



**StAMBROSE  
UNIVERSITY**

Master of Social Work

**Student Policy Manual  
Master of Social Work Program  
2026 – 2027**

MSW Program Location:  
St. Ambrose University  
Higgins Hall  
518 W. Locust St.  
Davenport, IA 52803

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### **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION AND VISION**

**MISSION:** It is the mission of the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work to prepare competent and ethical social work professionals who advocate a just society.

**VISION:** Consistent with the purposes of social work and Catholic Social Teaching, the St. Ambrose University School of Social Work seeks to advance the well-being of people, to promote social and economic justice and to protect human rights. Emphasizing client system empowerment, the School prepares graduates to practice competently, ethically and with critical understanding of diversity, human behavior and social contexts. Students acquire a comprehensive knowledge base, practice skills, and ethical standards for professional practice. These competencies enable graduates to provide resources and opportunities for people to live with dignity and freedom in their transactions with each other and social institutions locally, nationally, and globally.

### **MSW MISSION**

The St. Ambrose University Master of Social Work program prepares empowerment social workers to use a life-long praxis to ensure collaborative, participant-led, anti-oppressive, eco-systemic, contextualized practice. Empowerment social workers promote the intrinsic dignity and equality of all people by advancing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice alongside participants within a diverse, global context.

### **BSW MISSION**

The mission of the BSW Program is to prepare holistic social workers, grounded in liberal arts and social justice traditions to enrich lives, facilitate empowerment, and advocate a just society as generalist professionals. Through an anti-oppressive lens, the BSW program cultivates empathy and the desire to change society at multiple levels by equipping students with knowledge, skills, and values indicative of ethical social work practice. It prepares students to embrace the ideals of the intrinsic dignity and equality of all people, and to advance social, racial, economic, and environmental justice within a diverse, global context.

### **ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES MISSION AND VISION**

**MISSION:** The College of Health and Human Services prepares exemplary professionals through innovative programs in the health sciences, human services, and education. We are committed to excellence in teaching, scholarship, and collaboration through interdisciplinary and community-based partnerships.

**VISION:** The CHHS will be valued for preparing creative and critically thinking professionals who are recognized as leaders in their field and advocates for social justice in their communities.

### **ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY MISSION AND VISION**

**MISSION:** St. Ambrose University – independent, diocesan, and Catholic-- enables its students to develop intellectually, spiritually, ethically, socially, artistically, and physically in order to enrich their own lives and the lives of others.

**VISION:** St. Ambrose will be recognized as a leading Midwestern university rooted in its diocesan heritage and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. Ambrosians are committed to

academic excellence, the liberal arts, social justice and service.

**ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK GENERALIST AND  
EMPOWERMENT SPECIALIZATION 2015 EPAS COMPETENCIES AND  
BEHAVIORS**

**Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior**

***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant policies, laws, and regulations that may affect practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand that ethics are informed by principles of human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize and manage personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Social workers use rights-based, antiracist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand and critique the profession's history, mission, roles, and responsibilities and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression in shaping institutions and social work. Social workers understand the role of other professionals when engaged in interprofessional practice. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure relevant and effective practice. Social workers understand digital technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

- a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context;
- b. demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes;
- d. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

Implementing an empowerment approach to ethical social work practice requires a social worker's extensive self-awareness. This awareness is based on self-reflection; information from participants, colleagues, and supervisors; scientific knowledge; and ethical analysis of all practice decisions and behaviors. Essential areas of ethical analysis for empowerment-oriented social workers emphasize the worker's socio-cultural location and its impact on practice, as well as the extent to which the worker-participant relationship facilitates empowerment. A praxis process incorporating sources of self-awareness and ethical analysis cycles through phases of reflection, action, and further reflection and steers empowerment-oriented workers toward accountability to participants, community, and the social work profession. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- e. evaluate professional actions utilizing a praxis process of reflection-action-reflection informed by participants, colleagues, supervisors, and scientific knowledge;
- f. resolve ethical dilemmas inherent in the empowerment method

## **Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights. Social workers are knowledgeable about the global intersecting and ongoing injustices throughout history that result in oppression and racism, including social work's role and response. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect for all. Social workers advocate for and engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

- a. advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels;
- b. engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

Empowerment-oriented social workers are committed to advancing human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. An empowerment-oriented practitioner understands the impact of environmental power dynamics on the identity, development, well-being, and opportunities of individuals and groups. Empowering practitioners analyze the ways in which people's experiences of power are shaped by social and cultural systems, social policy, agency protocols, and global dynamics. In keeping with the goal of empowerment, practitioners act on this knowledge to contribute to a more just society. In addition to their understanding of the sociocultural forces that impact justice and human well-being, empowerment professionals recognize the significance of the natural environment and its impact, globally and locally, upon all species. Practitioners understand an ecological perspective that reveals the interdependence of all life on earth. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. effectively challenge the disempowering attitudes and behaviors that contribute to social injustices, oppression, and discrimination in self and others;
- d. work individually and collectively to advocate for policies at multiple levels which support social, racial and economic justice; protect human rights; and promote well-being of all species, habitats, and ecosystems.

