



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

“Cultivating the knowledge for global change – one community at a time”

Graduate Student Handbook¹ 2024-2025

¹ Updated Fall 2024

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Graduate Student Handbook – 2024-2025

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Effective Fall 2024

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: <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/resources> .

I. MSW PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the MSW program is to prepare versatile leaders for professional, ethical, and advanced specialist social work practice. The program focuses on evidence-informed practices, advancing equity and social justice, promoting human rights, and engaging in social action to enhance individual and community well-being. The program prepares graduates to meet the evolving needs of the diverse US-Mexico border-connected region, Tribal and indigenous communities, and beyond.

MSW Program Goals:

The goals of the MSW Program are to implement the mission by preparing advanced practitioners in the specialized areas of Direct Practice/Clinical or Administration/Community Development who:

1. are well-grounded in the values and ethics of the profession;
2. have multiple competencies that can be used in a wide variety of settings, with systems of various sizes and with diverse and vulnerable populations;
3. are able to critically examine issues of social, economic and environmental justice and are committed to the realization of human rights;
4. utilize research evidence in practice decision making;
5. are committed to lifelong professional development; and
6. are prepared to be leaders in the profession.

II. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVISING

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

SDSU School of Social Work office: Hepner Hall room 119 (619)594-6865

Graduate Advisor

Social Work Graduate Advisor: Shelly Paule, LCSW, MSW

Office: Hepner Hall (HH) 118; Email: slpaule@sdsu.edu

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm by appointment using the following link:
<https://calendly.com/shellypaulelcsw/office-hours-coaching>

The Social Work Graduate Advisor is your link to the University and the School of Social Work. The Graduate Advisor provides academic direction and support for all of the MSW Programs, including information and counsel on program and course requirements and administrative procedures.

In Fall 2024, the Social Work Graduate Advisor for all Master of Social Work programs is Shelly Paule, LCSW, although the single term “Graduate Advisor” will be used throughout this handbook.

Role of Graduate Advisor:

- Provide information about requirements and policies of the College of Graduate Studies.
- Advise students on their 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 11 of 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 these students on ways that may improve their academic performance to 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 the College of Graduate Studies any 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 12 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 17 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.
- 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 (SAC) and discuss whether the Committee can respond to a concern (see Pages 27-30). The Director of the School of Social Work responds to appeals of grades (see Page 29).
- 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 (see Pages 31-33).
- 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 8).
- 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/Clinical or Macro Practice Faculty and will review with them the topic areas they missed on the exam.
- Email Graduate Announcements to inform students of important events related to their matriculation at the School of Social Work. A condensed version of the Graduate Announcements will also be posted on the School of Social Work Home Room Canvas website: Communications Central.

Please note that the Graduate Advisor 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 MSW Admissions office: mswadmissions@sdsu.edu

Documentation: Please Keep a File

It is extremely important that all students keep their own running file of all official actions regarding their status, all copies of documents sent to them by the School of Social Work or by the University including the College of Graduate Studies, Office of Admissions, and Office of the Registrar. This includes all grade reports, all important memos from the School regarding requirements, curriculum, field practicum due dates, etc. ***Please keep all Syllabi!!*** Students may need copies of their course syllabi or Field Intern Evaluations for verification for license requirements 5 or 10 years from now.

University Catalog and the College of Graduate Studies Master's Student Handbook

Students are responsible for all information contained in the current University Catalog <https://catalog.sdsu.edu/>. In addition, the College of Graduate Studies and their Master's Student Handbook provide an overview of masters-level graduate programs and policies at SDSU that you must know (<https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/grad-resources>). This document, the *Graduate Student Handbook 2024-2025* is meant to supplement (not replace) the *University Catalog and the Master's Student Handbook*. As a graduate student in the School of Social Work, you are responsible for reading and being familiar with the contents of these 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 general information, announcements of upcoming events, and Field Education announcements. Other bulletin boards are allocated to the Social Work Alumni Association, Graduate Student Social Work Association, and other recognized student organizations affiliated with the School of Social Work.

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 the Graduate Advisor.

SDSU Email

SDSU has partnered with Google to provide free Google G Suite accounts to all current students, faculty, and staff. Students are required to obtain an @sdsu.edu email account, and it is used in the SDSUid single sign on process. "Single sign on" allows you to access many electronic systems through your web browser without having to log in through separate accounts. It is a requirement of the School of Social Work that students use their SDSU email accounts (not personal email) when communicating with School of Social Work faculty, staff and administration. In accordance with recently passed SDSU Senate Policy, students shall be responsible for checking their official email messages in order to stay current with university communications. More information on the Google G Suite for Students is available at it.sdsu.edu/help/google

Communications Central: Social Work Homeroom

Communication within the School of Social Work is primarily by email and through the Canvas Homeroom/course entitled, "Social Work HR." While notices to students from the Graduate Advisor related to their academic progress (e.g., probation status, problems with fulfilling course requirements, etc.) will be sent via email, general announcements on advising, important deadlines, and community events will be sent through the Social Work Homeroom. It is the responsibility of School of Social Work students to read messages sent to them from the Social Work HR, as these often contain important information and updates regarding program requirements and deadlines. Students should inform the School of Social Work of any changes in their address, phone number, and personal email. Changes may be reported to the Office Staff in the School of Social Work Office (HH 119); Joanne Rullan (jrullan@sdsu.edu).

All graduate students will have access to the Canvas Social Work HR. School of Social Work staff member, Joanne Rullan, is the designated instructor for the "Social Work HR". Students may communicate with other students through email using this site. It is also possible for recognized student organizations to set up their own Discussion Board. If you have questions about the Social Work Homeroom in Canvas, please contact Joanne Rullan: jrullan@sdsu.edu.

The School of Social Work has established social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). Please contact Joanne Rullan (jrullan@sdsu.edu) if you wish to submit an announcement for consideration. Links to all of these can be found on the front of the School's webpage: <https://socialwork.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 coordinates these meetings.

