will not need to purchase it again. All students enrolled in the MSW Program are required to purchase this membership. There will be required performance assessments at specified points in your academic career.

More specific information will be provided during the MSW Program Orientation.

## **RETENTION IN THE MSW PROGRAM**

A number of concerns may arise regarding student behavior and performance while a student in the MSW program. The procedures for addressing these concerns conform to the general guidelines set forth in the *Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education*. The procedures described below are more specific than those found in the *Waldron College Standards*.

A graduate student shall be terminated from the MSW program if any of the following occurs:

1. Receipt of a C grade in any two graduate courses;
2. Receipt of a grade below C in any single graduate course;
3. Failure to adhere to the Radford University *Honor Code*, the Radford University *Standards of Student Conduct*, or the *Waldron College Standards for Professional Practice Education*; or
4. Failure to adhere to the *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Social Workers.

## **REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Each and every MSW student must abide by the *Radford University MSW Student Manual*, the *Standards of Student Conduct*, the Radford University *Honor Code*, and the *Waldron College Standards for Professional Practice Education*, and the *NASW Standards of Cultural Competence*. Further, the *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers* (NASW) provides the framework for professional social work practice and also for social work action; therefore, all social work students must follow the *NASW Code of Ethics* as they pursue their education. Because professional and ethical performance of students is a highly valued component of the Social Work program, students will be assessed in accordance with *Radford*

*University policies, Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education and the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics.* Violations of ethical or behavioral standards are considered serious issues and indicate that a student cannot meet the expectations to work as a social work practitioner. Repeated, serious, or unresolved problems may result in sanctions up to and including student dismissal from the MSW program.

## **REVIEW PROCEDURES**

All concerns are addressed through the following 3-stage process. The MSW Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the entire process; therefore, all questions about the procedures should be addressed to the MSW Coordinator.

### Stage 1: Informal remediation

The student will be informed of the concerns by the field instructor, field liaison, or the course instructor. The instructor or liaison will document the concerns and how they were communicated to the student. In most cases, the concern will be resolved at this level and no further action will be necessary.

### Stage 2: Formal remediation

This stage is engaged if informal remediation is unsuccessful. Stage 2 is automatically engaged for students who receive a grade of C in any graduate course. Stage 2 is also engaged for concerns involving the violation of codes of ethics or behavior, unless the MSW Committee determines that the case should proceed immediately to Stage 3. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty may additionally be referred to the University's Conduct Board.

Stage 2 requires the development of a formal remediation plan that provides the student the opportunity to address the concern or correct the problem. For field concerns, the field liaison and field instructor must be involved in developing the remediation plan. For all other concerns, the course instructor (and, if the concern is not limited to a specific course, the MSW Coordinator) and the student's advisor must be involved. The involved parties must devise a written plan of remediation that is agreed to and signed by all parties. The remediation plan must include clear consequences if the student does not adhere to the agreement. If the parties cannot agree on a remediation plan, the matter will be presented to the MSW Committee for action. The MSW Coordinator must be informed of the concerns and the remediation plan. The Field Coordinator must also be informed if the concern relates to field, and the Site Coordinator must be informed if the student is an extended campus student. A copy of the signed agreement will be maintained in the student's academic file.

### Stage 3: Dismissal from the MSW program

This stage will be engaged under the following circumstances:

- Receipt of a grade of C in any two graduate courses;
- Receipt of a grade below C in any graduate course;
- Remediation plan set forth in Stage 2 is violated or is not successfully completed;

- More than 2 concerns reach Stage 2; or
- Serious violations of applicable codes of ethics and behavior.
- Failure to pass the comprehensive exam on the second attempt

The MSW Coordinator and the student's advisor are involved in all cases that reach Stage 3. The Field Coordinator and Site Coordinator are also involved, if the concern involves field or an extended campus student.

If Stage 3 is reached due to academic performance (i.e., two grades of C or one grade below C), the student will be dismissed from the MSW program. The MSW Coordinator will notify the student of this action in writing and will also notify the student of the available appeals procedures. In accordance with the College of Graduate Studies and Research policies, students who have been dismissed from any graduate program are not eligible for readmission to the College of Graduate Studies and Research until at least two years following their dismissal. Students wishing to apply for readmission to the MSW program must follow the regular admissions process.

If Stage 3 is reached for any reason other than academic performance, the following procedures for dismissal from the MSW program will be followed.