## **Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice**

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice. Social workers understand how diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color,

culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that this intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Social workers understand the societal and historical roots of social and racial injustices and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers understand cultural humility and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression. Social workers:

- a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels;
- b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with participants and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

Empowerment-oriented social workers recognize that anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to socially just practice with historically marginalized populations. The empowerment approach requires ongoing collaboration with participants with diverse identity characteristics. Collaborative partnerships are cultivated through effective communication and nurturing inclusive relationships that recognize participants as strategic partners in the decision-making process. Empowerment-oriented social workers demonstrate the knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes associated with the cultural competency model, while embracing cultural humility. Empowerment-oriented social workers are lifelong learners who recognize program participants as subject-matter experts in their lived experiences. Empowerment-based practice further incorporates a strengths-based perspective that acknowledges the positionality of all stakeholders. A strengths-based perspective emphasizes the inherent capabilities of diverse participants and the potential to overcome individual and collective challenges. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. collaborate effectively with diverse participant, colleague, and community populations at all practice levels;
- d. demonstrate an understanding of cultural competence and cultural humility in acknowledging the strengths and inherent power of participant populations from diverse backgrounds.

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

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers use ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches in conducting research and building knowledge. Social workers use research to inform their practice decision making and articulate how their practice experience informs research and evaluation decisions. Social workers critically evaluate and critique current, empirically sound research to inform decisions pertaining to practice, policy, and programs. Social workers understand the inherent bias in research and evaluate design, analysis, and interpretation using an anti-racist

and anti-oppressive perspective. Social workers know how to access, critique, and synthesize the current literature to develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses. Social workers demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, and they interpret data derived from these methods. Social workers demonstrate knowledge about methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of participants and constituencies. Social workers understand the value of evidence derived from interprofessional and diverse research methods, approaches, and sources. Social workers:

- a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs;
- b. identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

Empowerment-oriented social workers consider and include historically marginalized populations in research design, analysis, and implementation process. Evidence-based practice interventions incorporate participants' preferences, cultural backgrounds, specific life circumstances, and socio-cultural considerations. There is a charge to advocate for more funding and attention to research in underserved communities and areas with limited evidence. A distinguishing quality of empowerment practice is the use of evidence from a participant's perspective in balance with knowledge and evidence generated through research. A critical question is identifying what constitutes valid evidence to guide social work practice, prompting workers to critically evaluate new knowledge and its sources for credibility and applicability in each unique practice situation. Empowerment-oriented social workers continuously evaluate their practices through the lens of new knowledge and by accessing voices from participants, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive lenses to critically assess the evidence-base and determine goodness-of-fit for historically marginalized populations;
- d. design, analyze, and implement program evaluations that incorporate stakeholders' views.

## **Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects wellbeing, human rights and justice, service delivery, and access to social services. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in service delivery through rights-based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation within their practice settings with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings. Social workers:

- a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services
- b. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

Empowerment oriented social workers ensure that the lived experience and participation of historically marginalized communities are central to policy practice, including activism and advocacy. Social workers recognize the structural dimensions of oppression and utilizes anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks in their practice to actively challenge and transform such systems of oppression. They recognize the role of policy in service delivery and the effects of social policy on a participant's experience. To implement an empowering process, workers acknowledge the pervasive influence of domestic and global social policy in every practice endeavor and use this understanding in their consciousness-raising efforts with participants. Empowerment-oriented social workers engage individually and collectively to influence service delivery, policy formulation, and legislative change. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. challenge unjust social, racial, political, economic, and environmental policies in all practice activities;
- d. engage in collective action to influence political and economic forces that contribute to individual and community problems.

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

#### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse participants and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with participants, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with participants and constituencies;
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with participants and constituencies.

#### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in engagement elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment social work practitioners engage with participants in forming purposeful partnerships, balancing participant strengths with challenges, and in recognizing participant expertise, experience, and resources. To facilitate engagement, empowerment-oriented social workers require an astute

understanding of human diversity and consistently practice with an understanding of cultural humility. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. use critical self-awareness and feedback to construct empowering relationships in collaboration with participants;
- d. facilitate participant system engagement at all practice levels.

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

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision making.

Social workers:

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing participants and constituencies;
- b. demonstrate respect for participant self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with participants and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in assessment elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment-oriented social workers comprehensively assess participant situations utilizing a social justice ethic in order to recognize social and political roots of individual experience and assess opportunities for change with participants and in their environments. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. practice cultural humility by collaboratively selecting, modifying, or developing assessment tools in ways that are responsive to diversity;
- d. assess factors of risk and resilience that hinder or promote participant system competence.