The Fall Town Meeting: (a) reviews various aspects of the specialized/advanced level (SWORK 700 level) course of study (i.e., selection of area of specialization [Advanced Direct Practice/Clinical and Administration/Community Development Practice]); (b) outlines electives according to student areas of interest; (c) provides information about the school social work and PPS credential; (d) discusses the process of writing a Thesis versus taking the Comprehensive Exam, etc.), and (e) provides information about the advanced year (i.e., SWORK 700 level) field placement process.

There are two Town Meetings during the Spring Semester. The meeting for SWORK 600 level students focuses on policies and procedures related to the Program Assessment, while the meeting for SWORK 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. Please note that this information might be provided as a separate meeting by instructors instead. 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 Social Work HR, mentioned above.

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 with 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 or publishable article option should seek mentoring from their thesis chair or committee members. The thesis chair will assist students in developing a thesis/article topic and outlining a realistic time frame for completing the thesis (see Pages 22-24 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 25 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, Dr. Lianne Urada (lurada@sdsu.edu) will serve as the First Year Faculty Mentor for students in the Administration/Community Development specialization and Dr. Eunjeong Ko, eko@sdsu.edu will serve as the First Year Faculty Mentor for students in the Direct Practice/Clinical specialization. The role of the First Year Faculty Mentor is to be a resource related to **social work career counseling** and questions that students 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 with international expertise may be assigned to international students. They 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 available only while the student is taking SWORK 600-level foundation courses. Once the student has taken the Program Assessment and been advanced to candidacy, the First Year Faculty Mentor will no longer have a role. The Second Year Faculty mentor will be the field faculty assigned to the student, i.e., the instructor for your SWORK 750 or SWORK 755 course.

Please note that the assigned Field Faculty Instructor (who teaches your SWORK 650, 750 or 755 course) is always a resource and provides mentorship in relation to students' field practicum assignment, even in the foundation year.

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 or Field Faculty Instructor, but to the Graduate Advisor.

Faculty Office Hours and Contact Information

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

Office Hours for Director of the School of Social Work

Dr. Min has an open door policy; students may stop by his office or schedule to an appointment by contacting Joanne Rullan, Administrative Support Assistant, at jrullan@sdsu.edu. Important announcements throughout the year will be sent through the Canvas Social Work Homeroom. Stay in touch with the School of Social Work by liking us on Facebook: *San Diego State University School of Social Work*, check the Facebook page to learn about important activities, including those sponsored by Dr. Min. Also, please follow the School of Social Work on Twitter [@SDSUSocialWork](https://twitter.com/SDSUSocialWork)

Contact Information: Updating Student Addresses, Phone, and Email

All students are required to use their SDSU email to communicate with faculty, staff, and administration. Throughout the semester, the Graduate Advisor distributes general advising information and program announcements to all students to the SDSU email account.

Information related to 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 University, as well as with the administration of the School of Social Work. They may update their contact information through my.SDSU (<https://my.sdsu.edu/guides/update-contact-information>), but need to also notify the School of Social Work directly about changes to their address, telephone number, or personal email. These changes can be made in person at the Social Work Office (HH 119) or emailed to Joanne Rullan (jrullan@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 students regularly and carefully monitor their SDSU email account.

Job Notices

Job announcements are posted on the School of Social Work web site on our job board at:

<http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/career/job-board-for-students-and-grads/>. Job announcements may also be emailed to MSW students in the School of Social Work through the Canvas Social Work Homeroom.

Please also consult with SDSU Career Services at:

http://career.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/career/student-services.aspx. They can assist you with your job search and resume. Each Spring semester 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 through my.SDSU

Registration is administered by the Office of the Registrar, and done online through my.SDSU each semester. Students can view their registration window through my.SDSU. You will use your nine-digit student identification number, currently called the Empl ID number, to register. The registration guide can be found here: <https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/registration/mysdsu-registration-guide>

** SDSU implements a web based first on first off waitlist system. Refer to the guidelines for details: <https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/registration/waitlist>

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 (SWORK 601, 619, and 690). If a course is waived, it must be replaced by another course in consultation with the Graduate Advisor.

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., SWORK 601 - Social Policy, SWORK 619 - Human Behavior in the Social Environment, and SWORK 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 MSW Admissions Office: mswadmissions@sdsu.edu. The Student Development and Accreditation Support Specialist or Graduate Advisor administers the exams. Meanwhile the Waiver Examination is scheduled, 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 provide their responses to multiple-choice questions on a GradeScope bubblesheet. A GradeScope scanner 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 (84%) to pass the Waiver Examinations. If you are successful in these exams, you will not have to complete these courses (SWORK 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 Student Status

Be familiar with the “Know Your Status” section of the Master’s Student Handbook offered by the College of Graduate Studies (<https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/grad-resources>). 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 students with Conditional status 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 College of Graduate Studies, which will change the student’s status to Classified. For questions related to Conditional and Classified Status, please contact MSW Admissions at mswadmissions@sdsu.edu, or the Graduate Advisor.

Transfer of Units

A maximum of 18 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 the MSW Admissions Office (mswadmissions@sdsu.edu), who will work together with the Graduate Advisor, for an

evaluation and the submission of the required paper work, 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 (SWORK 744, 739, 740, and 745), advanced research courses (SWORK 791, 797), or the MSW II Advanced Field Practicum course (SWORK 750, 755).

Refer to the “Transfer courses” section of the Master’s Student Handbook offered by the College of Graduate Studies (<https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/grad-resources>) for more details.

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 schedule adjustment period when classes may be dropped and/or added. Adding a class follows the procedures developed by the Office of the Registrar (<http://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/registration>). The administration of the School of Social Work discourages instructors from accepting students above the recommended class size for a course section, especially when there are seats open in another section of the same course.