1. The MSW Coordinator will notify the student, in writing, that they face dismissal from the MSW program. This notice will cite the specific provisions the policy or policies that the student is alleged to have violated. Regardless of the nature of the charges, the student may not accrue any hours toward any field placement until the process is completed. The student may continue to attend classes unless directed otherwise by the MSW Coordinator in writing.
2. The student may submit a written response to the charge within 10 classroom days to the MSW Coordinator. Faculty, field liaisons, and other individuals directly related to the case will also be asked to submit written reports within 10 classroom days. These statements will be made available to the MSW Committee.
3. The MSW Coordinator will schedule a meeting of the MSW Committee to be held no less than 10 classroom days but no more than 20 classroom days after the initial letter is sent to the student. The MSW Coordinator will inform the student, advisor, MSW Committee members, and any other relevant parties of the date and time of the meeting. The MSW Coordinator serves as Chair of this meeting.

The student may elect to have present a faculty advisor, who may privately counsel the student but may not address the Committee or question witnesses. No party may be represented by legal counsel at these proceedings. Only individuals having direct knowledge of the alleged violation(s) may appear before the Committee. Members of the Committee must be present at the hearing in order to vote. Minutes of the hearing must be kept and will become part of the record. The hearing proceeds as follows:

- a. The Chair calls the meeting to order. All those present for the meeting introduce themselves and indicate their roles in the proceedings. The Chair asks one

member of the MSW Committee to take notes. The Chair reminds everyone present that all participants are bound by the Radford University Honor Code and asks for the verbal assurance of each that he or she will uphold the Honor Code. The Chair then states the purpose of the meeting and briefly explains the procedure.

- b. Any witnesses present are dismissed from the room. They are asked to remain available outside the room to be called on as needed. The only people remaining in the room are the MSW Committee members, the student, and the student's faculty advisor (if requested by the student).
  - c. The Chair will read the initial charges against the student and will summarize the evidence presented to support the charges.  
The Committee members may ask questions of the student.
  - d. The student may call upon his or her witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee. The student may also ask questions of the witnesses if they wish to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed before the next witness is called in.
  - e. The MSW Coordinator may call upon her or his witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee. The student may also ask questions of the witnesses if they wish to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed before the next witness is called in.
  - f. The MSW Coordinator is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes his or her position supporting dismissal from the MSW program.
  - g. The student is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes his or her position that dismissal from the MSW program is not warranted.
  - h. The Chair asks everyone to leave the room except the members of the MSW Committee. The student is informed that they will be notified in writing within three classroom days of the Committee's decision.
  - i. The Committee deliberates and reaches a decision.
    1. If a majority of committee members present vote in favor of dismissal, the MSW Committee will formally recommend that the student be dismissed from the MSW program.
    2. In all other cases, the MSW Committee will not recommend dismissal from the MSW program.
  - j. The Chair adjourns the hearing.
4. The Chair of the MSW Committee will inform the student, the Director of the School of Social Work, the Dean of Waldron College, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research of the MSW Committee's decision. Such notice must be made in writing and within 3 classroom days of the hearing. Copies of all documents reviewed and minutes of all Committee proceedings will also be included.

## **STUDENT PROCEDURES FOR GRADE APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES**

Students have the right to appeal decisions made about their progress in the social work program using appropriate mechanisms. Students should consult their advisor regarding the

proper procedure to follow. Below are procedures for grade appeals. Procedures for grievances start immediately following the grade appeal procedure.

### Student Grade Appeal Procedure

Student grade appeals will be heard by the Grade Appeals Committee of the School of Social Work according to the Grade Appeals Procedures. This process is used if the student feels that they were treated unfairly; it should not be used merely because the student does not like the grade they received.

For MSW students the Notice of Intent to Formally Appeal a Grade forms are available on the Graduate College's webpage, or through emailing the MSW Coordinator. BSW students should contact the BSW Coordinator to obtain the forms.

The grade appeals procedure is designed to give the student the opportunity to correct an injustice. It should be utilized only when the student contends that the final course grade assigned by the instructor is arbitrary or capricious. It is not to be used to challenge grades on individual assignments. "Arbitrary or capricious" implies that:

- \* The student has been assigned a grade on the basis of something other than their performance in the course; or
- \* Standards utilized in the determination of the student's grade are more exacting or demanding than those applied to other students in the course; or
- \* The grade is based upon standards that are significant, unannounced and unreasonable departures from those articulated in the course description distributed at the beginning of the course.

