

BSW FAQs

Q: What is the purpose of field education?

A: Field education is an integral part of the social work curriculum and is considered its signature pedagogy. The field education component is facilitated under the direction and supervision of a field instructor. The Field Instructor is your practicum supervisor, an agency-based licensed social worker or other mental health professional with practice experience who has been vetted and approved by the College of Social Work to provide field instruction. A Field Liaison is your course Seminar (SW 4782) professor or instructor. Field education is an opportunity for students to integrate and apply theories they learn in classroom with actual practice with individuals, families, groups, and larger systems. This will develop the skills necessary to competently intervene at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Q: How is my practicum placement determined?

A: Students will complete and submit a field application that will be sent to all admitted and enrolled students via email, the semester prior to their practicum. Students will complete this application and submit it, with an updated resume to their practicum liaison. The practicum liaison is a College of Social Work faculty member or instructor who has extensive social work practice experience. Students will then meet with their practicum liaison to discuss various agency options and answer questions. On the application, students will document their interests, and identify their top ten agency selections. Students are expected to adhere to the placement procedures as outlined in the BSW Field Manuals and cannot secure placements outside of this process without specific permission. Also, the practicum liaison the student meets with for placement, may not be the practicum liaison that follows them during their field experience. Online Students who reside outside of Utah or in an area without approved agency placements, will be asked to assist in locating an agency with assistance from your practicum liaison.

Q: I am a BSW student entering practicum. What should I expect?

A: BSW students will receive an email to their UMAIL account regarding a BSW Orientation in the semester preceding their field placement. Students must attend this orientation. Following the orientation students will receive another email from our practicum liaison regarding a Practicum Application and Resume. Students will list their top agency preferences on the application and schedule a time to interview with the liaison.

Q: Is placement in one of my top ten agencies guaranteed?

A: While every effort is made to place students in one of their top ten selections, it cannot be guaranteed. However, practicum liaisons will work diligently to align students interests with placements.

Q: What do I do after I have received an email with my field agency referral?

A: After students receive an email from the Office of Field Education with information regarding the agency to which they are referred for placement, they are required to contact that agency to request a pre-placement interview. Some agencies are agreeable to virtual interviews for students who are unable to interview in person due to geographical distance or national health emergencies. Students should consider this a professional interview: dress appropriately, bring an updated resume and be prepared to discuss, and ask appropriate questions. Contact with agencies should happen within 7 days of receiving the agency referral from the Office of Field Education.

Q: Can I arrange my own field placement?

A: No. It is the policy of the College of Social Work that all referrals of students must be made by the Field Education staff. Of course, online students living outside of Utah, or in areas without placements will work collaboratively with their practicum coordinator to identify a suitable placement in the area in which they reside. It should be noted that students may suggest to their practicum coordinator a potential agency, but may not pursue a placement on their own. For detailed instructions on obtaining a field placement, please refer to the BSW Field Handbook.

Q: I am already employed at a social work agency. Can I do my field placement there?

A: Students who are interested in completing an employment-based field placement must complete a separate application and get prior approval from the Office of Field Education. Students who are proposing to use their place of employment as their field site must follow the procedures outlined in the Employment Based Field Placement Policy in the BSW Field Handbook.

Q: Can I change my placement after I have already started?

A: Students cannot resign from a field placement. Any change in placement requires the involvement of, and approval from the Office of Field Education and is permitted only in extreme circumstances.

Q: When does my BSW field placement begin and end?

A: BSW students complete practicum during their last semester in the program. It will begin on the first day of class for the semester they are enrolled, and end on the last day of class for that semester. If they are completing a 2-semester practicum they will end practicum on the last week of classes in the 2nd semester.

Q: Can I begin my field placement before the beginning of the semester-perhaps?

A: There are circumstances that may require a student to complete some hours in the semester prior to officially enrolling in field. Students may be allowed to complete up to 50 hours* in advance for things such as orientation, onboarding, trainings, shadowing and observing. However, students are not permitted to provide any direct services to clients during this period and students must receive prior approval from their field liaison.

Q: If I exceed my hours, can I discontinue my placement early?

A: No, students are expected to attend practicum for the duration of the contracted period. Any exceptional and extenuating circumstances that might disrupt this schedule must be discussed well in advance with the field instructor and practicum coordinator.

Q: Can I do my field placement with all evening and/or weekend hours?

A: It is expected that the majority of placement time will be completed during regular business hours, although arrangements for some placement hours on weekends and evenings may be possible as long as a supervisor is available.

Q: What happens during school breaks/snow days and other holidays?