Please refer to the University calendar for the Add/Drop deadline:
<https://registrar.sdsu.edu/calendars/academic>.

Students may be permitted to add or drop classes after the deadline but will have to pay a fee to do so. 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.

As per the Office of the Registrar, “Students who find it necessary to cancel their registration or to withdraw from all classes after enrolling for any academic term are required to follow the University's official withdrawal procedures. Failure to follow formal University procedures may result in an obligation to pay fees as well as the assignment of failing grades in courses.”

Refer to the “Withdrawal or Late Schedule Adjustments” section of SDSU Office of the Registrar’s website for more details: https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/academic_status/withdrawal-late-schedule-adjustment.

If you find that you have a serious, compelling reason (e.g., severe illness, family emergency) for dropping your coursework, please contact the Graduate Advisor.

Leave Of Absence

Students need to file a leave of absence every semester that they are not matriculating. Students are allowed to take up to four semesters of approved leave of absence:
https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/academic_status/leave_of_absence

It is your responsibility to meet all the necessary application and registration deadlines for the semester in which you intend to resume your courses. This includes deadlines for applying for a social work field placement (SWORK 650, 750, 755). Please be advised that a leave of absence 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 the Graduate Advisor of your intent to take a leave of absence. If you are in the SWORK 650, 750, or 755 Field Practicum course or have applied for a field practicum course, you must also notify Amanda Lee, 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 & Area of Specialization

Students are accepted into the program under 1-year, 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 Requesting Change in MSW Graduate Program Status form at the end of this Handbook. You will need to meet with the Graduate Advisor to obtain approval to change programs. If the change in program results in a year-long delay of a Field course, you must inform Amanda Lee, LCSW, Director of Field Education that you will not be enrolling in Field.

Students can only change their Area of Specialization based on availability in the desired Specialization. To initiate this change, approval from the Graduate Advisor is required. If space constraints prevent a change of Specialization, students have the option to appeal to the Student Affairs Committee (SAC). To do so, the student must inform the Graduate Advisor at least five working days before the scheduled monthly SAC meeting, providing a written explanation of the circumstances. The Graduate Advisor will then forward the case to the Chair of the SAC, who will review it and include it on the agenda for the next scheduled SAC meeting. Appeals received during breaks will be scheduled for the first SAC meeting after classes resume.

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 the Graduate Advisor for an explanation of this option. Also refer to the Degree Time Limitations section of the Requirements for Master's Degrees in the SDSU Online Catalog; <https://catalog.sdsu.edu/index.php>.

Academic Expectations

Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) 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 of Social Work Degree. In keeping with the requirement of the College of Graduate Studies 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. For example, students cannot be advanced to candidacy for the MSW degree unless they have: (a) successfully completed all 600 level coursework and (b) have a GPA of at least 3.0. Furthermore, students are not allowed to sit for the Comprehensive Exam or file 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, per their Degree

Evaluation. (See “Important Milestones to Graduation” and “Comprehensive Exam/Thesis/Publishable Paper” sections of this Handbook). Also refer to the “Grade Point Averages” section of the Requirements for Master’s Degrees in the SDSU Online Catalog; <https://catalog.sdsu.edu/index.php>.

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, the Graduate Advisor 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 MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment and Comprehensive Exams, or to graduate). If you receive a notice about your academic performance, you should contact and make an appointment with 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 3.0 or above. If a student’s GPA drops below 3.0, he or she will be placed on Academic Probation. The student has two semesters to bring their overall cumulative GPA back to 3.0 or above. A term GPA of 3.0 or above is required in the semester immediately following being placed on Probation; otherwise, the College of Graduate Studies will disqualify the student from the University. If the student obtains a term GPA of 3.0 or above, they are allowed to continue in the MSW program; however, they must still have the overall cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above by the end of the next semester or they will be disqualified from the University. If at the end of the second semester the student has attained a 3.0 or better on all work attempted at San Diego State University, academic probation will be lifted. (https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/academic_status/grad-probation-disqualification)

Consequences of “No Credit” Grades in Field Coursework

The MSW I and MSW II Field Practicums (SWORK 650 or SWORK 750/755 courses) are graded on a Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) basis. Please note that a grade of No Credit (NC) in SWORK 650, 750, or 755 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 \$70 readmission fee https://registrar.sdsu.edu/students/academic_status/grad-probation-disqualification. Refer to the College of Graduate Studies Petition for Reinstatement form (accessible online: https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/forms). To return to the MSW program, the disqualified student must first meet with the Graduate Advisor and file an application for re-admission to the School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee (SAC). Readmission to the university is NOT automatic. The graduate adviser and the SSW Student Affairs Committee will consider each applicant on an individual basis and provide recommendations to the SSW Director and graduate dean.

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 Chair of the SAC and request an appointment with the SAC. They may give an oral statement before the Committee stating the reasons they wish to be readmitted and 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. The student should consult with the Graduate Advisor, before initiating the readmission process.

School of Social Work Grading Policy

Faculty members in the School of Social Work take great care in the assignment of grades. The grading policy is as follows:

%	Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

The grades at the School of Social Work will reflect the University policy. 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 (See University Catalog; <https://catalog.sdsu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=921#grading-system>), are:

A: Outstanding achievement B: Average
C: Minimally passing
D: Unacceptable for graduate credit
F: Failing
Cr: Credit
NC: No Credit
RP: Report in Progress
I: Incomplete authorized
IC: Incomplete Charged
WU: Withdrawal Unauthorized

These grades are further defined by the criteria described below.

Grading 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: SWORK 650, 750, and 755). 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, they will determine with the student the means by which the remaining course requirements will be completed.

University policy on Incomplete Authorized grades and the Incomplete Agreement:

https://registrar.sdsu.edu/faculty_staff/courses_grades/incomplete_i_agreement

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

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. Students who suspect they may have a disability should contact Student Disability Services and request an informational session with a 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 [Student Disability Services](#) at (619) 594-6473; sds@sdsu.edu. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services 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 Student Disability Services.