The assessment of the quality of the student's academic performance is one of the major responsibilities of university faculty members and is solely and properly their responsibility. A grade appeal is not appropriate when a student simply disagrees with the faculty member's judgment about the quality of the student's work.

The burden of proof is always on the student appellant to prove that a change of grade is an appropriate action in their case. Students must adhere to the timelines delineated in this policy or the right to appeal may be lost.

### **Informal Appeals Process**

The student must begin the grade appeals process by contacting the instructor in an attempt to resolve the disagreement in an informal and cooperative atmosphere. This discussion should take place within the first ten class days after the beginning of the following semester (unless the next semester is a summer session, in which case the "next semester" is interpreted as fall semester). If the student and instructor cannot, after

consultation, reach a satisfactory resolution within the first ten class days from the beginning of the following semester, the student may begin the formal grade appeal process.

### **Formal Appeal Process**

1. Following the failure to reach resolution through the informal grade appeals process and not later than the 15th class day of the semester, the student must complete the Notice of Intent to Formally Appeal a Grade form. For MSW students the forms are available on the Graduate College's webpage, or through emailing the MSW Coordinator. BSW students should contact the BSW Coordinator to obtain the forms. Students can initiate the process by submitting the form to the chair of the department in which the course is offered. On the form, the student will be asked to:
  - verify that they have been unsuccessful in reaching a resolution through the informal appeals process;
  - precisely and specifically state the reasons for the appeal; and
  - offer suggestions as to what the student would consider a fair resolution of the appeal, with supporting reason or reasons.

The form should be submitted to the chair in whose department the course in question is offered (or the Dean<sup>1</sup> if the chair's grade is being appealed). After all signatures are obtained, copies of the form will be distributed to the student and the instructor.

2. The instructor will be asked to submit a written response to the department chair (or to the Dean<sup>1</sup> if the chairperson's grade is being appealed) and to the student within five class days of the receipt of the appeal. The department chair (or the Dean<sup>1</sup> if the chair's grade is being appealed) will attempt to resolve the appeal within five additional class days through conferencing with the instructor and student appellant. If not resolved within five class days, the department chair will request in writing to the department's Student Grade Appeal Committee that the Committee consider the appeal.

The Student Grade Appeal Committee is constituted from the department's Personnel Committee according to the department's policy. Criteria for creation of the Committee are that there be no fewer than three faculty members, and that the members are selected at the beginning of the academic year, to hear formal appeals from fall, spring, and summer semesters. One or more alternates must be chosen at the beginning of the year to replace members of the Student Grade Appeal Committee who might be unavailable to hear a case in a timely manner or who might have a conflict of interest. Neither the faculty member who assigned an appealed grade nor the chair can serve on the Student Grade Appeal Committee. In addition, departments may choose to follow the Student Government Association's recommendation of including one voting student appointed by the department's Personnel Committee. If a department chooses to include a student, they must be in good academic and disciplinary standing.

A quorum for decisions of the Committee is two-thirds or more of the assigned members. The highest ranking, and within rank the most senior faculty member of the Committee shall be the chair. Departmental Student Grade Appeal Committee membership selection policies should be on file in the Dean's Office.

3. The student appellant and the instructor(s) involved may submit additional brief written summaries of the evidence to the chair of the Student Grade Appeal Committee within five class days after the chair notifies the Committee that a formal appeal has been filed. The student has the right to consult with a Radford University faculty member of the student's choice. The faculty member may also attend the grade appeal hearing if one is conducted. Based upon the evidence presented and any additional evidence requested by the Committee, the Committee will meet to decide if there are grounds for a hearing. Minutes of the meeting must be kept and copies of any evidence presented shall become part of the record.
  - If the Student Grade Appeal Committee decides by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present that there are grounds for a hearing, a formal hearing will be scheduled not sooner than ten and not later than twenty class days after the notice of a hearing is given to the instructor and the student appellant.
  - If the Student Grade Appeal Committee decides by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present that there are no grounds for a hearing, the appeal goes to step 5 of the process, and, if certified, the grade remains unchanged.

In either case, the student and the instructor shall be notified in writing within two class days of the Committee's decision. Copies of the minutes of the Student Grade Appeal Committee meeting shall accompany the notification of the decision. Should a hearing be necessary, the Committee chair will notify in writing the student appellant and the instructor at least three class days prior to the hearing date. The Student Grade Appeal Committee cannot change a grade without a full hearing as described in the next step.

