SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
“Cultivating the knowledge for global change - one community at a time”

Graduate Student Handbook¹
2014-2015

¹ Updated by Lucinda A. Lee Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, Graduate Advisor, September 20, 2014
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Welcome to the graduate program in Social Work at San Diego State University. We hope the years you spend with us will be rewarding. To help make sure that they are as trouble free as possible, we are providing you with this Graduate Student Handbook. It may be downloaded from the School of Social Work website at: http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/student-resources/references/msw-handbook/

I. MSW PROGRAM MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The School of Social Work’s Mission is to educate students with the knowledge, values, ethics, and skills to become competent and professional generalist, direct service, and administrative practitioners while also generating and disseminating new knowledge. Working primarily in public and non-profit agencies, particularly in the Southern California border region, graduates help culturally diverse individuals, families, organizations, and communities recognize their strengths, access needed resources, and empower themselves to reach their goals and potentials.

The School pursues this mission through the following goals:

- The education of social work professionals who can assist individuals and families in the accomplishment of self-determined goals, and the resolution of difficulties and distress through problem solving.
- An evidence based curriculum that responds to changes in the practice environment by providing current and relevant knowledge and skills required to meet the service needs of the diverse populations of the Southern California border region.
- Development and dissemination of research knowledge that ensures evidence based social work practice.
- Equipping students with the tools to ensure that their practice is based on the best available knowledge.
- Direct involvement, particularly through leadership, by the faculty and students in community welfare concerns which ensure community members equal access to resources, programs, and opportunities.
- Preparation of practitioners who are skilled at working within the diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural mix of the Southern California border region in order to address the needs and visions of the region’s varied communities.
- Education of students who understand and use social work values and ethics throughout their careers.
- Preparation of practitioners who understand the contexts and purposes of social work practice, the changing nature of those contexts, and the nature and dynamics of social policy and organizational behavior.
- Preparation of graduates who are committed to lifelong professional growth and learning.
The Master’s Program subscribes to the stated philosophy and the overall mission of the School of Social Work by offering a coherent and integrated curriculum that emphasizes professional values, ethics, knowledge, and skills that enable graduates to work in public and nonprofit social service agencies with diverse and vulnerable populations, particularly in the Southern California border region. The Mission of the Master’s Program is to prepare graduates for advanced evidence based social work practice in an area of concentration (Direct Practice or Administration/Community Development Practice).

**MSW Program Goals:**

The goals of the graduate program are to implement the mission by preparing advanced practitioners:

- who are prepared to be leaders in the profession;
- who have multiple skills that can be used in a wide variety of settings and with systems of various sizes;
- who are well-grounded in the values and ethics of the profession;
- who are committed to social and economic justice;
- who utilize research evidence in practice decision making;
- who understand and can respond to the dynamic nature of the social contexts of practice;
- and who are committed to lifelong professional development.

**MSW Program Objectives:**

Based on the mission and goals stated above and consistent with the Curriculum Policy Statement for graduate social work education, the objectives of the MSW program are designed to prepare advanced autonomous social work practitioners with specialized skill and knowledge in a social work method, who can use a generalist perspective, and implement evidenced based multiple-level interventions. The achievement of MSW Program’s mission and goals are operationalized through an educational program that prepares graduates who:

1. Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice (EP 3.01);
2. Understand and interpret the history of social work on its current structure and issues (EP 3.05);
3. Are well-grounded in social work knowledge, skills, values, and ethics as they engage in multiple levels of social work intervention (EP, 3.02);
4. Practice without discrimination and who are responsive to the needs of diverse groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, gender, age, social class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, family structure, marital status, religion, or other important characteristics (EP3.03);
5. Are committed to social and economic justice and who can apply strategies of advocacy and social change to empower oppressed groups to participate more fully and equitably in society (EP 3.04);
6. Use interdisciplinary and strengths perspectives to provide high-quality services to client systems of various size (EP 6);

7. Can function within structure of organizations and service delivery systems, and can guide necessary organizational change to improve service delivery systems (EP 3.012);

8. Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals and between individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (EP 3.07);

9. Use a biopsychosocial and generalist perspective, the best available research evidence, and specialized knowledge and skills to intervene effectively with selected vulnerable populations (i.e., children, youth and families; the mentally ill; and those who are physically ill or elderly) (EP 3.07);

10. Have specialized knowledge and skills in a major social work intervention method (i.e., direct practice or administration/community development) and who demonstrate a high level of professional competency that includes the appropriate use of supervision and consultation (EP 3.1, EP 3.011);

11. Possess the skills to assume professional leadership roles in the community and to influence the development and implementation of sound social policies (EP 3.08);

12. Are able to integrate and use quantitative and qualitative empirical research to monitor and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of various modes of intervention to assist diverse vulnerable populations and resolve social problems (EP 3.09);

13. Understand and value social work practice research and who are able to conduct and apply studies to assure best practice interventions (EP 3.09);

14. Are committed to their continuing education, professional growth and lifelong learning (EP 3.1, EP 3.09);

15. Use communication skills differently across client populations, colleagues, and communities (EP 3.010).

II. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVISING

Website: www.socialwork.sdsu.edu or www.sdsu.edu (Social Work in Department Directory)

Graduate Advisor: Lucinda A. Lee Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, School of Social Work
Office: Hepner Hall (HH) 110 / Telephone: 619.594.6459 / Email: lucindarasmussen@cox.net

Office Hours: Mondays: 11 a.m. to 12 noon; 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.; Tuesdays: 2:30 to 4:30; Other times by appointment. Please email for appointment when possible.

The Graduate Advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen is your link to the University and the School of Social Work. Dr. Rasmussen will provide you with academic direction and support, as well as information and counsel on all aspects of program and course requirements and administrative procedures. Dr. Rasmussen provides advising for students in the MSW and Gerontology Programs. Tom Packard, DSW is the Graduate Advisor for MSW/MPH students.
Administration/Community Development students are also advised to contact Dr. Packard if they have questions related to that concentration. Dr. Packard’s contact information is: Office: HH 135, telephone: 619.594.6723 and email: tparkard@mail.sdsu.edu. Dan Finnegan, Ph.D., is the Graduate Advisor for MSW/JD students. His contact information is: Office: HH 119F, telephone: 619.594-6850 and email: dfinnega@mail.sdsu.edu.

**Role of Graduate Advisor:**

- Provide information about requirements and policies of the Division of Graduate Affairs.

- Advise students on developing a Program of Study in the MSW program, including the sequence of appropriate coursework and available resources to ensure academic success.

- Meet with transfer students to ensure transfer of credits from other institutions. (See Page 14 or this Handbook.)

- Provide feedback on the progress of students toward completion of the MSW degree. The Graduate Advisor: (a) monitors the academic progress of all students in the MSW Program; (b) contacts students if their GPA falls below the expected level of 3.0 and/or if they are placed on academic probation; and (c) counsels with these students on ways to improve their performance and regain good academic standing.

- Complete necessary paperwork when students need to change their status (e.g., from conditional to classified, or from fulltime to 3-year or 4-year programs).

- Complete and send to Graduate Division the Program of Study and other necessary paperwork related to students’ progress through the MSW Program and toward Graduation.

- Provide students information related to taking a Leave of Absence. (See Page 15 of this Handbook).

- Refer students to the office of Student Disability Services if it appears that assessing the need for special accommodations might be helpful. (See Page 19 of this Handbook).

- Refer students to resources on campus that may be helpful to their progress through the MSW program (e.g., tutoring, Student Health Services, SDSU Counseling and Psychological Services, etc.).

- Refer students who are interested in completing a thesis to faculty members whose research expertise may match the students’ interests and research questions.

- Inform students (generally through the Graduate Announcements) about opportunities for scholarships and fellowships. Details about scholarships/fellowships may be obtained by contacting the Student Affairs Coordinator, Ms. Elizabeth Marucheau (HH-118).

- Act as a resource to students and faculty when problems or conflict arise in classroom situations, and assist in resolving the situation.
- Provide students information about the policies governing the grievance/appeals process to Student Affairs Committee and discuss whether the Committee can respond to a concern (see Pages 33-37). The Director of the School of Social Work responds to appeals of grades (see Page 35).

- Receive Student Situation Reports from faculty related to incidents of unprofessional behavior by students (i.e., cheating, plagiarism, violation of NASW Code of Ethics), and refer the student to the Student Affairs Committee if such incidents meet the criteria stated in the Graduate Student Handbook 2014-201 (see Pages 36-38).

- Serve as Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, which responds to student grievances/appeals or other issues related to student progress in the MSW program.

- Receive student feedback (at Town Meetings and throughout the year via email) related to their opinions about the curriculum and other aspects of the MSW program. Communicate the feedback to the School of Social Work Curriculum Committee and to the faculty (see Page 10).

- Meet with students who have failed the Qualifying Exam and review with them the content areas of the exam they performed poorly. The students are not allowed to read the actual exam during this review. Rather, the Graduate Advisor will provide a summary of the areas covered by the exam and the student's performance in those areas.

- Meet with students who failed the Comprehensive Exam and refer them to a faculty mentor. The faculty mentor will be a member of the Direct Practice or Macro Practice Faculty and will review with them the questions and topic areas they missed on the exam.

- Email Graduate Announcements (usually every 2 weeks) to inform students of important events related to the School of Social Work. A condensed version of the Graduate Announcements will also be posted on the School of Social Work Home Room Blackboard website: Communications Central.

- Serve as the Advisor to the Graduate Social Work Association (GSWA; see Page 41 of this Handbook).

Please note that Dr. Rasmussen provides academic advising once you have been admitted to the MSW program and have begun your first semester of coursework. Questions related to Admissions, or questions by newly accepted students prior to the beginning of their first semester of coursework should be directed to the Student Affairs Coordinator, Elizabeth Marucheau, LCSW.

**Documentation: Please Keep A File:**

It is extremely important that you keep your own running file of all official actions regarding your status, all copies of documents sent to you by the School of Social Work or by University Division of Graduate and Research Affairs, or by Admissions and Records, all grade reports, all important memos from the School regarding requirements, curriculum, field due dates, etc. *Please keep your Syllabi!* You may need copies of your course syllabi or Field Intern Evaluations for verification for license requirements 5 or 10 years from now. The School does not maintain materials indefinitely due to lack of storage space.
Graduate Bulletin 2014-2015

You are responsible for all information contained in the current Graduate Bulletin [http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/bulletin/index.html](http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/bulletin/index.html), whether or not you purchase it. This document, the Graduate Student Handbook 2014-2015 is meant to supplement the Graduate Bulletin 2014-2015 and does not replace it. As a graduate student in the School of Social Work, you are responsible to read and be familiar with the contents of both documents.

Bulletin Boards

Important information is often posted on the School of Social Work bulletin boards in the glass cases outside the Social Work Office (HH 119). This includes: (a) general information (i.e., class registration, class scheduling, course changes, etc.); and (b) Field Education announcements). Other bulletin boards are allocated to the Graduate Social Work Association, NASW, Society of Clinical Social Work, and student organizations.

Notices may not be posted on School bulletin boards without prior approval of the administration of the School of Social Work. If you have questions related to posting notices on School of Social Work bulletin boards, please contact Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor.