If a Student Disability Services 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 documentation from Student Disability Services for appropriate academic accommodations. Please refer to the SDSU Student Disability Services website at http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/ for additional information.

Students who are requesting academic accommodations for the SWORK 650, 750, and 755 Field Practicum courses need to follow these procedures:

Before the student's field practicum application due date, contact Student Disability Services for an evaluation.

1. Obtain a letter from Student Disability Services stating the requested appropriate academic accommodations.
2. Obtain and provide a copy of the completed Release of Information from Student Disability Services for the Director of Field Education, Field Faculty, and Field Instructor for consultation with Student Disability Services.
3. 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 Student Disability Services before coursework is started. 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 Comprehensive Exam, students who need SDS testing accommodations need to inform the Graduate Advisor at least two months prior to the scheduled Comprehensive Exam. . The Graduate Advisor and Associate Director work with the SDS Testing Accommodations Center to arrange for appropriate academic accommodations for the student to take the 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 College of Graduate Studies 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 University Catalog related to the requirements of a Master's degree, with special attention to the sections related to the School of Social Work.

Program of Study and Degree Evaluations

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 (MSW) – Advanced Standing Program (ASP)
- Master of Social Work Degree and Master of Public Health Degree (MSW/MPH) - concurrent degrees (*currently not accepting new applications*)
- Master of Social Work Degree and Juris Doctor Degree (MSW/JD) – concurrent degrees (*currently not accepting new applications*)

Information specific to the Master in Social Work (MSW) degree is presented below. Information specific to either of the concurrent programs can be obtained by contacting the Graduate Advisor using the hyperlinks on the School of Social Work website at

<https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/academics/graduate>.

Note: SDSU is currently not accepting applications for the MSW/MPH and MSW/JD concurrent programs

The MSW program is a 60 unit program of study organized around two distinct areas of specialization. Each student's official **Program of Study** identifies their area of specialization: Direct Practice/Clinical or Administration/Community Development.

Within each Specialization, students may use their elective courses to further their interest in various service areas in social work (e.g., child welfare, mental/behavioral health practice, health and aging, school social work).

Student's progress toward their degree completion can be tracked via the Degree Evaluation (also called the degree audit report). The report includes the **Program of Study**, GPA and advancement to candidacy requirements. Visit the College of Graduate Studies website for additional information on Degree Evaluations:

https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/degree_completion

Graduate Field Education

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

Course Sequencing

Courses in the School of Social Work are described in the University Catalog. The 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/>. For questions related to the sequencing of your coursework, contact the Graduate Advisor. Please refer to Course Sequence Table below:

Sequencing of Courses taken under Options permitted MSW Graduate students.

		Advanced Standing		2 year		3 year		4 year	
		Direct	Administration Community Development	Direct	Administration Community Development	Direct	Administration Community Development	Direct	Administration Community Development
		Number (units)		Number (units)		Number (units)		Number (units)	
1st Year									
	Bridge	670 (3), 671 (3)							
	Research	610 (3), 791 (3)		690 (3), 610 (3)		690 (3)		690 (3)	
	Policy	702 (3)		601 (3)		601 (3)		601 (3)	
	HBSE	720*(3)		619 (3), 620A (3)		619 (3), 620A (3)		619 (3), 620A (3)	
	Practice	744 (3), 739 (3)	740 (3)	630 (3), 631 (3), 632 (3)					
	Field	750 (8)	755 (8)	650 (7)					
	Electives (6-9 units)	590, 596, 696, 745, 758, 780, 781, and/or out-of- department							
2nd Year									
	Research			791 (3) or 797 (3)		610 (3)		610 (3)	
	Policy			702 (3)					
	HBSE			720*(3)					
	Practice			744 (3), 739 (3)	740 (3)	630 (3), 631 (3), 632 (3)		630 (3), 631 (3), 632 (3)	
	Field			750 (8)	755 (8)	650 (7)		650 (7)	
	Electives (6-9 units)			590, 596, 696, 745, 758, 780, 781, and/or out-of- department					
3rd Year									
	Research					791 (3) or 797 (3)			
	Policy					702 (3)		702 (3)	
	HBSE					720*(3)		720*(3)	
	Practice					744 (3), 739 (3)	740 (3),		
	Field					750 (8)	755 (8)		
	Electives (6-9 units)					590, 596, 696, 745, 758, 780, 781, and/or out-of- department		590, 596, 696, 745, 758, 780, 781, and/or out-of- department	
4th Year									
	Research							791 (3) or 797 (3)	
	Practice							744 (3), 739 (3)	740 (3),
	Field							750 (8)	755 (8)

*720 Civic Engagement is required for all in the Administration/Community Development specialization. Direct Practice/Clinical specialization 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 SWORK 600 level coursework and taken the MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment. The foundation courses are considered prerequisites for the SWORK 700 level coursework, including elective courses. Exception is made for students who pass Waiver Exams for SWORK 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 SWORK 600 foundation level coursework. 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 form signed by the Graduate Advisor must be filed and accepted by the College of Graduate Studies. All such courses must be related to social work and must be approved by the Graduate Advisor prior to enrollment. If you wish to take an out-of-department elective, you should email the Graduate Advisor and provide a description of the course, the course syllabus, 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, substance abuse, domestic violence, aging & long term care, law & ethics, and human sexuality to be eligible for the California State Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). 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 SWORK 600 level courses with a grade of at least a C.
4. Complete the MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment.
5. Be Advanced to Candidacy. For many students this usually takes place during Summer term between finishing SWORK 600 level courses and beginning SWORK 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. The Graduate Advisor will advance the student to candidacy when they become eligible.

6. Pass all SWORK 700 level courses with a grade of at least a C while maintaining an overall GPA of at least 3.00.
7. File for Graduation with the College of Graduate Studies (see discussion below). Please note that students who have not been advanced to candidacy before the administration of comprehensive exam will not become eligible to graduate until Summer semester at the earliest.
8. 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).

The MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment

All students must participate in the MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment administered by the School of Social Work as one of the requirements for advancement to candidacy and the MSW degree. The Program Assessment covers content in the generalist social work coursework. Results from the Program Assessment are compiled and aggregated to inform student competency on the nine EPAS. Details are posted on <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/academics> The Program Assessment takes place in the Spring semester (May) when you complete the Generalist coursework. Students will be notified of their eligibility to take the required MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment in the first week of May.

Thesis or Comprehensive Exam

In addition to completing the courses listed on their Official Program of Study and completing the MSW Generalist-level Program Assessment, all students must complete a Culminating 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 (Plan A) or take the Comprehensive Exam (Plan B). The School of Social Work offers an alternative method for meeting the Comprehensive Exam requirements through the writing of a research article for publication. The decision for selecting Culminating Experience is made when you register for your Fall courses for your last year of the MSW program.

Thesis (Plan A)

If you are planning to do a Thesis, you should have your ideas and procedures worked out long before your last academic year when your choice to do a Thesis becomes official. The Plan A option becomes official to the university with the registration into 799A. Information on the requirements and conduct of a Thesis will be discussed in the SWORK 690 Research class and can be found in a University guide to the conduct of a Thesis at SDSU. Please contact the College of Graduate Studies at either gra@sdsu.edu or 619-594-5213. <https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/thesis>

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. Identify (tenure-line) faculty member who will serve as the Chair of your Thesis Committee, and obtain written/email confirmation that they will serve as your Thesis Chair.
4. Prior to the Fall semester of your Advanced/Specialized year, send this email confirmation to the Associate Director, Dr. Dahlia Fuentes (Dahlia.Fuentes@sdsu.edu) so that you may obtain the registration number to enroll in SWORK 797 in the Fall semester.
5. Form a Thesis Committee (a Chair, plus two other Faculty members). One Faculty member must be from outside the School of Social Work. For details: <https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/thesis>
6. Meet with the Graduate Advisor to discuss the proposed thesis committee and provide them with the required information for the Thesis Committee form. The Graduate Advisor submits the completed form to the College of Graduate Studies through Onbase. (This is usually done during the Fall semester of the Advanced Year)
7. Begin literature review. (Ideally, this should be done during the summer term before beginning SWORK 700 level coursework).
8. Work with Thesis Chair to formulate the research questions and methodology of the study. (Ideally, this should be done during the summer term before beginning SWORK 700 level coursework).
9. Write up first three chapters of Thesis (i.e., Statement of the Problem (including the research question and discussion of its significance or contributions), Review of Literature, and Methodology), and include the bibliography.
10. Meet with your committee Chair and other members to obtain feedback on your proposal prior to submitting it for IRB review and beginning the empirical portion of the study.
11. Submit proposal to the SDSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtain their approval to conduct the study. You can gather or obtain the data for the study only after the SDSU IRB has approved your proposal.
12. Registration in SWORK 799A. Registration in SWORK 799A is obtained from the College of Graduate Studies after approval of the Thesis Committee Form, #6 above. *Note: Master's thesis committee packets are submitted online via your Graduate Advisor.*
13. Input the data, complete statistical analyses, and analyze the findings.
14. Write up the last two chapters of Thesis (i.e., Findings and Discussion).
15. Submit draft of Thesis to Thesis Chair and committee members for their review. Revise drafts of your chapters as advised by your Chair and other committee members.
16. Present and defend the Thesis. Obtain signatures from Thesis Committee indicating they approve the Thesis.
17. Submit completed Thesis to Montezuma Publishing and the College of Graduate Studies.

Note: you must complete and submit the Thesis by the deadline dates specified on the College of Graduate Studies [website](#): (a) thesis submission deadline (in March/April, date to be determined by the College of Graduate Studies); (b) thesis publication deadline (in May, date to be determined by the College of Graduate Studies); and (c) avoid reenrollment in 799B deadline (in May, date to be determined by the College of Graduate Studies). These are also posted by [Montezuma Publishing](#). Otherwise, you will not be able to graduate on time and your graduation will be delayed until the following Semester (August).

Students often underestimate the amount of time it takes for approval between the completion of the first draft and the submission of the final copy to the College of Graduate Studies and Montezuma Publishing. Your committee members need time to read and respond to your drafts, and Montezuma Publishing can also take a substantial amount of time to review formatted theses. Working backward from the submission deadline in March/April, you may likely need to have a complete draft of your thesis finished by early February in order to have your thesis properly reviewed by your Committee and to meet deadlines for a Spring semester graduation. So, even though you may not be registered for SWORK 799A until the Spring semester of your Advanced/Specialized year (e.g., 4th semester of the 2-year program), it will be necessary to complete much of the writing prior to that time if you wish to graduate at the end of that semester.

For further information regarding deadlines, please visit the College of Graduate Studies website: <https://grad.sdsu.edu/announcements-and-deadlines> and/or contact them at gra@sdsu.edu or 619-594-5213

SWORK 799B Thesis Extension. If the writing, formatting, and approval processes are not completed within the deadlines for a graduation in the semester that you have enrolled in SWORK 799A, then you can enroll in SWORK 799B so that you are registered the semester that you will actually graduate with a completed, approved, and formatted thesis. SWORK 799B may be taken through SDSU World Campus (formally College of Extended Studies) for a lower cost than the fees through regular registration.

Comprehensive Exam (Plan B)

If you choose the Comprehensive Exam, you will take it in your final Spring Semester, not before. The exam will be given in April. The exam is scheduled again in the Summer 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. Dahlia Fuentes, Associate Director, determined students' eligibility (early March), but have since become eligible. Please note that students who have not been advanced to candidacy before the April exam date will not become eligible to graduate until Summer Semester at the earliest. They should still apply for Summer Graduation during Spring Semester. Students may walk in Commencement exercises if they have applied for Graduation for the Spring 2025, Summer 2025, or Fall 2024 semesters.