4. If a hearing is to be held, the Student Grade Appeal Committee will conduct the hearing at which both the student appellant and the involved instructor(s) must be present. The student may also elect to have present a faculty advisor, who may privately counsel the student but may not address the Committee or question witnesses. Neither party may be represented by legal counsel at these proceedings. In the event that either the student or the faculty member is absent at the time of the appeal as a result of illness, resignation or any other reason found valid by the Student Grade Appeal Committee, the Committee may delay the hearing until a more appropriate time. If the Committee determines that the reason is not valid, or the absence irremediable, the Committee may proceed with the hearing and notify the absent party that a full hearing was held in their absence. The faculty member and student appellant shall place all available pertinent grade records and student class work for the student bringing the appeal in the hands of the Student Grade Appeal Committee. Access to work of other students in the course

must protect the privacy rights of the students either by requiring permission of the students or through having their names redacted. Members of the Committee must be present at the hearing in order to be eligible to vote. Minutes of the hearing must be kept. The hearing should proceed as follows (The procedures to be followed in grade appeal hearings will be followed by departments unless amended in writing by the department and approved by the Dean<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of the academic year prior to any appeals being heard.):

- The Chair of the Student Grade Appeal Committee calls the hearing to order. All those present for the hearing introduce themselves and indicate their roles in the hearing. The Chair points out that one member of the Committee will be taking notes. The Chair reminds all present that all participants are bound by the Radford University Honor Code and asks for the verbal assurance of each that they will uphold the honor code. The Chair then states the purpose of the hearing and briefly explains the procedure.
- Any witnesses present are dismissed from the hearing room. They are asked to remain available outside the room, to be called upon as needed.
- The student appellant makes a statement about the reason(s) for the appeal. This statement should be limited to the reason(s) included on the "Intent to Formally Appeal a Grade" form.
- The instructor makes a statement stating their position as to why the awarded grade was appropriate.
- Members of the Committee may direct questions, first to the student appellant and then to the instructor. The instructor has the opportunity to ask questions of the student appellant, and the student appellant may ask questions of the instructor.
- The student appellant may call upon their witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee. The instructor may also ask questions of the witnesses if they wish to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed.
- The instructor may call upon their witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee. The student appellant may also ask questions of the witnesses if they choose to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed.
- The instructor is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes their position that the original grade was appropriate.
- The student appellant is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes their position that a change of grade is warranted.
- The Chair asks everyone to leave the hearing room except the members of the Grade Appeal Committee. The student appellant and the instructor are informed that they will be notified in writing within five days of the Committee's decision. They are also informed that the Committee's decision is final and may not be appealed.
- The Committee deliberates and reaches a decision. The Chair dismisses the hearing. One of two outcomes may result from the hearing:

- If a majority vote in favor of a change of grade, the chair of the Grade Appeal Committee shall so inform the professor by written memorandum, with copies to the student appellant and the department chairperson.
- If less than a majority of the Grade Appeals Committee members vote in favor of a change of grade, no grade change will be made.

The Chair of the Committee shall inform the student appellant of its decision by written memorandum, with copies to the instructor, the department chairperson, and the Dean<sup>1</sup>. The written memorandum shall be transmitted within five class days of the hearing and shall include a description of the process followed from informal appeals through the hearing decision, copies of all materials presented, and a copy of the minutes of the hearing.

As is usual in academic debate, the individual proposing the change has the opportunity to speak first and last. Since the student appellant maintains the burden of proof to demonstrate that a change of grade is justified, they will give the initial opening statement and the final closing statement.

5. The Dean<sup>1</sup> or appointed impartial representatives shall review the process, all related materials, and hearing minutes within five class days of the receipt of all materials.
  - If the Dean<sup>1</sup> or appointed impartial representatives certifies that the procedures were followed, the grade appeal is completed. If indicated by the Grade Appeal Committee in its findings, grade changes are initiated as indicated in step 6.
  - If the Dean<sup>1</sup> or appointed impartial representatives finds substantive errors in the process that the Dean<sup>1</sup> or appointed impartial representatives believes could have reasonably altered the decision reached, reconsideration by a separate Grade Appeal Committee in another College department shall be initiated by the Dean<sup>1</sup>. The reconsideration shall begin at step 4 of this process.

The Dean<sup>1</sup> shall advise all parties of the outcome of the process review. The Dean<sup>1</sup> cannot reverse the decision of the Grade Appeal Committee but can only send it to a second committee based upon procedural errors.