Communications Central

Communication within the School of Social Work is primarily by email. Notices to students from the Graduate Advisor (Dr. Rasmussen or Dr. Finnegan) related to their academic progress (e.g., probation status, problems with fulfilling course requirements, etc.) will be sent via email. Students should inform the School of Social Work of any changes in their address, email, and/or phone number. Changes may be reported to the Office Assistants in the School of Social Work Office (HH 119).

All graduate students will have access to a Blackboard website entitled “School of Social Work – Communications Central.” They can post announcements or comments on the website’s Discussion Board. The Graduate Advisor, Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, is the designated instructor for the Blackboard School of Social Work Communications Central website. Students may communicate with other students through email using this site. It is also possible for student organizations to set up their own Discussion Board. If you have questions about Communications Central, please contact Dr. Rasmussen.

The School of Social Work has established a blog on the School's website. The School of Social Work welcomes submission from students. If you wish to contribute commentary to the blog, please contact the Director of the School, Dr. Melinda Hohman at: [mhohman@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:mhohman@mail.sdsu.edu).
**Town Meetings**

The School of Social Work holds "forums" or “Town Meetings” each semester for student input on the curriculum, policies and procedures of the School. The Graduate Advisor (Dr. Rasmussen) coordinates these meetings.

The Fall Town Meeting (a) reviews various aspects of the second year (SW 700 level) course of study (i.e., selection of concentration [Advanced Direct Practice and Administration/Community Development Practice]); (b) outlines electives according to student areas of interest; (c) provides information about the school social work and PPS certification; (d) discusses the process of doing a thesis versus taking the Comprehensive Exam, etc.); and (e) provides information about the second-year (SW 700 level) field placement process.

There are two Town Meetings during the Spring Semester. The meeting for SW 600 level students focuses on policies and procedures related to the Qualifying Exam; while the one for SW 700 level students discusses policies and procedures of the Comprehensive Exam, reviews content areas included in the Exam, and provides suggestions for study and preparation. At both Town Meetings, student feedback about the MSW program is requested. Notice of the Town Meetings will be emailed to students as part of the Graduate Announcements, as well as posted as an announcement on the Communications Central Blackboard website.

**Mentoring by Faculty**

Advising related to specific course content or assignments should be sought from the course instructor. The instructor may assist you in overcoming difficulties you may have understanding particular subject matter, designing and conducting research, or conceptualizing and developing frameworks for your future practice in social work.

Students are encouraged to visit their instructors during their office hours and to form mentoring relationships with faculty who have teaching expertise or research expertise that are similar to their own interests. Such relationships may be helpful to students in developing professional skills (e.g., writing reports, papers or grant proposals; making professional presentations in group projects or at workshops or conferences; establishing professional networks; developing interviewing skills, etc.).

Students who are interested in research may find mentoring by faculty members to be helpful in staying aware of cutting-edge ideas in their field of interest, gaining training about research methodology, and learning about research ethics.

Students who elect to complete a thesis should seek mentoring from their thesis chair or committee members. The thesis chair will assist student to develop a thesis topic and outline a realistic time frame for completing the thesis (See Pages 26-27 of this Handbook.) As an alternative to a thesis, a student may choose to work with a faculty member in completing a small research project and writing an article to be submitted to a peer reviewed publication. (See Page 28 of this Handbook). Opportunities related to thesis research or the development of a publishable paper may include participating in activities to disseminate the research to professional colleagues (e.g., presenting at a professional conference or at the annual Student Research Symposium sponsored by the Division of Research Affairs).
First Year Faculty Mentor

In the first year of your matriculation, you will also be assigned a faculty member to serve as your First Year Faculty Mentor. The role of the First Year Faculty Mentor is to be a resource related to social work career counseling. Students should contact the Graduate Advisor to find out the name of their mentor. They are free to contact their assigned First Year Faculty Mentor about questions they may have about the social work profession and their future career plans. This might include questions about available jobs in the community, job interviewing skills, preparing applications for scholarships or fellowships, etc.

The First Year Faculty Mentor assigned to international students will have international expertise. He or she can assist the international students with concerns related to their international status and/or refer them to appropriate resources (e.g., courses on English as a Second Language, tutoring, financial resources, housing, etc.).

The First Year Faculty Mentor is assigned to the student only for the SW 600 level foundation courses. Once the student has passed the Qualifying Exam and been advanced to candidacy, the First Year Faculty Mentor will no longer have a role. The assigned Field Faculty Instructor is a resource and takes the faculty mentor role for students in the SW 700 level advanced coursework.

Questions related to day-to-day concerns that students might have as they go through the MSW Program (e.g., scheduling of coursework, progress in their classes, academic performance, concerns about administrative or faculty decisions, grievance process) should not be directed to the First Year Faculty Mentor, but to the Graduate Advisor.

Faculty Office Hours and Contact Information

Faculty Office Hours are posted in the School of Social Work Main Office, HH 119. For the Faculty Directory, please refer to the SDSU School of Social Work website – http://socialwork.sdsu.edu. If you are making a special trip to campus to see a professor you may want to call ahead to ensure that the professor is available.

Office Hours for Director of the School of Social Work

Dr. Melinda Hohman, Director of the School of Social Work, has scheduled Open Houses for all students (MSW, Gerontology, and BSW) on the following Thursdays in the Fall Semester: October 2nd, November 13th and December 4th. These Open Houses will be held in the Conference Room in HH 119 from 9:30 to 11:30. Free coffee will be served (no RSVP is necessary). This is a time for students to discuss the Social Work program, social work careers, or “whatever is on your mind.” Information about the Open Houses can be obtained by calling 619.594.6247.

Dr. Hohman has an open door policy; students may stop by her office or schedule to an appointment by contacting Jullian Lutau, Administrative Support Coordinator, at 619.594.5724.
Important announcements throughout the year will be sent through the Blackboard Communications website. You can also check the School’s Facebook page to learn about important activities, including those sponsored by Dr. Hohman.

**Contact Information: Updating Student Addresses, Phone, and Email**

All students are required to secure an e-mail account and send the address to the Social Work office at socwork@mail.sdsu.edu and Social Work, Field Education swfield@mail.sdsu.edu. Throughout the semester, the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Rasmussen, distributes general advising information and program announcements to all students with a known e-mail account. Field Education may be found on the Field Education link at http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/field/.

Students are expected to keep their contact information current with the Admissions and Records Office of the University and the administration of the School of Social Work. They may update their contact information through Web Portal for the University, but need to notify the School of Social Work directly about changes to their address, telephone number, or email. These changes can be made in person at the Social Work Office (HH 119) or emailed to Angela Long Albert at along@mail.sdsu.edu. Please note that email rather than the telephone is the primary means that Faculty and administration of the School of Social Work communicate with students outside of the classroom or office hours. It is therefore imperative that you make sure that Web Portal and the School of Social Work have your current email address.

**Suggestion File**

A suggestion box (file folder) is located on the bulletin board outside of the Social Work Office, HH 119. Your suggestions on School of Social Work policies, procedures, curriculum, admissions process, etc. are welcome. Suggestions will be reviewed by the School of Social Work advising faculty. Responses to suggestions will be posted the first Monday of each month in the glass case bulletin board in the hallway by HH-119.

**Job Notices**

Job notices are posted on the School of Social Work web site or are communicated in the Graduate Announcements. Please also consult with SDSU Career Services. They can assist you with your job search and resume. Each spring the School of Social Work co-sponsors an Agency Fair that provides students information about practicum agencies and career opportunities in social work.

**III. UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (SSW) POLICIES**

**Registration**

Registration is done through SDSU Web Portal each semester. You will use your SDSU RED ID number to register. Please refer to the Graduate Bulletin or review the Class Schedule on
Admissions: Waiver/Proficiency Examinations

Students admitted to the Graduate social work program with a 3.0 GPA may be eligible to take a waiver examination for certain courses (SW 601, 619, and 690).

In order to be eligible to take a Waiver Examination, the following conditions must be met:

- The student must hold a Baccalaureate degree in Social Work from an accredited social work program or a major from a closely related field;

- The student must have achieved a grade of B or better in a course similar to the course in which the Waiver Examination is to be taken (i.e., SW 601 - Social Policy, SW 619 - Human Behavior in the Social Environment, and SW 690 – Social Work Research).

- Students who had majors from closely related fields may take the Waiver Examinations if they have had comparable courses with a grade of B and above. In this case, they need to provide documentation (e.g., syllabus, course outline, etc.) to demonstrate the comparability of the courses and their knowledge and proficiency with the material.

Who Administers the Waiver Examinations?

Applications to take the Waiver Examinations must be submitted to the Student Affairs Coordinator, Elizabeth Marucheau, LCSW who administers the exams. Please contact her at 619.594.5710 or at emaruche@mail.sdsu.edu for the date, time and place of the exams. In the meantime, you should go ahead and register for the courses you are hoping to waive, according to the Registration instructions you have received.

Grading of Waiver Examinations

The Waiver Examinations are primarily in a multiple-choice format, although some exams have a section with short answer essay questions. Students will note their responses to multiple-choice questions on a Scantron (Form 882 ES). A Scantron machine is used to grade the multiple-choice questions in the exams. Short answer essay questions will be graded by faculty members who teach the course being tested.

Students must receive at least a grade of B (83%) to pass the Waiver Examinations. If you are successful in these exams, you will not have to complete these courses (SW 601, 619, and/or 690) in the Graduate program, but will need to take an elective course approved by the Graduate Advisor for each of the courses waived. During the first week of class, you may drop the course(s) that you waived and add the approved elective(s).
Admissions: Conditional Status

Most students admitted to the School of Social Work are given the status of “Classified” upon their admission. Occasionally, students may be admitted under “Conditional” status. This means that certain conditions (e.g., 3.0 GPA in all coursework) must be met within a specified time period (generally 12 units). If conditional students do not meet the specified conditions by the time period indicated, they will not be allowed to continue in the MSW Program, unless the Graduate Advisor grants an extension for the conditions. Once conditions have been met, the Graduate Advisor will submit a Change of Status form to the Graduate Division, which will change the student’s status to Classified. For questions related to Conditional and Classified Status, please contact the Graduate Advisor or the Student Affairs Coordinator, Elizabeth Marucheau, LCSW (see contact information above).

Transfer of Units

A maximum of 30 graduate units may be transferred from a CSWE accredited School of Social Work MSW program. Only Social Work courses can be used to substitute for the required coursework in the program. If you have graduate Social Work courses to transfer, you must see Dr. Dan Finnegan for an evaluation and the submission of the required paperwork, and you must make sure that the transcripts of the work are on file with Graduate Admissions. Transfer credit will not be accepted for the advanced practice courses (SW 744, 739, 740, and 745), advanced research courses (SW 791, 797), or the MSW II Advanced Field Practicum course (SW 750).

The School of Social Work does not accept life/work experience as transfer credit, or in lieu of any course requirements or academic credits.

Dropping and Adding Classes

The University provides a program adjustment period when classes may be dropped and/or added. The add/drop period is the first three weeks of the semester. Adding a class (or crashing) requires the acceptance of the instructor. Only the instructor may sign for adding a class. The administration of the School of Social Work discourages instructors from accepting students above the recommended class size for a course section.