If the student does not pass the second attempt at the Comprehensive Exam, the third and final attempt can be scheduled for the Spring or Summer semester of the following year. 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 Foundation year classes (31 units) and SWORK 744 or 740, SWORK 791 or SWORK 797, and SWORK 750 or 755.
2. Receive grades of C or above for all graded courses in the MSW program, and RP 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 (SAC), who will review the plan and approve its implementation. The third exam cannot be taken until the 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 Method of Meeting the Comprehensive Exam Requirement (Plan B, Publishable Paper)

Students have a third option for completing the culminating 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. Students will be expected to have earned a B+ or higher in both SW690 and SW610 to be eligible for the option. Information about this option can be found at: <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/resources> (see “Alternative to the Comprehensive Exam, The Research Publication Option”)

Changing from Thesis, or Publishable Paper to Comprehensive Exam

Students may be allowed to switch from the Thesis or publishable paper options to the Comprehensive Exam, and vice versa, but must request the approval of the Graduate Advisor. If the change is approved, the advisor will submit a Change of Program form to the College of Graduate Studies. 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. Please check with the College of Graduate Studies for the exact date. Applications for Graduation in the Summer Semesters are also due 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 deadline.

Graduating students: Please note that if you are not advanced to candidacy by the beginning of the Spring Semester, you will most likely not be able to graduate until the Summer Semester. However, you may still participate in the Commencement Exercises in May. 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 communicated to students by the College of Graduate Studies. Inquiries about the Commencement Ceremony should be directed to the College of Graduate Studies at 619-594-5213. Announcements related to the Commencement Ceremony will also be posted online (<https://commencement.sdsu.edu/>) and will be sent to students via the graduate announcements sent by the Graduate Advisor. This important information is likely to be sent via the Canvas Social Work Homeroom. Read those emails!

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 University policy!

SDSU School Social Work Education, Training, and Credential Requirements

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 credentialed by the State of California to work in public schools (grades K-12).

The program can be integrated into the existing MSW program, with students selecting the Direct Practice/Clinical specialization. Specific requirements include:

- SWORK 750 (Field Practicum in an approved School Social Work setting -- 8 units)
- SWORK 758 (Seminar in School Social Work – 3 units)
- SWORK 798 (Special Study – 1 unit)
- SWORK 720 (Psychosocial Development of Vulnerable Children - *recommended*)
- SWORK 702 (Advanced Policy focused on children and/or families and disadvantaged communities)

CA Pupil Personnel Services Credential in School Social Work (PPSC) Requirements:

Candidates must be in the Direct Practice Specialization. In addition to the required courses listed above, there are specific supervised experience requirements for the PPS Credential. The requirements below of supervised experience fall within the number of field hours required of all advanced-year MSW students:

1. Completion of 450 hours of supervised experience within a public school setting. This experience must include at least 100 hours with a secondary developmental age group; pre-school, 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.

The Child Welfare and Attendance Specialization

The SDSU School of Social Work also offers the Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA) Specialization as part of the PPS credential. It is not a separate credential, but is listed on the credential as an added feature of expertise.

Completion of an additional 150 contact hours engaging in supervised practice in the following areas: student attendance, student enrollment and discipline, educational records, parent engagement, and legal and ethical compliance related to pupil services. Thus, if one is working toward the PPS Credential with the CWA Specialization there will be a total of 600 hours of school-based experience.

Note: The Certificate of Clearance (C O C) is a required document issued by the Commission to an individual who has completed the Commission's fingerprint character and identification process, whose moral and professional fitness has been shown to meet the standards as established by law. The COC fingerprinting process must be completed and the certificate must be issued before the internship begins. Candidates who have completed the fingerprinting process and been issued a valid document by the Commission do not need to complete the COC process.

For further information about the PPS curriculum, please contact Paul Brazzel, LCSW, PPSC at pbrazzel@sdsu.edu, and visit the SSW PPS Credential website: <https://socialwork.sdsu.edu/academics/certificates-credentials/pps-credential>

Other Specialized Programs

The School of Social Work has two other specialized programs. For questions about the Title IVE Child Welfare Stipend program, students should contact the Coordinator Amalia B. Hernandez at amalia.hernandez@sdsu.edu. For the Early Childhood-Transdisciplinary Education and Mental Health (EC-TEaMH) certification program for working in the area of early childhood mental health, they should contact the Graduate Advisor.

V. STUDENT RIGHTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Steps in the Grievance Process

The School of Social Work 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 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.

The 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 SAC 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 SAC 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. The 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.

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 Social Work Association) and interviewed by the Chair of the SAC 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. The Chair of the SAC recommends the selected students to Dr. Jong Won

Min, 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 SAC 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 Chair of the SAC, who will review the case 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 SAC 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 SAC 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 SAC 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 SAC 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. However, the Committee may make recommendations to the Director and Faculty of the School of Social Work about policies it believes need to be changed.
12. The Chair of the SAC will notify the student 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. Notification will be by email and will place a copy of the notification in the student's file.
13. The student may appeal the recommendation of the SAC directly to the Director of the School of Social Work, Dr. Jong Won Min.
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 Interim Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in the College of Health and Human Services, Jason Ramirez.
15. The student may appeal the decision of the Assistant Dean for 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 SAC 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. Jong Won Min, 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” (University Catalog). Several examples of cheating are listed on <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-rights/academic-dishonesty/cheating-and-plagiarism>
- 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 includes, but is 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; (e) submitting as one’s own work papers purchased from research companies. (f) submitting as one’s own work papers purchased from research companies; and (g) representing work produced by generative artificial intelligence (AI) as one’s own.” <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-rights/academic-dishonesty/cheating-and-plagiarism>.
<https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-rights/academic-dishonesty/cheating-and-plagiarism> .
- 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, 2021). 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. Student 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, including cheating and plagiarism, is a serious offense in academia and according to the University Catalog:
which may warrant two separate and distinct courses of action that may be applied concurrently in response to a violation of this policy: (a) academic sanctions, such as grade modifications; and (b) student conduct sanctions, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. Academic sanctions are concerned with the student’s grades and are the

responsibility of the instructor involved. Student conduct 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 Director of the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities shall be the president's representative in matters of student discipline.