6. Changes of grade shall be initiated as follows:
  - If the Grade Appeal Committee rules in favor of a grade change, the Dean<sup>1</sup> shall request that the faculty member contact the Registrar's Office to change the grade within five class days after the Dean's<sup>1</sup> certification of the process.
  - If the Grade Appeal Committee rules in favor of a grade change and the faculty member does not initiate a grade change within five class days of the request by the Dean<sup>1</sup>, the Dean<sup>1</sup> shall forward the Committee's decision to the Registrar, who shall then change the grade.

Decisions reached through this process are final and may not be appealed.

## Student Grievance Procedure

Students may grieve any program decisions (for grade appeals see grade appeal procedure), or may file a grievance if the student has been treated in an arbitrary or capricious manner, or has a grievance regarding a university employee; it must not be used merely because the student does not like the outcome of the process. Students have the opportunity to grieve a decision made by the MSW/BSW program (the MSW/BSW Coordinator, the MSW/BSW Committee, or the Field Committee), or to resolve a grievance against a university employee, by following the procedures stated below.

The grievance procedure is designed to give the student the opportunity to correct an injustice. It should be utilized only when the student contends that a programmatic decision is arbitrary or capricious. "Arbitrary or capricious" implies that:

- \* A programmatic decision has been made on the basis of something other than their performance in the program; or
- \* Standards utilized in the determination of a programmatic decision are more exacting or demanding than those applied to other students in the program; or
- \* The program decision is based upon standards that are significant, unannounced and unreasonable departures from those articulated in the student handbooks distributed at the beginning of the program.

Programmatic decisions include:

- Field Petitions
- Progression in the program
- Program Petitions
- Sequencing and content of courses;

### Informal Grievance Resolution Process

In an attempt to resolve the disagreement in an informal and cooperative atmosphere, the student must begin the grievance process by contacting the university employee (for a grievance about a particular person). For programmatic decisions, students should contact the MSW/BSW Coordinator. For field decisions, students should contact the Field Coordinator. This discussion should take place within 10 classroom days after the experience of concern or notification of the decision in question. The MSW/BSW Committee and the School of Social Work believe that this is the preferred way of resolving problems or grievances, and that most issues can be addressed through an informal process of mutually respectful discussion.

In regards to decisions made by the MSW/BSW program or Coordinator, the student may begin the formal grievance process if they and the SSW employee are unable to reach a satisfactory resolution.

#### Formal Grievance Resolution Process

1. Following the failure to reach resolution through the informal grievance resolution process and not later than one month after the attempt at informal resolution failed, the student must complete the "Notice of Intent to File a Formal Grievance" form. The form is available on the College of Graduate and Professional Studies webpage. The student initiates the process by submitting the form to the Director of the School of Social Work. On the form, the student will be asked to
  - verify that they have been unsuccessful in reaching a resolution through the informal grievance resolution process;
  - precisely and specifically state the reasons for the grievance; and
  - offer suggestions as to what the student would consider a fair resolution of the grievance (note that this must focus on the process associated with a decision, not the decision itself), with supporting reason(s).

After all signatures are obtained, copies of the form will be distributed to the student and the other parties involved. If the grievance does not meet the requirements for a formal grievance per the definitions of this policy, the Director of the School of Social Work may dismiss the grievance. Otherwise, the grievance shall proceed to the next stage.

2. If the grievance involves a specific person in the School of Social Work, the university employee in question will be asked to submit a written response to the Director of the School of Social Work (or to the Dean<sup>1</sup> if the Director is named in the grievance) and to the student within five classroom days of receipt of the grievance. If the grievance involves a programmatic decision, the MSW/BSW Coordinator will be asked to submit a written response to the Director and to the student within ten classroom days of receipt of the grievance.

The Director of the School of Social Work (or the Dean<sup>1</sup> if the Director is named in the grievance) will attempt to resolve the appeal within ten additional classroom days through conferencing with the SSW employee and student. If not resolved within ten classroom days, the Director will request in writing to the SSW (School of Social Work) Student Grievance Committee that the Committee consider the grievance, and the procedures of the SSW Student Grievance Committee will be followed.

A quorum for decisions of the Committee is two-thirds or more of the assigned members. The highest ranking, and within rank the most senior faculty member, of the SSW Grievance Committee shall be the Chair. School of Social Work Student Grievance Committee membership selection policies are stated in the SSW Faculty Handbook.