The deadlines for adding and dropping classes for Fall Semester is September 8, 2014 at 11:59 p.m. The deadline for Spring Semester will be February 3, 2014. Students may be permitted to add or drop classes after the deadline but will have to pay a fee to do so, usually $25. Please note that dropping classes after the deadline is considered only with a documented, serious and compelling reason, and generally entails dropping all coursework for the semester, as opposed to a single class. If you find that you have a serious, compelling reason (e.g., severe illness, family emergency) for dropping your coursework, please contact Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor. You will need to: (a) complete a Petition for Late Schedule Adjustment (obtained from the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs); (b) obtain the signatures of your instructors; (c) write a letter detailing the serious and compelling reasons for dropping your coursework; (d) provide documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note); and
(e) obtain the signature of the Graduate Advisor. Once this process is completed, the petition is turned in to the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs who make the determination whether students can drop courses after the deadline date.

**Leave Of Absence**

Graduate Students may stop out of SDSU one semester in a calendar year and maintain continuing student status. If you elect to sit out the subsequent semester, you must file a Leave of Absence through Web Portal to maintain continuing student status. It is your responsibility to meet all the necessary application and registration deadlines for the semester in which you intend to resume your courses, including deadlines for applying for a social work field placement (SW 650 or 750). Please be advised that a stop out may delay your timely progression through the program. For example, prerequisites for enrollment in a course must be met. It is your responsibility to notify Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor of your intent to take a leave of absence. If you are in the SW 650 or 750 Field Practicum course or have applied for a field course, you must also notify Candy Elson, LCSW, Director of Field Education, that you no longer wish a field placement. These notifications should be done in writing (i.e., by email).

**Change in Program**

Students are accepted into the program under 2-year, 3-year, or 4-year options. If you are in the full-time (2-year) program, or the 3-year program, and find that you need to reduce your course load, please complete the Change in Program form (you may download the form on Page 50 or obtain a hard copy from Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor). You will need to meet with Dr. Rasmussen to obtain approval to change programs. If the change in program results in a year-long delay of a Field course, you must inform Candy Elson, LCSW, Director of Field Education, that you will not be enrolling in Field.

**Seven Year Rule – Completion of Requirements for the MSW**

No course on an Official Program of Study can be accepted that will be more than 7 years old on the date of the award of your degree. This is the "Seven Year Rule" observed by almost all graduate schools. This means that you have 7 years from the date of the first course listed on the official program of study to complete your degree. After 7 years your coursework becomes ineligible to count toward a degree. Please contact the Graduate Advisor if you have concerns that any of your previous coursework was completed more than 7 years ago.

Coursework that is no longer eligible to count toward a degree may be considered for validation of “recency.” Please contact Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor, for an explanation of this option.
GRADES

Academic Expectations

Students must maintain an overall 3.0 grade point average in all coursework taken in the Graduate program in order to remain in good standing and be eligible to be awarded the MSW. If you receive a grade of C in a course it must be balanced by grades in one or more other courses that raise your overall grade point average to at least 3.0. A grade of C- or below is not acceptable even if a 3.0 average is achieved. A course in which a C- or below is given must be repeated.

The Graduate Advisor of the School of Social Work has responsibility for periodic review and evaluation of all graduate students' progress in achieving the Master's of Social Work Degree. In keeping with the requirement of the Graduate School that all graduate students remain in good academic standing during the course of their study, it is a serious concern to the School of Social Work if the student is not maintaining a cumulative overall average grade of 3.0 or better throughout their matriculation. Having a GPA of at least 3.0 is necessary in order for the Graduate Advisor to file a student's Official Program of Study with the Graduate Division. Students cannot be advanced to candidacy for the MSW degree unless they have: (a) taken and passed the Qualifying Exam (see section below on Qualifying Exam); (b) have an Official Program of Study on file with the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs; and (c) have a GPA of at least 3.0. Furthermore, students are not allowed to sit for the Comprehensive Exam or complete a thesis committee form unless they have been advanced to candidacy and have a GPA of 3.0 in both their overall GPA and the social work courses on their Official Program of Study. (See Pages 23-29 for discussion of “Important Milestones to Graduation”, Qualifying Exam, and Comprehensive Exam/Thesis).

The University does not confer a graduate degree to students who finish their Official Program of Study with a GPA of less than 3.0. Failure to achieve the 3.0 GPA could result in being disqualified from the MSW program. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all requirements for graduation, including the GPA requirements and whether or not the requirements have been met.

The Graduate Advisor reviews the academic performance of all students at the end of each semester. As a courtesy, either Dr. Finnegan or Dr. Rasmussen will send notices to those students whose GPA is below the required 3.0, or who have other problems in their Official Program of Study (i.e., courses that need to be retaken, outstanding grades of Incomplete, or other situations that stop their academic progress and/or impact their eligibility to take the Qualifying and Comprehensive Exams, or to graduate). If you receive a notice about your academic performance, you should contact and make an appointment with Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor to discuss your situation and make a plan for improvement.

Academic Probation

The University requires that graduate students maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.85 or above. If a student's GPA drops below 2.85, he or she will be placed on Academic Probation. The student has two semesters to bring his/her overall cumulative GPA back to 2.85 or above. A term GPA of 2.85 or above is required in the semester immediately following being placed on
Probation; otherwise the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs will disqualify the student from the University. If the student obtains a term GPA of 2.85 or above, he or she is allowed to continue in the MSW program; however, he or she must have the overall cumulative GPA to 2.85 or above by the end of the next semester or will be disqualified from the University. “If at the end of the second semester the student has attained a 2.85 or better on all work attempted at San Diego State University, academic probation will be lifted” (Graduate Bulletin 2014-2015, p. 65).

Consequences for “No Credit” Grades in Field Coursework

The MSW I and MSW II Field Practicums (SW 650 or SW 750/755 courses) are graded on a Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) basis. Please note that a grade of No Credit (NC) in SW 650 or 750 courses will result in an automatic disqualification from the Social Work program.

Reinstatement of Academically Disqualified Students

Students who have been disqualified from further attendance at the University may not attend SDSU for one full semester. They must file an application for readmission and file a $55 readmission fee (see Graduate Bulletin, 2014-2015, p. 65). The Division of Graduate and Research Affairs will send them a Petition for Reinstatement. To return to the MSW program, they must file an application for re-admission.

The Student Affairs Committee (SAC) will review the application for re-admission of any previously disqualified students and determine whether they should be readmitted to the MSW program. The Committee may request a student who has been disqualified to meet with the Committee to discuss the reasons they were disqualified and their plans for addressing these issues if readmitted. They may also request that the disqualified students provide reference letters supporting their reinstatement. Likewise, students who have applied for re-admission may contact the Graduate Advisor and request an appointment with the SAC and may give an oral statement before the Committee stating the reasons they wish to be readmitted. They may also provide to the Committee written documentation to support their application for readmission. If the Committee decides to readmit a disqualified student they may make recommendations regarding actions the student can take to ensure future success in the MSW program.

School of Social Work Grading Policy

Adopted and approved by School of Social Work Faculty 05/14/2003

Faculty members in the School of Social Work take great care in the assignment of grades. In Spring Semester 2003, the Faculty adopted and approved the following grading policy that is currently in effect. The policy is as follows:

The grades at the School of Social Work will reflect the University policy (IV-C-1). No formula for a "curve" is appropriate for all classes, but faculty members are expected to use all grades among academic levels. The grade for average achievement in undergraduate programs is C; the grade for average graduate achievement is B. Graduate grades, as per University policy, are:
A - Superior performance
B - Satisfactory performance
C - Minimally passing
D - Unacceptable for graduate credit
F – Failing
CR – Credit
NC – No Credit
RP – Report in Progress

These grades will be further defined by the criteria described below.

**Graduate Guidelines:**

Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work that not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content, but also shows that the student has (a) undertaken complex tasks, (b) applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or (c) demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The degree to which the student demonstrates these skills determines whether he/she receives an A or an A-.

A grade of B+ is given to work that is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-satisfactory understanding of the material being tested, and has exceeded expectations in the assignment.

A grade of B is given to student work that meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done satisfactory work on the assignment and meets the expectations of the course.

A grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than satisfactory on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and is below expectations.

A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.

Grades between C- and F denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in a student's performance on the assignment.

A grade of Credit in graduate level courses is equivalent to grades that earn 3.0 or more grade points (B and above).

A grade of No Credit in graduate level course’s is equivalent to grades that earn less than 3.0 grade points (B- and below).

A grade of RP (Report in Progress) is used in courses that extend more than one term (e.g., Field courses: SW 650 and 750). It indicates that work is in progress, has been evaluated, and is satisfactory to date. In assigning grades, the assumption will be that the student has completed the assignment at an average level of achievement (B for graduate students; C for undergraduate students). Students who demonstrate higher or lower performance levels will receive grades consistent with the guidelines provided, including plus and minus grades.
Incompletes

A grade of Incomplete (I) indicates that a small, clearly identifiable portion of the required coursework has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time period due to unforeseen, but fully justified, reasons (e.g., personal illnesses, disabling accidents, or family emergencies). It is the responsibility of the student to inform their instructor if they have an emergency situation and believe they must resort to an Incomplete. If the instructor agrees that an emergency situation exists, he or she will determine with the student the means by which the remaining course requirements will be completed. In most cases, the student must have completed at least 70% in order to be granted an Incomplete. The grade for the course will be assigned when the remaining work is completed and evaluated.

An Incomplete not made up within a one year automatically converts to an Incomplete Charged (IC). An IC grade counts as an F in the calculation of Your GPA. This is the case whether or not the student maintains continuous enrollment. Please note that a grade of Incomplete in the Field practicum courses must be made up before the next semester Field course begins.

Please be advised that a grade of Incomplete may interfere with timely progression through the program. A course with a grade of (I) does not fulfill the prerequisite requirements of another course. Students will not be eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam if they have any outstanding grades of Incomplete.

SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS)

The School of Social Work abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended. Students who have disabilities that can potentially impact their academic performance may request special accommodations by contacting the SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS). Students who suspect they may have a disability should contact SDS and request an informational session with an SDS counselor. If the counselor agrees that the student’s concerns may reflect a disability, the counselor will refer the student for an evaluation.

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for any or all of your classes, it is your responsibility to contact SDS at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact SDS as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from SDS.

If an SDS evaluation determines that a student has a disability and is eligible for academic accommodations (e.g., extended time for taking exams), it is the student’s responsibility to inform instructors and provide the necessary paperwork from SDS for appropriate academic accommodations. Please note that the Graduate Advisor is available to expedite a student’s referral to SDS. Please refer to the SDSU Student Disability Services website at www.sa.sdsu.edu/sds for additional information.
Students who are requesting academic accommodations for the SW 650 and 750 Field Practicum courses need to follow these procedures:

1. Before the student’s field practicum application due date, contact SDSU Student Disability Services (SDS) for an evaluation.
2. Obtain a letter from SDS stating the requested appropriate academic accommodations.
3. Obtain and provide a copy of the completed Release of Information from SDS for the Director of Field Education, Field Faculty, and Field Instructor for consultation with SDS.
4. Inform the Field Instructor / agency field practicum directly or provide written authorization/documentation. Written authorization should include your signature and date, indicating you are authorizing the Director of Field Education or Field Faculty to inform the Field Instructor /agency field practicum of the requested reasonable academic accommodations.

Reasonable academic accommodations need to be requested through SDS before coursework is completed. Course instructors and Field faculty are not responsible to provide these accommodations after the fact (e.g. student informing faculty after exams, papers, presentations, at the end of the semester, etc.).