A student who is suspected of cheating or plagiarizing will be asked to meet with the instructor and the Graduate Advisor to assess the situation and determine the consequences that the instructor may implement. This may include failing the assignment or failing the course. The incidents relating to academic misconduct will also be reported to the Chair of the School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee. Any academic misconduct, including plagiarism infractions, will be reported to the SDSU Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities as it is mandated by the CSU Chancellor who may initiate their own consequences. Severe cases of documented academic misconduct may result in the Graduate Advisor recommending to the Graduate Division that the student be disqualified from the MSW program.

If you are unsure as to what is plagiarism, please take the 30-minute pre-and post- online quiz: **SDSU Plagiarism: The crime of intellectual kidnapping** by SDSU Librarian Pamela Jackson, found at: <https://libguides.sdsu.edu/onlineinstruction/plagiarism> For more information, visit the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities: <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-rights>

Student Situation Report Procedures and Policies:

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 2021 revised, <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics> as its academic standard. Students are responsible as adult learners to abide by ethical standards 1-6 of the NASW Code of Ethics -2021 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 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 Graduate Advisor.
3. If the faculty member or the Graduate 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 <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-rights> .
4. If the Graduate Advisor is the faculty member involved, he or she may elect to go to the Associate Director to implement the same procedure.
5. The faculty member will immediately forward the report to the Graduate Advisor.
6. The Graduate Advisor will forward the report to the student and keep a copy. The student will be encouraged to meet with the Graduate Advisor to discuss the report. The student may elect to submit a written response that will be attached to Advisor's copy.
7. The Graduate 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 SAC. Once the student has left the University by graduation or otherwise, any situation reports held by the Graduate Advisor will be destroyed.
8. The Graduate Advisor will inform the School's Associate Director of each student situation report and the Associate Director shall apprise the Director.
9. Depending on the Graduate Advisor's evaluation of the action reported, the Graduate 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 Graduate Advisor will recommend that the SAC review the student's academic standing. The SAC will make a recommendation to the Graduate Advisor on the student's continuing status. In its deliberations, the SAC will be provided all situation reports regarding the student.
10. The Graduate 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 SAC 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 SAC after one report. The SAC will make a recommendation regarding the student's continuance/discontinuance in the School of Social Work MSW 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 of Social Work program for violating laws, rules, or regulations. Students may appeal their disqualification to the SAC (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.

VI. SDSU CENTER FOR PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

The Center for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination is a resource, should students have questions or concerns related to these types of sex discrimination.

Title IX Coordinator

Gail Mendez, Director, Center for the Prevention of
Harassment and Discrimination (619) 594-6464;
gmmendez@sdsu.edu

Office of the Ombudsmen: <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-ombudsman>

VII. SDSU RECOGNIZED 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 to year, but usually include both academic and social activities for graduate students. The GSWA may sponsor study sessions for the Program Assessment 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 the Social Work Homeroom. For information about the GSWA, please contact Shelly Paule LCSW, who is the designated faculty advisor to the GSWA. She can be reached at slpaule@sdsu.edu.

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)
- Gerontology Alliance
- Gerontology Student Association
- Latino Student Social Work Association (LSSWA)
- Macro Social Work Student Organization
- OUTReach: for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Social Work and Allies
- Social Action Committee
- Student Association of School Social Workers
- Student Social Work Association at SDSU- Imperial Valley
- Phi Alpha: national honor society
- College of Health and Human Services Student Council (CHHSSC)

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. Contact Joanne Rullan (jrullan@sdsu.edu) for the updated list of active Recognized Student Organizations affiliated with the School of Social Work.

VIII. SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students must take care of the following:

1. Make sure all official transcripts are in and 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 timelines.
4. Keep your overall GPA at 3.0 or above.
5. Complete the Program Assessment 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. Alternatively, seek out a chair for the Publishable Paper and complete all requirements as directed by the chair.
9. Pass the Comprehensive Exam (if you select the Comprehensive Examination option, instead of the Thesis).
10. 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.
11. Obtain approval for transfer units from other schools.
12. Obtain approval from the Graduate Advisor to change your Official Program of Study.
13. File for Graduation in a timely fashion.

The College of Graduate Studies will:

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.
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. Forward your Official Program of Study to the Graduate Division, and sign/verify your advancement to candidacy.
2. Dr. Dahlia Fuentes, 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 her at Dahlia.Fuentes@sdsu.edu.

IX. GRADUATE ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Jong Won Min, Director, School of Social Work
Dr. Dahlia Fuentes, Associate Director
Shelly Paule, LCSW, Graduate Advisor
Dr. Lianne Urada, Coordinator of MSW Program
Amanda Lee, LCSW, Director of Field Education

X. STIPENDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND SDSU RESOURCES

Information on scholarships, stipends, and financial aid are available on the University web site: <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/financial-aid/scholarships/sdsu-aztec-scholarships>

Appendices:

- **Appendix A: See NASW Code of Ethics, Available at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>**
- **Appendix B: Maintaining Client Confidentiality**
- **Appendix C: Social Media Policy**
- **Appendix D: Change of MSW Program Status Form (From 2-year to 3 or 4-year MSW Program)**

SDSU School of Social Work Policy and Guidelines *On Maintaining Client Confidentiality*

***Marjorie Milstein, LCSW
Lucinda A. Rasmussen, Ph.D.
May 2000***

SDSU School of Social Work Policy on Maintaining Client Confidentiality

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.