A: The academic calendar lists the holidays and school vacation days during which students are not required to be in field placement. However, any extended breaks such as winter breaks must be discussed well in advance with the field instructor to ensure continuity of client care. Please review the BSW handbooks for more detailed information regarding the Policies related to holidays, vacations, illness and inclement weather.

Q: How do I document my field hours?

A: Students document field hours using a method of their choosing. It is up to the student to track their own hours during the field placement. Students will be required to document their hours in the assigned logs submitted via Canvas and in the midterm and final evaluations.

Q: Will I be able to find a placement close to my home?

A: The Office of Field Education offers opportunities for placements in several geographic areas throughout Utah. Students should indicate their preferred area in the Practicum Application.

Q: How many internship hours are required?

A: BSW = 400 hrs

Q: Will I be placed with the population of my choice?

A: While every effort is made to place students in the population of their choice, it cannot be guaranteed. However, practicum liaisons will work diligently to align students interests with placements.

Q: What should I do if I have problems in my field placement?

A: If you have problems with your Field Instructor or in the placement, you are encouraged to handle concerns directly on your own in the field placement and notify your practicum liaison. Please refer to the BSW Field Education policies for more information.

Q: Does the University of Utah provide liability insurance?

A: Yes, the University of Utah provides malpractice insurance. However, in accordance with Section U.C.A. 1953 Section Q (3), if you live outside of Utah, or are referred to an agency outside of Utah, you will be required to have supplemental insurance through the NASW (www.socialworkers.org) or another professional malpractice entity. When applicable, additional information about supplemental information will be provided by our office.

Field Performance Expectations

Q: How often should I meet with my Field Instructor for supervision?

A: CSWE accreditation standards mandate that you have a minimum of 1 hour of weekly face-to-face supervision (in-person, virtual or hybrid) with your Field Instructor.

Q: Will my field placement have an organized, structured set of tasks lined up for me to practice all of the required social work competencies?

A: Some agencies will, others will not. You will be challenged to enhance your own learning needs by working with your field instructor and practicum liaison to identify tasks that will address the competencies. Your Learning Plan will guide you in this process.

Q: How many of the CSWE competencies do I have to demonstrate to be considered successful in the field placement?

A: You must demonstrate satisfactory mastery of ALL competencies by the end of your practicum. Receiving a “1” in any competency related behavior will result in a NC/E for the class.

Q: Do I have to follow all of my agency’s policies, even though I’m a student?

A: Yes, you are expected to follow ALL policies and procedures of your field placement agency. Students terminated for non-compliance with agency policies, the NASW Code of Ethics, the University of Utah Standards for Behavior, laws and or statutes, may be at risk of termination from their field placement. Termination from field may result in a NC/E grade for the field.

Q: Do I have to attend a Field Practicum class in addition to practicum?

A: Yes, practicum seminar is a mandatory core component of the field education process and provides an integrative process where you join your peers to discuss your learning experiences, examine the connection of the classroom material to practice, and reflect on your personal and professional development. The course is facilitated via CANVAS and ALL assignments must be submitted to receive a passing grade for the course. Please register for the following:

BSW: SW 4702 Social Work Practicum and SW 4782.

BSW students (in-person): Required to attend weekly seminars.

Q: What is a Learning Plan?

A: The Practicum Learning Plan is a student assignment that outlines the in-agency practice opportunities that will allow you to demonstrate the identified core competencies and behaviors or tasks mandated by the Council on Social Work Education.

Q: How am I evaluated by my Field Instructor?

A: At the end of each field semester, your Field Instructor will complete a student Field Evaluation that measures your performance. This evaluation is one component of your semester grade. Students must receive a 3 or higher in 80% of competency related behaviors (and no "1"'s in final semester) to receive a passing grade for the course.

Q: Will I receive a letter grade for the field seminar?

A: Yes students will receive a grade for SW 4782 and will receive CR/NC for SW 4702.

Q: How is field graded?

A: You earn a grade, but it is issued to you by your practicum liaison using the following criteria: 1) your field evaluation as completed by your Field Instructor (80% of behaviors must be rated a 3 or higher to receive credit); 2) your seminar attendance, participation, engagement, and contribution; 3) completion of the required hours and requirements; 4) timely submission of ALL forms and other required assignments; 5) your adherence to all policies and procedures. Termination from practicum will result in a NC/E grade, and all assignments must be submitted to pass the course.

Q: How will I manage classes, field placement, my job, and life in general?

A: There is no doubt that good time management is critical as well as utilizing the support of family, friends, peers, and campus resources to help you manage what can be a very stressful year. The Office of Field Education, advisors and practicum liaisons are here to help you. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us. For questions regarding University of Utah College of Social Work Field Education, please feel free to contact the office of field education. For inquiries regarding the BSW program, please contact Judy Parker: judy.parker@socwk.utah.edu