For the Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam, students who have disabilities should bring their SDS paperwork to Dr. Rasmussen to complete. She will arrange with SDS for appropriate academic accommodations for the student to take the Qualifying Exam or Comprehensive Exam.

IV. MSW COURSEWORK –

UNIVERSITY & SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK POLICIES:

All graduate study at San Diego State comes under the supervision of the University's Graduate Division which establishes the general requirements for admission, graduate status and changes of status, probation, disqualification, advancement to candidacy, graduation, and ultimately the awarding of advanced degrees. For the student this means understanding the processes involved, filing the proper forms on time, and fulfilling certain responsibilities. It is strongly recommended that you read the sections of the SDSU Graduate Bulletin 2014-2015 related to the requirements of a Master's degree, with special attention to the section related to the School of Social Work.

Program of Study

The School of Social Work offers several accredited academic programs of study at the master's level:

- Master of Social Work Degree (MSW) – 2 Year, 3-Year, 4-Year Options
- Master of Social Work Degree and Master of Public Health Degree (MSW/MPH) - concurrent degrees
- Master of Social Work Degree and Juris Doctor Degree (MSW/JD) – concurrent degrees
Information specific to the Master’s in Social Work (MSW) degree is presented below. Information specific to either of the concurrent programs can be secured by contacting the Graduate Advisor using the hyperlinks on the School of Social Work website at http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/sequence.php

The MSW program is a 60 unit program of study organized around two distinct method concentrations. Each student develops an Official Program of Study identifying his or her concentration of study: Direct Practice or Administrative Practice.

Within each concentration, students may design their own program of study according to their interest in various service areas in social work (e.g., child welfare, mental health practice, health and aging, school social work). They may select electives that correspond with their interests.

**Graduate Field Education**

School of Social Work policies and procedures related to Field Education are contained in a separate document, the 2014-2015 Student Field Manual. This Manual may be accessed on the School of Social Work Field Education website http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/field/student-resources/student-field-manual. You are responsible for knowing all policies and procedures related to the Field Practicum courses. For questions, please contact the Faculty Field Coordinator, Candy Elson, LCSW.

**Course Sequencing**

Courses in the School of Social Work are described on Pages 391 to 397 of the Graduate Bulletin. Sequence of courses for the MSW Program is outlined in the following table and is also posted on the School of Social Work website at: http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/. If you have questions related to the sequencing of your coursework, please contact the Graduate Advisor. Please refer to Course Sequence Table below:
### Sequencing of Courses taken under Options permitted MSW Graduate students.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advanced Standing</th>
<th>2 year</th>
<th>3 year</th>
<th>4 year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>610 (3), 791 (3)</td>
<td>690 (3), 610 (3)</td>
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<td>Policy</td>
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<td>720 (3)</td>
<td>619 (3), 620A (3)</td>
<td>619 (3), 620A (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
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<td>744 (3), 739 (3)</td>
<td>740 (3)</td>
<td>630 (3), 631 (3), 632 (3)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>650 (7)</td>
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<td>791 (3) or 797 (3)</td>
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<td>Policy</td>
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<td>702 (3)</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td>744 (3), 739 (3)</td>
<td>740 (3)</td>
<td>630 (3), 631 (3), 632 (3)</td>
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<td>791 (3) or 797 (3)</td>
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<td>Policy</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td>745, 758, 780, 781, and/or out-of-department</td>
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<td>Field</td>
<td></td>
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<td>750 (8)</td>
<td>755 (8)</td>
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*720 Civic Engagement is required for all Administration/Community Development Concentration. Direct Practice concentration students can take any 720 course to meet the Advanced Human Behavior Requirement.
Electives and Out of Department Electives

Students are not allowed to take elective courses until they have completed the SW 600 level coursework and taken and passed the Qualifying Exam. The foundation courses are considered prerequisites for the SW 700 level coursework, including elective courses. Exception is made for students who pass Waiver Exams for SW 601, 619, and/or 690, or who have transfer credit. The Graduate Advisor, may approve these students to take electives, even though they have not yet finished the SW 600 foundation level coursework or taken the Qualifying Exam. Six units of electives (or two courses) may be taken in other departments with the approval of the Graduate Advisor.

Although we offer a variety of electives in the Social Work Program, students may wish to take some elective units in another department at San Diego State University. A Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirement for the Master's Degree approval form signed by the Graduate Advisor must be filed and accepted by the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs. All such courses must be related to social work and must be approved prior to enrollment by the Graduate Advisor. If you wish to take an out-of-department elective, you should email Dr. Rasmussen and provide a description of the course and a statement about why you wish to take it. Approval will be based on the Graduate Advisor’s determination that the course is relevant to your Official Program of Study and that similar content taught from a social work perspective could not be obtained by taking an elective in the School of Social Work.

Students wishing to pursue California LCSW licensure after graduation should check with the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (http://www.bbs.ca.gov) to see what coursework is currently required for eligibility to take the LCSW examinations. Please note that the California Business and Professions Code (California Board of Behavioral Sciences – BBS Statutes and Regulations) require pre-licensure coursework in child abuse, human sexuality, substance abuse and domestic violence to be eligible for the California State Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Some courses in the Social Work department fulfill these requirements (i.e., SW 758 Seminar in Substance Abuse Intervention (substance abuse) and SW 780 Advanced Seminar in Family Violence (domestic violence). The following courses offered in other departments have met this requirement in the past: (a) Family Studies and Consumer Sciences 537 (Child Abuse), (b) Community Health Education 574 (Habit-forming Substances), and (c) Counseling and School Psychology 585A (Human Sexuality for Counselors). Out-of-department courses may be taken to fulfill the LCSW requirement for licensure. However, they will not be approved for the student's Official Program of Study (unless the course is approved by the Graduate Advisor as an out-of-department elective that meets the eligibility criteria described above). Students should check with BBS to see if a particular School of Social Work or University course might be accepted to fulfill LCSW pre-licensure requirements.

IMPORTANT MILESTONES TO GRADUATION

The following is a brief summary of the “Steps to Graduation,” which are discussed in detail in the various sections of this Handbook:
1. Achieve Classified Status in the MSW program. Most students are admitted as “classified” students. Some will be admitted as “conditionally classified.” Students admitted conditionally will become classified when the conditions are met.

2. Maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or above.

3. Pass all SW 600 level courses with a grade of at least a C.

4. Take and pass the Qualifying Exam.

5. Choose either the Direct Practice or Administrative/Community Development Practice as the concentration for your Official Program of Study (the choice is determined by the type of agency that accepts you for your second year Field placement). Select electives based on your area of interest (e.g., mental health, child welfare, aging, medical social work, school social work, administration, community development).

6. Have an Official Program of Study filed with the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs. This is done by Dr. Dan Finnegan after a student has successfully passed the Qualifying examination. The Official Program of Study cannot be filed if a student has a grade of C- or below on any of the courses needed for the Official Program or if the student has a GPA of less than 2.85.

7. Be Advanced to Candidacy. For many students this usually takes place during Summer Term between finishing SW 600 level courses and beginning SW 700 level courses. For Advanced Standing students, it usually takes place after the end of the Fall Semester. However, in order to be “Advanced to Candidacy”, a student must have a GPA of at least 3.00 for completed courses listed on the Official Program of Study and an overall GPA of at least 3.00 for all completed courses that are at the 300 level or above. Dr. Finnegan will advance the student to candidacy when they become eligible.

8. Pass all SW 700 level courses with a grade of at least a C while maintaining an overall GPA of at least 3.00.

9. File for Graduation with the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs (see discussion below). Please note that students who have not been advanced to candidacy before April 6, 2015 will not become eligible to graduate until Summer Semester at the earliest.

10. Take and pass the Comprehensive Exam; complete and defend a Thesis; or complete a publishable article under the supervision of a faculty member. Please note the completion of any of these alternatives cannot be reported to the Graduate Division unless the student has first achieved “Candidacy” (i.e., is Advanced to Candidacy).

**Qualifying Exam**

Students in the MSW program are required to successfully pass a written Qualifying Exam before being advanced to candidacy and allowed to enroll in the Social Work 700 level
courses. Students take the Qualifying Exam at the end of the Spring Semester during the final exam period. The exam tests students' knowledge of the foundation (SW 600) content in social work. Mastery of this content is deemed essential before moving on to the advanced specialized course material.

Students are eligible to sit for the Qualifying Exam if they will have completed or are enrolled in 31 units of Social Work 600 level coursework by the end of the Spring Semester 2015 with a grade of at least a C in each course tested on the exam. If students become eligible after the Spring Semester 2015, they may take the exam at the retake (scheduled in July 2015), otherwise they will have to wait until the Spring Semester 2015 to take the exam. This sitting for the exam assumes that the student’s eligibility problem has been resolved. There are no exceptions to this rule. It is the student’s responsibility to insure that they meet all eligibility criteria.

Content comes from first year coursework in Micro and Macro Practice (SW 630, 631, 632), Policy and Services (SW 601), Research (SW 690, SW 610) and HBSE (SW 619, 620). Topics for the exam are listed in the Master Syllabus for each of the above courses. A Study Guide for the exam is posted on the School of Social Work website at the beginning of Spring Semester. The instructors who taught the SW 600 courses have constructed the Study Guide. The texts related to the topics that are outlined are suggested references based on the most common text or readings used in your first year courses. Common refers to those items in use across sections.

The exam is multiple-choice; test questions were developed by the instructors of those courses. Approximately 14 to 15 questions are drawn from each course except for 610 and 690, which are treated as a single course. Students will note their responses on a scantron (Form 882 ES) provided with the exam, and a scantron machine will be used to grade the exam. Copies will be numbered and students will sign for receipt, and again when they return their copy. The exam must be returned in order for the student to receive a grade. No cell phones are allowed in the exam room. If students need to leave the room during the exam, they must ask the Proctor for permission. The Proctor will hold the scantron while the student is out of the room. Violations of any of the above may lead to the disqualification of the student’s exam.

Special testing arrangements are available for students identified through Student Disability Services (SDS). Students requiring these arrangements must contact Dr. Rasmussen and/or complete the appropriate procedures and documentation at SDS.

Students are allowed two attempts to pass the exam (in May and July). If a student is ill on the day the first time the exam is given, he or she must notify the School by either calling the main telephone number 594-6865, and leaving a message on the VMS, or informing HH 119 office staff directly, or by emailing Dr. Dan Finnegan (dfinnega@mail.sdsu.edu). In case of illness, the student must bring a letter from a doctor verifying the illness to be eligible to take the exam on the second examination day as your first try.

Students may have an unanticipated event or emergency of a serious nature that prevents them from taking the examination. They should call the School of Social Work office and follow the procedures outlined above. If the student is unable to make this early contact he or she must present a justification with supporting documentation that includes: (a) a description of the event that caused him or her to miss the exam, (b) justification of why the event was unanticipated and necessitated missing the exam, (c) satisfactory reasons for why he or she
were not able to contact the School prior to the exam. Based on the evidence provided, the School will decide whether or not the student is eligible to take the exam on the second examination day as his or her first attempt. If the School determines students have not presented adequate justification for missing that exam, they forfeit their first examination attempt and will only have one chance to take the examination (at the retake exam in July).