3. The student appellant and the SSW employee involved may submit additional brief written summaries of the evidence regarding the process that was followed in making the decision to the chair of the SSW Student Grievance Committee within ten classroom days after the Director notifies the Committee that a formal appeal has been filed. The student has the right to consult with a School of Social Work faculty member of the student's choice. The faculty member they consulted with may also attend the appeal hearing if one is conducted. Based upon the evidence presented and any additional evidence requested by the Committee, the Committee will meet to decide if there are grounds for a hearing regarding the process that was followed. Minutes of the meeting must be kept and copies of any evidence presented shall become part of the record.
  - If the SSW Student Grievance Committee decides by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present that there are grounds for a hearing, a formal hearing will be scheduled not sooner than ten and not later than twenty classroom days after the notice of a hearing is given to the SSW employee and the student.
  - If the SSW Student Grievance Committee decides by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present that there are no grounds for a hearing, the grievance goes to step 5 of the process, and, if certified, the grievance process ends.

In either case, the student and the SSW employee shall be notified in writing within two classroom days of the Committee's decision. Copies of the minutes of the SSW Student Grievance Committee meeting shall accompany the notification of the decision. Should a hearing be necessary, the Committee chair will notify in writing the student and the SSW employee at least five class days prior to the hearing date. The SSW Student Grievance Committee cannot find in favor of the student without a full hearing as described in the next step.

4. If a hearing is to be held, the SSW Student Grievance Committee will conduct the hearing at which both the student and the involved SSW employee must be present. The student may also elect to have present a faculty advisor, who may privately counsel the student but may not address the Committee or question witnesses. Neither party may be represented by legal counsel at these proceedings. In the event that either the student or the SSW employee is absent at the time of the appeal as a result of illness, resignation, or any other reason found valid by the SSW Student Grievance Committee, the Committee may delay the hearing until a more appropriate time. If the Committee determines that the reason is not valid, or the absence irremediable, the Committee may proceed with the hearing and notify the absent party(ies) that a full hearing was held in their absence. The SSW employee and student shall place all available pertinent evidence regarding the process that was followed in the hands of the SSW Student Grievance Committee. Access to work/experience of other students must protect the privacy rights of the students either by requiring permission of the students or through

having their names redacted. Members of the Committee must be present at the hearing in order to be eligible to vote. Minutes of the hearing must be kept. The hearing should proceed as follows:

- The Chair of the Student Grievance Committee calls the hearing to order. All those present for the hearing introduce themselves and indicate their roles in the hearing. The Chair points out that one member of the Committee will be taking notes. The Chair reminds all present that all participants are bound by the Radford University Honor Code and asks for the verbal assurance of each that they will uphold the honor code. The Chair then states the purpose of the hearing, emphasizing that the focus is on the decision-making process, not the decision itself, and briefly explains the procedure.
- Any witnesses present are dismissed from the hearing room. They are asked to remain available outside the room, to be called upon as needed.
- As is usual in academic debate, the individual bringing the grievance has the opportunity to speak first and last. Because the student maintains the burden of proof to demonstrate that a change is justified, they will give the initial opening statement and the final closing statement.
- The student makes a statement about the reason(s) for the grievance. This statement should be limited to the reason(s) included on the "Intent to File a Formal Grievance" form, emphasizing the concerns about the process followed.
- The SSW employee makes a statement stating their position as to why the process associated with the interaction/decision was appropriate.
- Members of the Committee may direct questions, first to the student and then to the SSW employee regarding the process used. The SSW employee has the opportunity to ask questions of the student, and the student may ask questions of the SSW employee.
- The student may call upon their witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee regarding the process used. The SSW employee may also ask questions of the witnesses if they wish to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed.
- The SSW employee may call upon their witnesses, one at a time. Witnesses are questioned by the Committee regarding the process used. The student may also ask questions of the witnesses if they choose to do so. Each witness is thanked and dismissed.
- The SSW employee is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes their position that the original process associated with the interaction/decision was appropriate.
- The student is given the opportunity to make a brief final statement that summarizes their position that the grievance is warranted because of the concerns about the process that was followed.

- The Chair asks everyone to leave the hearing room except the members of the SSW Student Grievance Committee. The student and the SSW employee are informed that they will be notified in writing within 3 classroom days of the Committee's decision. They are also informed that the Committee's decision is final and may not be appealed, except on procedural grounds.
- The Committee deliberates and reaches a decision. The Chair dismisses the hearing.