SDSU School of Social Work Guidelines on Maintaining Client Confidentiality

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:
 - o Could you change or not state the specific drug to which an individual is addicted?
 - o Could you change the exact nature of a physical problem?

**San Diego State University
School of Social Work**

Social Media Guidelines

Prepared by Candy Elson & Jessica Robinson
March 2015

For those of you who grew up in the digital age and are familiar with the positives and pitfalls of social media, this information may be redundant. However, we hope these guidelines serve as a helpful reminder to all of us, whether we consider ourselves social media experts or novices. When using social media as a means of communication and interaction inside and outside the classroom, there is potential for misinterpretation of relationships and posted information; therefore, we recommend students consider these guidelines.

General Social Media Guidelines

Students' online and digital communications and postings should comply with ethical standards of the social work profession and SDSU School of Social Work guidelines. Students should recognize that digital and Internet-based social networks and communications are not necessarily private and may cause boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships. Social work students who choose to participate in online and other digital forums should assume that anything posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, or subscribed to might be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to clients, professional colleagues, professional reputations, and careers.

Social work students who use online and digital tools (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, email, Canvas, text messages, and blogs) should be aware of how their communications, messages, and postings may be perceived by clients, colleagues, SDSU faculty and administrators, and members of the general public. Social work students should take steps to prevent any online or digital communications or postings that are unethical for a professional social worker or social work student.

Students should not post any unethical information or photos. Students should carefully consider the potential implications of posting personal information online or through other digital means. Students should take steps to prevent client access to their online social networks and maintain clear boundaries when their professional duties include communicating with clients using email or mobile phone technology.

Students should take steps to prevent any unauthorized or otherwise unethical disclosure of confidential information about clients or other parties when using online websites or other digital technology. Further, students should ensure that any comments about professional colleagues, field placement agencies, or members of the School of Social Work community that they post online or through the use of other digital technology adhere to standards in the NASW Code of Ethics and SDSU policies.

Expectations for Students

- 1. Realize that social media puts anyone on the world stage.**

Do not post anything that you would not want your employer or family to see and do not write anything that you would not say to someone face-to-face. Managing your privacy settings, adjusting your privacy settings to require approval before posting, and remembering to log off any social media accounts are some steps that can be taken to protect your privacy.
- 2. Be aware of liability and your reputation.**

You are responsible for the content you publish, using any form of user-generated content such as blogs, discussion forms, posts, chats, audio files. Many employers are conducting web searches on job candidates before extending any offers. Be aware that what you publish can remain public for a long time, and anything inappropriate could come back to haunt you!
- 3. Respect your audience.**

Use respect as a guiding principle when interacting with others through social media. Treat others the way you expect to be treated. If you feel upset or angry about a subject, postpone commenting until you feel calm and rational enough to do so. Do not use slurs, personal insults, or obscenities. Social media should not be used to attack or insult others.
- 4. Protect your own and the SDSU School of Social Work's good name.**

Identify yourself and your role at SDSU's School of Social Work when appropriate, especially during times you are working for and referencing the SDSU School of Social Work. Even in your personal social media sites, be aware that you may be known as a member of the SDSU School of Social Work. For that reason, when referencing SDSU, it is important to clearly state that your personal opinions are in no way attributable to our School. Students should exercise caution, sound judgment, and common sense when using social media.
- 5. Protect your privacy as well as the privacy of others.**

Do not share passwords, personal, confidential or proprietary information about employees, students, faculty, staff, or college partners. Releasing this information can violate state and/ or national laws (e.g., HIPAA, FERPA) and could cause you to be liable for damages. Once something is publicly shared, it can never again be private.
- 6. Be truthful while being positive.**

Any comments made should add value to the conversation. Honesty or dishonesty may be quickly noticed in a social media environment. Make sure to separate and differentiate your personal identity from your college identity.
- 7. Avoid or report inappropriate material.**

Students may find themselves in online conversations or on websites that contain inappropriate material or malicious material regarding the SDSU School of Social Work. Your best course of action is to report your concerns to someone in authority at the School.
- 8. No electronic stalking or bullying.**

Using the Internet or other electronic means to bully, stalk, or harass an individual is not tolerated at the SDSU School of Social Work. Examples of this type of stalking include making false accusations against another individual, monitoring someone's activities, making threats, stealing someone's identity, the solicitation of sex or gathering information in order to harass.
- 9. Do not post inappropriate images.**

Do not share sexually explicit photos or videos of yourself or others. Keep in mind that once such images are made public by sharing them with even one other person, you can never get them back. Images may be copied, re-posted and shared in a variety of ways. Sharing sexually explicit material may result in serious legal consequences.

10. Consequences for inappropriate use.

Violating the expectations outlined in this document while using social media, may result in disciplinary action such as a Student Incident Report (please refer to detailed student situation report procedures and policies in MSW Student Handbook p. 38 and BASW student Handbook p.17). Students should also be mindful of not violating federal, state, or local laws.

Right of SDSU School of Social Work to Administer its Social Media Content

Except where precluded by law, the School of Social Work may routinely monitor School-related social media and online sites such as the School's website, Facebook page and Twitter account, as well as other websites with content that references the SDSU School of Social Work. Although individual student's social media communication is not routinely monitored, the School of Social Work expects that communication concerning its members will be professional, courteous and socially appropriate for an institution of higher education.

Acknowledgement

These social media guidelines were originally developed by the University of Michigan and Rhode Island, School of Social Work, and have been edited and revised for the San Diego State School of Social Work community. We thank our colleagues at the University of Michigan and Rhode Island, for sharing them with us and giving us permission to adopt and modify them for San Diego State University.

Also review the NASW Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice:

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-for-Technology-in-Social-Work-Practice>

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 Admissions Director 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

Admissions Director/Graduate Advisor

cc: **Director of Field Education & Graduate Advisor**