A grade of 75% or above is needed to pass the exam. For students who fail the exam, the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Rasmussen, will provide a summary of the content covered in the exam and the areas that the student performed poorly. The exam itself will not be made available for review. Students who fail the exam will also have a review session with the faculty responsible for teaching foundation courses to review the exam content.

Procedures for the retake duplicate the conditions of the first examination process and all the same expectations apply. Each student can choose to retake the exam in either a multiple choice or short answer/essay format. The retake examination will reflect the same set of knowledge and skills requirements, as the initial examination required. The exam must be taken prior to attending classes in the Fall Semester. If the student plans to retake the exam, he or she must notify Dr. Finnegan by email (dfinnega@mail.sdsu.edu), or stop in at HH-119.

Students who pass the Qualifying Exam will be Advanced to Candidacy and an Official Program of Study will be filed with the Division of Graduate Research Affairs. The Graduate Advisor files the paperwork in the early part of the Fall Semester during following the successful passing of the Qualifying exam. Students will receive notification from the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs that they have been advanced to Candidacy and have an Official Program of Study on file. Questions about the Program of Study or Advancement to Candidacy should be directed to Dr. Finnegan.

Those students not passing the exam the second time will be required to leave the program for at least one semester. After one semester they may apply for re-entry (please see policy below regarding readmission of disqualified students).

Before taking the Qualifying Exam, please review the Study Guide posted on the School of Social Work website.

**Thesis or Comprehensive Exam**

In addition to completing the courses listed on their Official Program of Study and passing the Qualifying Exam, all students must complete and successfully defend a Thesis or pass a Comprehensive Exam to meet all academic requirements for graduation. The Thesis or Comprehensive Exam fulfills the University requirement of an “integrative experience” for a Master's degree. When a student is admitted into the MSW program, she or he is admitted with the agreement that they will complete a Thesis or take the Comprehensive Exam. The decision is made when you register for classes in your last semester of the program.

**Thesis**

If you are planning to do a Thesis, you should have your ideas and procedures worked out long before your last semester, when your choice to do a Thesis becomes official.
Information on the requirements and conduct of a Thesis will be discussed in the SW 690 Research class and can be found in a University guide to the conduct of a Thesis at SDSU. Please see:  
http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gra/grad/thesisreview/dtm.html

The steps for completing a Thesis are briefly summarized below:

1. Identify a research topic that you are interested in.

2. Contact Faculty who are currently doing research related to your topic of interest.

3. Form a Thesis Committee (a Chair, plus two other Faculty members). One Faculty member must be from outside the School of Social Work.

4. Complete the Thesis form (available at the office of the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs); obtain signatures from your Thesis Chair and other Committee members and the Graduate Advisor). Submit the completed form to the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs.

5. Begin literature review. (Ideally, this should be done during the summer term before beginning SW 700 level coursework).

6. Work with Thesis Chair to formulate the research questions and methodology of the study.

7. Write up first three chapters of Thesis (i.e., Statement of the Problem, Review of Literature, and Methodology)

8. Submit proposal to the SDSU Institutional Review Board and obtain their approval to conduct the study.

9. Gather the data for the study. Enroll in SW 799 for each semester that you are working on the Thesis.

10. Input the data, complete statistical analyses, and analyze the findings.

11. Write up the last two chapters of Thesis (i.e., Findings and Discussion).

12. Submit draft of Thesis to Thesis Chair and committee members for their review.


14. Submit completed Thesis to the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs. Note: you must complete and submit the Thesis by the deadline dates specified on the Division’s website:  
(a) without risk (in April, date to be determined by Graduate Division); (b) completion date (in May, date to be determined by Graduate Division); and (c) last day to submit (in May, date to be determined by Graduate Division). Otherwise you will not be able to graduate on time and your graduation will be delayed until Summer Semester (August). See thesis policies on the Division’s website:  
http://gra.sdsu.edu/grad/thesisProcedures.html
Comprehensive Exam

If you choose the Comprehensive Exam, you will take it in your final Spring Semester, not before. This year’s Exam will be given on April 6, 2015. The exam is scheduled again before the end of the Spring Semester (date to be determined) for those students who failed the first time, or were not eligible to take the exam at the time that Dr. Dan Finnegan, Associate Director of the School of Social Work, determined students’ eligibility (early March), but have since become eligible. Please note that students who have not been advanced to candidacy before April 6, 2015 will not become eligible to graduate until Summer Semester at the earliest. They should still apply for Summer Graduation during Spring Semester. As noted above, students may walk in the Commencement exercises if they have applied for Graduation for the Spring 2015, Summer 2015, or Fall 2014 semesters.

If the administration of the School of Social Work determines that there is a need to schedule the exam a third time, it will be given during the following Fall Semester. You must take the Comprehensive Exam during one of the scheduled times; it is not possible to arrange a different date to take the exam.

To be eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam, students must:
1. Complete all first year classes (31 units) and SW 744 or 740, SW 791 or SW 797, and 750 or 755.
2. Receive grades of C or above for all graded courses in the MSW program, and SP or CR for CR/NC courses.
3. Be advanced to candidacy.
4. Have a 3.0 GPA in all courses on the Official Program of Study, and a cumulative 3.0 GPA in the University.
5. Have no grades of Incomplete.
6. Have filed for May graduation or be eligible to graduate in August or December.

The Comprehensive Exam Study Guide will be posted on the School of Social Work website at the beginning of Spring Semester. Students are given three opportunities to pass the Comprehensive Examination.

Students who fail the second exam are required to design and successfully implement a plan of study that gives the student a reasonable chance of passing the exam. They should consult with the Graduate Advisor when developing the plan. The Advisor will refer the student to the School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee, who will review the plan and approve its implementation. The third exam cannot be taken until the Student Affairs Committee has recommended that the student be allowed to make an additional attempt. Students who do not successfully pass the exam in three attempts will be disqualified from the MSW Program and will not be recommended to be awarded the MSW degree.

Alternative to Thesis and Comprehensive Exam

Students have a third option for completing the integrative experience required by the University. This involves researching an area of interest and writing a research article that is of publishable quality and ready to be submitted to a peer reviewed journal. Students who
are interested in this option should contact the Graduate Advisor. Information about this option can be found at:

http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/student-resources/references/publishable-paper/

**Changing from Thesis to Comprehensive Exam**

Students may be allowed to switch from the Thesis option to the Comprehensive Exam, and vice versa, but must request the approval of the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Rasmussen. If the change is approved, Dr. Rasmussen will submit a Change of Program form to the Graduate Division. However, a switch from one option to the other is permitted only if you have not defended the Thesis or failed the Comprehensive Exam.

**Graduation Application**

Graduation does not occur automatically upon completion of all requirements. You must apply for graduation and pay the required fee. Deadlines for each semester are listed on the Academic Calendar on the SDSU website or in the Graduate Bulletin. The last day to file for Graduation for Fall Semester is September 8, 2014. For the Spring Semester, the last day is February 3, 2015. Applications for Graduation in the Summer Semester 2015 are also accepted in the Spring Semester. If you plan to graduate in the summer, but want to go through the Commencement Exercises in May, you should file for Summer Graduation by the Spring Semester deadline of February 3, 2015.

The application for graduation is valid for one semester only. Should you fail to graduate in the semester for which you applied, you must reapply for the next semester, and pay an additional fee. Please check the Graduate Division website for the Graduation application: http://aztecgrad.sdsu.edu/gra/graforms.aspx

Graduating students: Please note that if you are not advanced to candidacy prior to the beginning of the Spring Semester, you will most likely not be able to graduate until Summer Semester 2015. However, you can still participate in the Commencement Exercises in May 2015. All students who file for graduation will be allowed to participate in the Commencement Ceremony regardless of whether or not they qualify to receive the degree.

Graduation information will be mailed to students by the Dean's Office in the College of Health and Human Services. Inquiries about the Commencement Ceremony should be directed to the Dean's Office, 619.594.6151. Announcements related to the Commencement Ceremony will also be posted online on the College of Health and Human Services website (see http://chhs.sdsu.edu/) and will be sent to students via the graduate announcements sent by the Graduate Advisor.

*Please note: students are not allowed to participate in the Commencement Ceremony if they fail to apply for graduation by the designated deadline. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this policy!*
SDSU School Social Work Specialization Education, Training, And Certification Requirements

Pupil Personnel Services Credentials:

Please refer to the SSW PPS Credential Website:  [http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/pupil.php](http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/pupil.php)

The School Social Work Specialization program at SDSU prepares students for the practice of social work services in school settings, providing the education and training necessary to be certified by the State of California to work in public schools. This program meets the requirements for two specializations for Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credentials: (a) School of Social Work and (b) Child Welfare and Attendance Services.

The program is integrated into the existing MSW program, with students selecting the direct practice concentration. Specific requirements include:

- SWORK 750A (Field Practicum in an approved School Social Work setting -- 8 units)
- SWORK 758 (Seminar in School Social Work)
- SWORK 758 (Social Work Practice in the Educational Arena)
- SWORK 720 (Psychosocial Development of Vulnerable Children)
- SWORK 702 (Advanced Policy focused on children and/or families and disadvantaged communities)

California PPS Certification Requirements:

Supervised Experience Requirements: the requirements below of supervised experience fall within the number of field hours required of all second-year MSW students:

School Social Work Specialization

1. Completion of 450 hours of supervised experience working in a public school. This experience must include at least 100 hours of work at each of 2 school levels: elementary, middle-school, high school.

2. At least 100 clock hours of practice with at least 10 pupils of a racial/ethnic background different from that of the credential candidate.

For further information about the PPS curriculum, please contact Amalia Hernandez at 619.594.6259 or at amalia.hernandez@mail.sdsu.edu

Child Welfare and Attendance Specialization

Completion of an additional 150 contact hours of supervised experience focused on assessment and program development in the area of attendance problems. Thus, if one is working toward both certificates there will be a total of 600 hours of school-based experience.
Other Specialized Programs

The School of Social Work has three other specialized programs. For questions about the Title IVE Child Welfare Stipend program, should contact the Coordinator, Ken Nakamura at 619.594.8709 or at knakamura@mail.sdsu.edu. For the Mental Health Training program, they should contact the Coordinator, Candy Elson, LCSW at 619.594.5144 or at candy.elson@mail.sdsu.edu. For the EC-SEBRIS certification program for working in the area of early childhood mental health, they should contact the Coordinator, Elizabeth Marucheau, LCSW at: 619.594-5710 or at emaruche@mail.sdsu.edu.

V. GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

The Master of Science degree in gerontology is supported by interdisciplinary faculty from several departments. The program is administered by the School of Social Work. The primary goal of the Gerontology Graduate Program is to offer high-quality interdisciplinary education and training that focus on the core areas of gerontology such as theories of aging, aging policy, long-term care, research methodology, design, development, administration, and evaluation of programs for the aged. The program is committed to preparing students to enter positions in administration and management in a variety of organizations serving older adults. This goal will be accomplished by offering coursework and a field experience aimed at providing the necessary knowledge and skills to encourage/promote gerontology competencies and evidence-based administration and management as related to older adults.