One of two outcomes may result from the hearing:

- If a majority of the members of the SSW Student Grievance Committee present and voting (excluding abstentions) vote in favor of the student's position regarding the process followed, the chair of the SSW Student Grievance Committee shall so inform the SSW employee by written memorandum, with copies to the student and the Director of the School of Social Work. The issue will be sent back to the appropriate committee, or Director of the School of Social Work, for reconsideration and/or additional action. This reconsideration must include consideration of the Grievance Committee's written memorandum. This reconsideration must begin within 5 class days of the hearing. This information will be communicated to all parties and the grievance will be considered closed. However, as programmatic decisions and accreditation guidelines are inextricably linked, a final result from the reconsideration can only be shared when it has been approved through the appropriate SSW processes. Those processes will occur outside the timeframes indicated in this policy.
  - If less than a majority of the SSW Student Grievance Committee members present and voting (excluding abstentions) vote in favor of the student's position regarding the process followed, no recommendation will be given. The chair of the Committee shall so inform the student, with copies to the SSW employee and the Director of the School of Social Work. The written memorandum shall be transmitted within 5 classroom days of the hearing and shall include a description of the process followed from informal appeals through the hearing decision, copies of all materials presented, and a copy of the minutes of the hearing.
5. The Director of the School of Social Work shall review the grievance process, all related materials, and hearing minutes within 5 classroom days of the receipt of all materials.
- If the Director certifies that the procedures were followed, the grievance is completed. No further appeals or grievances may be pursued.
  - If the Director finds substantive errors in the process that she or he believes could have reasonably altered the decision reached by the SSW Student Grievance Committee, reconsideration by a new SSW Student Grievance Committee shall be initiated by the Director. This second SSW Student Grievance

Committee will be appointed by the SSW Personnel Committee from among faculty who did not serve on the original committee. The reconsideration shall begin at step 4 of the process.

In either case, the Director shall advise all parties of the outcome of the process review within 3 classroom days of completing said review. The Director cannot reverse or revise the decision of the SSW Student Grievance Committee but can only send it to a second committee for reconsideration based upon procedural errors.

Decisions reached through this process are final and may not be appealed.

## **MSW AWARDS**

Students from each graduating MSW cohort are eligible for one of four awards outlined below:

### **OUTSTANDING IN FIELD**

The Outstanding in Field award is intended for student(s) who have demonstrated excellence during their field placement. The Field Committee is tasked with inviting nominations, including the accompanying narrative outlining why the student was nominated, as well as voting for who will receive the award.

### **OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

The Outstanding Research and Comprehensive Exam award is intended for student(s) whose research, presentation, or comprehensive exam material is identified as an exemplar for research in the profession. The Research Sequence Committee is tasked with inviting nominations, including the accompanying narrative outlining why the student was nominated, as well as voting for who will receive the award.

### **MOST COLLEGIAL**

The Most Collegial award is intended for student(s) whose behavior exemplifies collegiality with their peers, and is voted on by each graduating cohort. Students from the cohort will have an opportunity to nominate one of their peers for the award, as well as provide an accompanying narrative describing why they nominated this peer. The student with the most nominations will be selected for the award.

### **EMBODIES THE MISSION AND VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK**

The Embodies the Mission and Values of Social Work award is intended for student whose behavior aligns and exemplifies the mission and values of the profession. Faculty members are able to nominate graduating students, while also providing a narrative describing why they were nominated. After nominations, the faculty are provided an opportunity to vote for the student who will receive the award.

## **ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### Title IX

Radford University is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. Per federal Title IX regulations, as well as other federal and state regulations, Radford University prohibits discrimination and harassment in its educational programs and activities, on the basis of sex or any other protected class, by individuals subject to its control or supervision. This requirement to not discriminate in the educational program or activity of Radford University extends to admission. Inquiries about the application of federal Title IX regulations may be referred to Radford University's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Assistant Secretary, or both.

### Non-Discrimination

Radford University is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. Per federal Title IX regulations, as well as other federal and state regulations, Radford University prohibits discrimination and harassment in its educational programs and activities, on the basis of sex or any other protected class, by individuals subject to its control or supervision. This requirement to not discriminate in the educational program or activity of Radford University extends to admission. Inquiries about the application of federal Title IX regulations may be referred to Radford University's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Assistant Secretary, or both.