The advisor for the Gerontology program is Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, Graduate Advisor. Questions about the Gerontology program can also be directed to the Gerontology faculty:

Mario D. Garrett, Ph.D., Professor of Social Work
Jong Won Min, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Social Work
Eunjeong Ko, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Work
Yawan Li, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Work
Anita E. Harbert, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Social Work

Gerontology Advancement to Candidacy

All Gerontology students must pass the general requirements for advancement to candidacy as described in Part Four of the Graduate Bulletin. Advancement to candidacy is contingent upon classified graduate status, completion of 12 semester units with a minimum grade point average of 3.0, satisfactory completion of an oral examination with a minimum grade of B and approval of the Graduate Council. Advancement to candidacy will be conferred prior to graduation.

Specific Requirements for the Master of Science Degree (Major Code: 21043) (SIMS Code: 551904)

In addition to meeting the requirements for classified graduate standing and the basic requirements for the Master of Science degree as described in Part Four of the Graduate
Bulletin, a Gerontology student must complete a minimum of 36 units. The program consists of 30 units of required core courses and six units of electives.

**Gerontology Core Curriculum Requirements**

A minimum of 30 units is required in the following core courses. Courses are described in the Graduate Bulletin on Pages 276-277 and include:

- GERO 520 - Analysis of Programs for the Aging (3 units)
- GERO 601 - Theory and Application in Gerontology and Aging (3 units)
- GERO 605 - Long-Term Care (3 units)
- SWORK 610 - Computer Application in Practice for Social Work and Gerontology (3 units)
- SWORK 632 - Social Work Practice and Gerontology: Organization and Communities (3 units)
- GERO 690 - Seminar in Research Methods for Social Work and Gerontology (3 units)
- GERO 700A - Practicum (Cr/NC) (3 units)
- SWORK 702 - Seminar in Selected Social Welfare Policy and Services, Health and Aging focus) (3 units)
- GERO 740 - Advanced Seminar in Social Work and Human Service Administration and Community Development (3 units)
- GERO 799A - Thesis (Plan A) OR GERO 700B (Plan B) (3 units)

A minimum of six units of electives is required in the Gerontology program. Selected with the approval of the Graduate Advisor, electives must include courses in gerontology or departments related to gerontology. Any gerontology graduate course or 500- to 700-level courses not taken for credit in the core curriculum qualify as electives. The breadth of courses available to supplement the core of required courses will be extensive, and draw on resources from across the university.

Plan A or Plan B.

Plan A: Students who complete Plan A, Thesis option for the M.S. degree in Gerontology must include 799A (Thesis) in the 30-unit program, complete GERO 797 as one of the electives and pass a final oral examination on the thesis.

Plan B: Students in Plan B must include GERO 700B to fulfill core requirements and pass a comprehensive written examination.

**STUDENT RIGHTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

**Student Files**

Student files are the property of the School of Social Work. It is the University's policy not to remove any materials from a student's file. Students may examine their own files at any time, but cannot remove the file or its contents from the Social Work Office in HH 119. Faculty submitting letters or other documents to a student file or to the Graduate Advisor must send the student a copy of that letter or document.
Students who wish to view the contents of their student file must make a written request to the Director of the School of Social Work. Copies can be requested; the fee for copies is 25 cents per page. For additional information about what is accessible, please refer to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

**Steps in the Grievance Process**

The Student Affairs Committee (SAC) is responsible for reviewing the continuing status of any student in the MSW program referred to the Committee by the Graduate Advisor or the Director of the School of Social Work. In addition, the Committee may elect to review the continuing status of any student who is brought to its attention by a concerned faculty member. The Chair of the SAC is Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen. The Committee meets once monthly during the Fall and Spring Semesters. The Chair may call additional meetings on an as needed basis. A quorum of the Committee (i.e., majority of Committee members) is necessary for the Committee to conduct its business.

SAC is also the designated entity in the School of Social Work for reviewing all grievances (i.e., appeals) by students concerning: (a) decisions by Social Work administration enforcing School of Social Work policy, or (b) behavior of professors or instructors that causes them concern. A student may appeal to the Student Affairs Committee if he or she is dissatisfied by an action of a professor/instructor or a decision by an administrative officer of the School of Social Work (e.g., Graduate Advisor, Director of Field Education) and believes that the action or decision is grossly unfair. If a student believes that a professor or instructor’s actions are clearly unprofessional, the student may also bring the complaint to the proper University authorities and official reviewing bodies by following the Procedures for Handling Student Grievances against members of the Faculty, adopted by the Faculty Senate.

The Student Affairs Committee is advisory to the Director and Faculty of the School of Social Work and operates under the authority delegated to the Director of the School of Social Work by the President of the University to administer the policies of the University and School of Social Work. SAC members are appointed by the Director of the School of Social Work. The SAC consists of at least five full-time members of the Faculty of the School of Social Work, a majority of whom are tenured or tenure track. The Committee is chaired by Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor.

Two student members serve on the SAC (one graduate and one undergraduate). They are selected by the student associations (Graduate Social Work Association and Undergraduate Association) and interviewed by the Chair of SAC, Dr. Rasmussen to determine their suitability to serve on a Committee that makes important decisions regarding the appeals and/or continuing status in the MSW program of their peers. Dr. Rasmussen recommends the selected students to Dr. Melinda Hohman, Director of the School of Social Work, who officially appoints them to serve as Student Representatives.

The School of Social Work policies and procedures governing the appeals process and the referral of students to the Student Affairs Committee are summarized below:
1. The first step in the process should be a conference with the faculty involved.

2. If the issue is still not resolved, then a conference with the Graduate Advisor is next. The Graduate Advisor will work with the student to try to resolve the situation with the particular Faculty member.

3. In cases where the complaint cannot be settled informally, the SAC is the first line of appeal for students. If a student desires to make an appeal to the SAC, he or she must notify the Graduate Advisor, at least five working days in advance of the scheduled monthly SAC meeting and explain the circumstances that relate to his or her concern. If the student wishes to pursue the appeal, the Graduate Advisor will refer the case to the SAC and place it on the Agenda for the next scheduled SAC meeting. If the appeal is received close to or during a break (i.e., Winter Break or Summer term), it will be scheduled for the first SAC meeting after classes resume.

4. The Graduate Advisor may refer students to the Student Affairs Committee when there are questions related to a student's academic performance and/or professional behavior. Students will be given at least ten working days' notice that the SAC will be reviewing their continued status in the MSW program. The Graduate Advisor will meet with the student to explain the reasons for the referral. The student will have opportunity to examine all written materials that are to be submitted by administrators or faculty of the School of Social Work for the Committee's consideration.

5. Whether students are submitting an appeal, or were referred by the Graduate Advisor to the SAC, they are permitted to present written testimony before the Committee in their behalf. Written materials must be submitted to the Graduate Advisor at least five working days before the SAC meeting. Documentation may include letters of support and/or other written materials relevant to: (a) a student's appeal or (b) the circumstances that have resulted in a student's continuing status in the MSW program being reviewed by the SAC. The Graduate Advisor will copy the materials and provide them to SAC members at least three working days before the meeting.

6. A student who is making an appeal, or whose continuing status in the MSW program is being reviewed by the SAC may be present when facts about his or her circumstances are being presented to the Committee. The student may elect to bring another person for support; however this person may not speak to the Committee. This person may not be a legal representative of the student.

7. Either the Student Affairs Committee or the student may request that the student provide oral testimony before the Committee. Students may not offer additional written materials at the time of their oral presentation, but are limited to the written documentation they previously submitted to the Graduate Advisor (at least five working days before the SAC meeting).

8. The Student Affairs Committee is charged with conducting a full, fair, careful, and objective investigation of the situation, and making every effort to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all concerned without taking the matter further. Members of the SAC will disqualify themselves from participating in the deliberation of individual cases, if, in their opinion, their participation would constitute a conflict of interest. For example, if a member of the SAC is involved in the circumstances related to the student's appeal, the
Committee member will not participate in the Committee's deliberation in the case and will not vote, but may provide testimony before members of the Committee.

9. If the student's grievance is against the Graduate Advisor, she will not participate in the deliberation of the case, but might provide testimony before members of the Committee related to the student's grievance.

10. A quorum of Committee members is necessary for the SAC to consider a student's appeal or referral from the Graduate Advisor for review of continuing status. Voting by proxy is not permitted.

11. After deliberating and considering the facts presented, the Student Affairs Committee makes their decision and recommends to the Director of the School of Social Work what action should be taken. Note: the role of the SAC is to assure that decisions made by the Graduate Advisor, the Director of Field Education, or other administrative officers of the School of Social Work have been made in accordance with the policies and procedures of the School of Social Work. The SAC does not overturn decisions that were made in accordance with the policies and procedures of the School of Social Work. The SAC however, may make recommendations to the Director and Faculty of the School of Social Work about policies it believes need to be changed.

12. The student will be notified in writing within five working days of the SAC's recommendation to the Director of the School of Social Work. Notification will include: (a) the reason the Committee reviewed the student's continuing status; (b) the evidence the Committee considered in reaching a decision related to the student's appeal or continuing status in the MSW program, and (c) any elaboration of the Committee's reasoning deemed necessary by members of the SAC. The Chair of the SAC will notify the student by email and will place a copy of the notification in the student's file.

13. The student may appeal the recommendation of the Student Affairs Committee directly to the Director of the School of Social Work, Dr. Melinda Hohman.

14. If after appealing to the Director of the School of Social Work, the student still does not feel the situation is resolved, he or she may appeal the Director's decision to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs in the College of Health and Human Services, Dr. Donna Daly.

15. The student may appeal the decision of the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs in the College of Health and Human Services to the University Ombudsman.

16. The student may contact the University Ombudsman at any time during the grievance process, but the Ombudsman will generally not take action until he/she is sure that every effort has been taken to solve the problem at the departmental or College level.

**Grade Appeals**

The Student Affairs Committee does not hear grade appeals. If a student is concerned that a grade given by a faculty member is unfair, he or she should first consult with the instructor, and then, if not satisfied with the Graduate Advisor. If the student then decides to appeal the
grade, he or she needs to set up an appointment with Dr. Melinda Hohman, Director of the School of Social Work, to discuss the grade. The student may also consult with the University Ombudsman.

SUSPENSION, DISQUALIFICATION, AND OTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Academic Misconduct and Dismissal

Social work education requires continuous evaluation of the student. This evaluation includes periodic objective evaluations such as grades, performance, and field work. Continuation in social work education is contingent upon positive ongoing faculty evaluation of the student's grades, professional attributes, and performance in real or simulated professional situations. A student may be suspended or dismissed from the MSW program for deficiencies in any of the foregoing. In addition, social work students are bound by the ethical guidelines of the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics and may be academically suspended or dismissed from the MSW program for violation of the professional Code of Ethics (see section on Student Situation Report).

Students in the MSW program are expected to avoid all forms of academic misconduct including: cheating, plagiarizing, stealing course examinations, asking another student to sign the roll for them when they are not going to be attending class, falsifying data, violating copyright laws, and/or intentionally assisting another individual in any of those actions. Please note the following definitions and policies:

1. **Cheating** “is defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means” (SDSU Graduate Bulletin, 2014-2015, p. 67). Several examples of cheating are listed on Page 67.

2. **Plagiarism** is defined as “the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained and submitting same to the University to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include but not be limited to: (a) submitting work in part or in whole completed by another; (b) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another; (c) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof; (d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the work of another; (e) submitting another’s artistic works such as musical compositions, paintings, drawings, or sculptures; and (e) submitting as one’s own work papers purchased from research companies (SDSU Graduate Bulletin, 2014-2015, p. 67).

3. **Giving authorship credit.** The social work Code of Ethics states that social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed. Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others (NASW, 1996). Students should be careful to give appropriate authorship credit to anyone from whom they have obtained information for written assignments and class presentations, including citing books, journal articles, Internet websites, class lectures, professional colleagues, and/or classmates. Students should consult their instructors if they have questions or are unclear about how to incorporate and cite the work of others.
4. **Consequences for academic misconduct.** Academic misconduct will be handled according to University policy. Students who are found plagiarizing the works of others or committing other forms of academic misconduct will be subject to standards set forth by the University, as documented in the Graduate Bulletin “may warrant two separate and distinct disciplinary action that may be applied concurrently in response to a violation of this policy: academic sanctions, such as grade modifications; and punitive actions, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. Academic sanctions are concerned with the student’s grades and are the responsibility of the instructor. Punitive sanctions are concerned with the student’s records and status on campus and shall be the responsibility of the university president or designated representative. The Coordinator of Judicial Procedures shall be the president’s representative in matters of student discipline” (SDSU Graduate Division, 2014-2015, p. 67).

A student who is found cheating or plagiarizing will be asked to meet with the instructor of the course. The instructor may inform the Graduate Advisor in determining the consequences to be implemented. Incidents of alleged plagiarism will be referred by the faculty member involved to the University Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, who may initiate their own investigation of the alleged plagiarism. The faculty member will inform the Graduate Advisor that such action has been taken.

**Student Situation Report Procedures and Policies:**
(Adopted and approved by School of Social Work Faculty on March 16, 2005.)

The following procedures and policy are listed below:

Students are expected to be professional when enrolled in the SDSU School of Social Work. This entails both behavioral and ethical appropriateness in all interactions. The School requires continuous monitoring of the student by Faculty. Optimal social work education is contingent upon positive ongoing faculty evaluation of the student’s grades, professional attributes and performance in real or simulated professional situations.

By enrolling in the SDSU School of Social Work, students are expected to be professional and act in accordance and compliance with social work ethics, values, and academic standards set forth by the University and the School. The SDSU School of Social Work has adopted the NASW Code of Ethics 1999 revised, [http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp) as its academic standard. Students are responsible as adult learners to abide by ethical standards 1-6 of the NASW Code of Ethics - 1999 revised, which are relevant to professional behavior for a student in the MSW program. Examples of behaviors or situations that are not consistent with these ethical standards are listed below:

1. Applying practice and/or service delivery outside the scope of social work practice.
2. Violating the social worker’s ethical responsibility to clients, colleagues, the agency setting, and the social work profession.
3. Misrepresenting self as other than a social work student or an intern while in School program.
4. Being disrespectful to colleagues and supervisors in an internship by verbal and non-verbal communication, (e.g., language used in email and written work, voice tone, volume, etc.).

5. Attending an internship under the influence of drugs and exhibiting acting-out behavior. Professional and ethical behavior requires students to be free of substance abuse.

**Procedures:**

When a faculty member considers the actions of a MSW or BASW student to be inconsistent with Ethical Standards 1-6 of the NASW Code of Ethics (see examples above), the faculty member may implement the following procedure:

1. The faculty member will meet individually with the student to discuss the situation.

2. The faculty member may elect to informally discuss the situation with the Undergraduate/Graduate Advisor (hereafter to be “Advisor”).

3. If the faculty member or the Advisor decides the situation should be documented, the faculty member will complete the Student Situation Report in its entirety within 3 days of the incident. Some activities that occur on campus property that may be disruptive may warrant a step in addition to a situation report. These incidents should also be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/index.html](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/index.html). If the Advisor is the faculty member involved, he or she may elect to go to the Associate Director to implement the same procedure.

4. The faculty member will immediately forward the report to the Undergraduate Advisor for undergraduate students and the Graduate Advisor for graduate students.

5. The Advisor will forward the report to the student and keep a copy. The student will be encouraged to meet with the Advisor to discuss the report. The student may elect to submit a written response that will be attached to advisor’s copy.

6. The Advisor will be responsible for compiling and tracking student situations. These reports will be kept confidential, unless the advisor recommends the student for review by the Student Affairs Committee. Once the student has left the University by graduation or otherwise, any situation reports held by the Advisor will be destroyed.

7. The Advisor will inform the School’s Associate Director of each student situation report and the Associate Director shall apprise the Director.

8. Depending on the Advisor’s evaluation of the action reported, the Advisor may immediately recommend the discontinuance of the student in the social work program. If three Situation Reports are recorded on an individual student, the advisor will recommend that the Student Affairs Committee review the student’s academic standing. The Student Affairs Committee will make a recommendation to the Graduate or Undergraduate Advisor on the student’s continuing status. In its deliberations, the Student Affairs Committee will be provided all situation reports regarding the student.

9. The advisor will evaluate the situation as it relates to university and school policies and report back to the instructor.
Policy:

If a student receives three Situation Reports during his or her course of study in the School of Social Work, the student will be immediately referred to the Student Affairs Committee for academic review. If the Advisor determines that the report involves a serious infraction of the NASW Code of Ethics, the student may be referred to the Student Affairs Committee after one report. The Student Affairs Committee will make a recommendation regarding the student's continuance/discontinuance in the undergraduate or graduate School of Social Work program.

Disciplinary Disqualification

The School of Social Work defines student misconduct as student behavior that is in violation of regulations established by the Board of Trustees, of college/university regulations, and of rules governing residence on college/university property. Social work students, as citizens, are subject to all federal and state laws in addition to all college/university regulations governing student conduct and responsibility. A student may be suspended or disqualified from the Master's in social work program for violating laws, rules, or regulations. Students may appeal their disqualification to the Student Affairs Committee (see section on "Grievances" above).

Felony/Misdemeanor Conviction

Students with a felony or misdemeanor conviction should be aware that they may not be able to receive the clinical license in social work in the State of California (LCSW) and may also be excluded from certain jobs, field practicum internship sites, and/or the MSW program. This is stated in the SDSU School of Social Work MSW Admissions Application.

Campus Procedures for Harassment and Discrimination Complaints Filed By Students:

SDSU Office of Compliance and Policy Analysis

Sexual Harassment Defined

The California Education Code at section 212.5 states in part that "sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from or in the work or educational setting under any of the following conditions:

1. Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic status or progress.
2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by the individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual.

3. The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.

Sexual harassment is a violation of several state and federal laws including the California Education Code, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Sexual harassment is specifically prohibited in the California State University system by Executive Order 345 which became effective in 1981.

If Repeated, Pervasive, or Sufficiently Severe, the Following May Constitute Sexual Harassment:

- Jokes of a sexual nature
- Suggestive gestures
- Derogatory comments of a sexual nature
- Slurs of a sexual nature
- Impeding or blocking movements
- Unwelcome touching
- Displaying sexually suggestive pictures or objects
- Graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body

What to Do If You Have Been Sexually Harassed?

Students who think that they have been sexually harassed may file a Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Complaint Form at the Office of the Ombudsmen. A preliminary review of the complaint will commence immediately. All students who have been sexually harassed are strongly encouraged to file formal complaints. However, students who are not ready to file formally, but who wish to discuss incidents of sexual harassment in a confidential setting, may do so with a counselor from Counseling and Psychological Services (619-594-5220) or Student Health Services (594-5281).

Retaliation Is Prohibited

It is illegal to retaliate against anyone reporting or thought to have reported sexual harassment or who is a witness or otherwise is involved in a sexual harassment proceeding. Encouraging others to retaliate also is illegal. Examples include, but are not limited to, retaliatory grading, evaluation, assignment or ridicule, threats and withholding information to which a person is entitled.

Sanctions

Sanctions imposed for sexual harassment or retaliatory behavior by a faculty or staff member include, but are not limited to, reprimand, suspension, demotion, and dismissal (loss of tenure). The sanctions imposed for sexual harassment or retaliatory behavior by a student
include, but are not limited to, probation, suspension, and expulsion. Furthermore, harassers have been held by courts to be personally liable to pay millions of dollars in damages.

Resource

The Office of the Ombudsmen is a resource, should students have questions or concerns related to sexual harassment.

Office of the Ombudsmen
Division of Student Affairs
San Diego, California 92182-7437
(619) 594-6578

Office of Compliance and Policy Analysis
Division of Student Affairs
San Diego, California 92182-7430
(619) 594-5211

Examples of Sexual Harassment

The following examples of specific behavior may assist in establishing what constitutes sexual harassment at San Diego State University:

- A teacher offers you a better grade, extra help, or an academic opportunity in return for your sexual attention or threatens action against you for refusal.

- A person supervising your campus job, academic, or off-campus field placement makes repeated sexual comments that interfere with your work or learning experiences.

- An advisor or counselor asks questions of a sexual nature inappropriate to the topic at hand that offend you or make you uncomfortable.

Negative Impact of Sexual Harassment

Below are some examples of the negative impact of harassment and/or sexual harassment on students. They may experience sexual harassment as demeaning and it may:

- Discourage their classroom participation.

- Prevent them from seeking advice or assistance outside of class.

- Cause them to drop or avoid certain classes, to change majors or specialties within majors, and even to leave the University.

- Minimize their development and inhibit collegial relationships with faculty.

- Impede and dampen academic and career aspirations.
- Undermine self-confidence,
- Affect grades, and limit their capacity for full intellectual development and professional success.

VI. STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

All graduate students are members of the Graduate Social Work Association (GSWA). Officers of this organization (i.e., the GSWA Executive Board) are typically elected during the Spring Semester and serve for the academic year following their election. The GSWA interfaces between the student body and the administration and faculty of the School of Social Work. GSWA officers make efforts to identify the needs and concerns of students and bring those issues to the attention of the Faculty. They may develop and conduct surveys to gain student feedback about their overall experience in the MSW program and then report the results of those surveys to students and faculty.

The extent of the GSWA’s activities depends upon the degree of student involvement, which varies from year to year. When there is a high degree of student involvement, GSWA officers recommend students to the chairs of faculty committees in the School of Social Work (i.e., Curriculum, Student Affairs, and Diversity Committees) to serve as Student Representatives. The chairs interview these students and recommend them to the Director of the School of Social Work to be appointed as Student Representatives. Student Representatives serve throughout the academic year. They are expected to attend the monthly meetings and participate as a member of their assigned committee. They may: (a) provide input to the committee process from the GSWA Executive Board and graduate student body, and (b) communicate decisions made in the committee back to the GSWA Executive Board and the graduate student body.

When there is a low degree of student involvement in the GSWA, students who wish to be Student Representatives should consult with the Graduate Advisor who will refer the students to be interviewed by the Faculty chairs of the committees and recommended for appointment by the Director of the School of Social Work.

The GSWA activities vary from year, but usually include both academic and social activities for graduate students. The GSWA may sponsor study sessions for the Qualifying and Comprehensive Exams. They may also sponsor various social activities for graduate students throughout the year (e.g., Bar-B-Que at the MSW Orientation in August and a Commencement Reception/Breakfast at graduation in May). Typically, the officers consist of a President and Vice President and a team of officers, each of whom have assigned functions (e.g., activities coordinator, part-time student representative). Announcements from the GSWA will be communicated to the student body through “Communications Central”. For information about the GSWA for 2014-2015, please contact, Dr. Rasmussen, the Graduate Advisor, who is the designated faculty advisor to the GSWA.

The GSWA also interfaces with other student organizations in the School of Social Work including the:

- Asian and Pacific Islander Social Work Association (APISWA)
- Black Social Work Caucus (BSWC)
- Latino Student Social Work Network (LSSWN)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Social Work and Allies Group
- Social Action Committee (SAC)

Students are encouraged to consider being involved in the GSWA, as well as one or more of these student organizations. Such involvement can enhance their overall experience in the School of Social Work and provide opportunities for collegiality and professional networking. For information about the GSWA, contact the President, Melissa Cole at: melissamcole@yahoo.com

VII. SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students must take care of the following:

1. Make sure all official transcripts are in and the GRE score is on file.

2. Make sure all conditions are met to change your status from Conditional or Unclassified to Classified within the time period established when conditional status was granted.

3. Officially add or drop classes within the established time lines.

4. Keep your overall GPA at 3.0 or above.

5. Pass a Qualifying Examination at the end of the semester you are completing all of the 600 level courses required for the MSW degree.

6. Notify the School of Social Work and University Admissions and Records of any changes in name, address, and email.

7. Seek out your Thesis Committee (if you choose the Thesis option) and complete all required paperwork. (If you have questions, ask your Research instructors or the Graduate Advisor.

8. Pass the Comprehensive Exam (if you select the Comprehensive Examination option, instead of the Thesis).

9. Follow the Field Course Instructor /Director of Field Education’s instructions as to field practicum meetings, field placement process timelines, field application deadlines, practicum orientation labs, etc.

10. Obtain approval for transfer units from other schools.

11. Obtain approval from the Graduate Advisor to change your Official Program of Study.

12. File for Graduation in a timely fashion.
The Division of Graduate and Research Affairs will do the following and let you know by mail:

1. Advance you to Candidacy when you have completed 24 units and been recommended for advancement by the Graduate Advisor. You need not fill out any forms but your Official Program and GRE score must be on file.

2. Inform you of any discrepancies, changes, deficiencies etc. that may bear on your progress through the University.

3. Evaluate you for graduation after you file for it. They will let you know what you still need to complete for the degree. They will remind you that no degree can be awarded until grades of incomplete are removed, all requirements are met, and you have a 3.0 or better GPA. The School of Social Work can only recommend you for the degree. San Diego State University awards it to you.

The School of Social Work will:

1. Complete and file the proper paperwork to change your status from conditional to classified.

2. Forward your Official Program of Study to the Graduate Division, and sign/verify your advancement to candidacy. Dr. Dan Finnegan, Associate Director of the School of Social Work, handles all the formal paperwork for the School of Social Work and can help you if there is a problem. Please contact him at 619.594.6850 or dfinnega@mail.sdsu.edu. The Official Program of Study is typically sent to the Division of Graduate and Research Affairs in mid-March when Dr. Finnegan reviews students’ eligibility for the Comprehensive Exam or defense of Thesis.

VIII. GRADUATE ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Melinda Hohman, Director, School of Social Work
Dr. Daniel J. Finnegan, Associate Director
Dr. Lucinda Rasmussen, Graduate Advisor
Dr. David Engstrom, Coordinator of MSW Program
Candy Elson, LCSW, Director of Field Education

IX. STIPENDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND SDSU RESOURCES

Information on scholarships, stipends, and financial aid are available on the University web site: www.sdsu.edu To find it click on Financial Aid in the alphabetical listing of departments. Information is also available on the School of Social Work web site: http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/ under Current Students. Questions about scholarships should be directed to Elizabeth Marucheau, LCSW at 619.594-5710 or at emaruche@mail.sdsu.edu.

Scholarship Stipends and Campus Resources for Social Work Students is a publication available for a small fee in the Social Work section of the Aztec Book Store. This publication also includes information on professional organizations and the Alumni Mentor Program.
Appendices:

- **Appendix A:** See NASW Code of Ethics, Available at: https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp

- **Appendix B:** Maintaining Client Confidentiality

- **Appendix C:** Change of MSW Program Status Form (From 2-year to 3 or 4-year MSW Program)

*Graduate Student Handbook*, Revised September 20, 2014 by Lucinda A. Lee Rasmussen, Ph.D., LCSW, Graduate Advisor.
Students will maintain at all times the confidentiality of clients assigned to them in their field placement. They will protect the confidentiality of their clients when writing papers for their classes and when presenting cases in classes or in integrative seminars by changing clients’ names and disguising all identifying information. Please refer to the School of Social Work Guidelines for Maintaining Client Confidentiality for guidelines on how to protect and maintain client confidentiality and for suggestions on how to appropriately disguise identifying information.

Although we need to practice in accordance with the law and the NASW Code of Ethics in regard to confidentiality, the most compelling reason to maintain confidentiality should be out of respect for our clients. Veteran social work educator Alfred Kadushin advised that we should think of client information as a valuable possession of the client's temporarily lent to us. In fact, we need to remember that ownership of client information always resides with the client.

Though most mental health professionals are conscientious and intend to maintain the confidentiality of their clients, in fact many make unintentional mistakes throughout the course of their careers. The complexities involved in maintaining confidentiality are not a simple matter, and there are many challenges to our best intentions once we get out in the field and begin to practice.

Students are advised to carefully read the confidentiality policy of their field agency so that they are absolutely clear about with whom they may speak after the client agrees to receiving services from their agency.
Violations of Confidentiality

The following is a list of some common mistakes that practitioners or students may make that jeopardize clients’ confidentiality:

- Leaving a message (other than just your name) for a client with someone other than the client or on a common answering machine.

- Accidentally running into a client in public and inadvertently revealing the nature of your relationship to others who happen to be around.

- Needing to share or just blow off steam and talking to a friend or family member about your day, and thus discussing client information.

- A family member of a client calls to get a message to your client and you agree to deliver it, thereby revealing the fact that you are seeing the client.

- A caring, concerned family member of your client calls wanting to know how she can help, or to share some information with you about the client, and you either inadvertently acknowledge that you are seeing the client and/or engage with the family member in a discussion about the client. In this example the client is not a minor, is not in danger of hurting self or another, and is oriented to person, place, and time.

- Feeling you need to answer a question regarding a client from someone with some authority, without a release (e.g., an emergency-room doctor, a lawyer, an insurance company representative, probation officer, etc.).

- A friend or colleague refers a client to you, wants to know if he or she called and how things are going, and you say yes and share a few things. Likewise, you call to thank a colleague for a referral without the client's permission.

- You run into a referral source who would like to know how things are going with a case, and you share a few things without a release from the client, or in a public place where the information can be overheard.

- A friend enthusiastically says she hears you are seeing someone she knows and that you are really helping. You acknowledge that you are in fact seeing the client.

Guidelines for Maintaining Confidentiality

Client information can be communicated verbally, nonverbally, or in written form, and all types of information need to be protected. The following are some suggestions for protecting client information:
• Get all necessary releases of information/informed consent in written form. If due to some pressing necessity you can only obtain it verbally, document that the client gave you the permission and then follow-up with a written release as soon as possible.

• Should you need to discuss a case or consult with another professional in the classroom or with an outside supervisor to obtain help with the care of your client, make sure you have adequately disguised all identifying information so the client is not recognizable. (See guidelines for disguising client information.)

• Should you ever recognize a client being discussed in an agency, classroom, etc., or with a person with whom you have some social or otherwise nonprofessional relationship and who is not aware that you may be privy to private information about that client, you should excuse yourself from the discussion and leave the room. (This is an ethical matter not a legal one.)

• Client information of any kind should not be transported out of the agency without explicit consent of the agency supervisor.

• Client information should always be locked up or otherwise protected. Don't leave papers with lists, appointment books, or documents with confidential information unattended (even if you are physically present). This includes writing case notes in public areas where others might see.

• It is your responsibility to educate or otherwise inform other nonprofessional personnel if you feel that they are in any way inadvertently exposing client information (e.g., leaving unfinished reports on the computer screen during lunch or speaking about clients in earshot of other people).

• When faxing information about a client, make sure you include a statement indicating the confidential nature of transmitted information on cover sheets.

• Client information must be adequately disguised when used for class assignments. Process recordings should be shredded after use, as well as papers containing client information when no longer needed for educational purposes.

Senate bill 19, sec. 56.101 reads, “Every provider of health care, health care service plan, or contractor who creates, maintains, preserves, stores, abandons, or destroys medical records shall do so in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the information contained therein. Any provider of health care, health care service plan, or contractor who negligently disposes, abandons, or destroys medical records shall be subject to the provisions of this part.”

Guidelines for Disguising Client Information

Regarding the disguising of confidential information, Senate Bill 19, section 56.05f states, “Medical information means any individually identifiable information, in electronic or
physical form, in possession of or derived from a provider of health care or health care service plan regarding a patient’s medical history, mental or physical condition or treatment.”

“Individually identifiable means that the medical information includes or contains any element of personal identifying information sufficient to allow identification of the individual such as the patient’s address, electronic mail address, telephone number or social security number, or other information that, alone or in combination with other publicly available information, reveals the individual’s identity.”

When preparing case material for classroom discussion or assignments, all identifying information must be deleted and disguised so as to maintain, with certainty, the confidentiality of the client. However, students should not change the essential character of the case so that the analysis is affected. To ensure that legal compliance with confidentiality, students should check with their field instructor to make sure that they have disguised case information adequately.

The following are suggestions for disguising client information:

- Disguise ages of all individuals discussed, though keep within the same developmental stage or subphase.

- Disguise all names and clearly indicate in the paper that names have been changed.

- Give no exact dates, including birthdates, referral dates, marriage dates, divorce dates.

- Give no specific places, including place of employment, birthplace, neighborhood, etc. Describe and disguise in general terms (e.g., client grew up on the west coast in a mid-size city, in a poor neighborhood).

- Disguise exact occupations, describe in a general way (e.g., works in the helping profession, works in a blue collar job, etc.).

- Disguise all numbers (e.g., exact years of education, exact years of marriage, etc.).

- Consider other aspects of the case that you can change without compromising the integrity of the case analysis:
  
  - Could you change or not state the specific drug to which an individual is addicted?
  
  - Could you change the exact nature of a physical problem?
San Diego State University - School of Social Work

Requesting Change in MSW Graduate Program Status

Please Print

NAME: ____________________________

Red ID: ____________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________

TELEPHONE: __________________ EMAIL __________________

I am/will be currently enrolled in the:

- [ ] 2 Yr Program
- [ ] 3 Yr Program
- [ ] 4 Yr. Program

I am requesting to officially change my MSW Program Status to:

- [ ] 2 Yr. Program
- [ ] 3 Yr. Program
- [ ] 4 Yr. Program

In accordance with the School policy, I understand that my:
1) Request for Program Status form must be completed in its entirety; and
2) Be approved and confirmed by the Student Affairs Coordinator or the Graduate Student Advisor before my status changes officially.

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                     Date

For SDSU School of Social Work Office Use Only

MSW Graduate Program Status Change -
Approved for the above named student.

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                     Date

Student Affairs Coordinator/Graduate Advisor

cc: Director of Field Education & Graduate Advisor