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

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with participants and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve participant and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings. Social workers:

- a. engage with participants and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve participant and constituency goals;
- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of participants and constituencies.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in intervention elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. The empowerment method directs practitioners as an ethical mandate to intervene across system levels. Empowerment-oriented social workers bridge individually oriented methods with group, organizational, and community efforts to help participants ally with others, broaden the participation of participants in defining service priorities, and involve participants as key constituents in systems of service delivery. This multilevel intervention is signature to empowerment practice, whereby the way in which the social worker intervenes with participants is never separate from the multiple contexts which reinforce the oppressive problem-maintaining environment. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. use strength-oriented empowerment processes to heighten efficacy, competence, and political consciousness;
- d. demonstrate practice skills necessary to achieve change through integrated clinical and political social work strategies at all practice levels.

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

### ***Generalist observable components***

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social

workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers use qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### ***Empowerment Specialization observable components***

An empowerment method builds upon the generalist foundation in understanding and acting on the dynamic interplay between participants and multiple systems including social, cultural, and political contexts as well as physical environments. Collaboration in evaluation elevates subjugated knowledge, activates energy to achieve goals, and exemplifies the value stance of an empowering social work professional in actualizing the principles of self-determination, individualization, the personal as political, and mutual acceptance. Empowerment practice is reflective practice. Empowerment practitioners thoughtfully apply scientific knowledge and evidence-based measures to practice situations, construct practice processes to generate practice-based evidence, engage participants as active partners in critically evaluating the work, and reflect on their own values and skills. Empowerment-oriented social workers:

- c. utilize participant's perspective to continuously monitor and measure practice effectiveness at all practice levels;
- d. actively involve participants in all steps of evaluation and practice research.

## **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK OVERARCHING GOALS**

- Goal 1.** Maintain accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) of the programs contained within it.
- The competencies proposed by CSWE and the behaviors subsequently developed by Program faculty serve to guide the professional training of students in competent and ethical directions.
- Goal 2.** Contribute to the mission of the College of Health and Human Services: *“The College of Health and Human Services prepares exemplary professionals through innovative programs in the health sciences, human services, and education. We are committed to excellence in teaching, scholarship, and collaboration through interdisciplinary and community-based partnerships.”*
- The mission of the School of Social Work is clearly aligned with the mission of CHHS. These commitments to all areas of academic appointment enhance each entity.
  - In course offerings, co-curricular events, and informal interaction, the School of Social Work seeks to model the mission of the College of Health and Human Services.
- Goal 3.** Support the mission of the University: *“St. Ambrose University-independent, diocesan, and Catholic-enables its students to develop intellectually, spiritually, ethically, socially, artistically, and physically to enrich their own lives and the lives of others.”*
- The mission of the School of Social Work is clearly aligned with the mission of the larger university, with its focus on both individuals and society.

## **MSW PROGRAM GOALS**

- Goal 1.** Provide a quality educational program in empowerment social work practice designed to assure the acquisition of advanced knowledge, skills, values, cognitive/affective processes, and ethics necessary for professional social work practice. Graduates of the MSW program show strengths in these skills due to intensive focus on these competencies and the program’s commitment to empowerment practice.
- In collaboration with other health science programs at St. Ambrose and CSWE, the MSW program provides multiple contexts for Interprofessional education promoting team-based client care.

- Goal 2.** Prepare social work practitioners with generalist and empowerment specialization skills to enable them to engage in multi-level interventions with diverse populations in a range of social service settings.
- MSW courses utilize components of empowerment practice including multi-level intervention, promotion of diversity, politicized practice, and systemic analysis combine to allow for understanding and applicability across practice settings.
  - Students build knowledge and skills in the empowerment method in order to promote a just global society for all people.
- Goal 3.** Nurture University-Agency partnerships by facilitating an educational and scholarship presence in the local, national, and international communities.
- MSW faculty participate in education, scholarship, leadership and service in these communities utilizing and promoting an empowerment stance to and with constituents.
  - MSW Program faculty provide training to agencies regarding empowerment practice, ethics, and diversity to name a few. Continuing education offerings by the MSW program focus on needs of the social work practice community.
  - Faculty involvement in community, state, national and international boards of directors exemplifies the mission of the University, the School and the MSW Program by focusing on the empowerment of people in those areas. In this way, faculty service is putting the empowerment method in practice.
  - Practicum education processes seek to strengthen relationships and build bridges between the School and regional social service and health service providers.
- Goal 4.** Contribute to the knowledge base of the social work profession by engaging in scholarship for publication and presentation at professional conferences.
- Using a broad model of scholarship including: scholarship of discovery, of integration, of application, of teaching and learning, and of engagement, faculty collect and share information in order to best serve populations which social workers serve.
  - Social Workers advocate changes in society through these endeavors. Contribution to the knowledge base of the social work profession is key to the MSW Program.
  - Empowerment Scholarship has an explicit goal to positively impact the greater society.

## **ADMISSIONS**

The School of Social Work administers its own Admissions procedures in both the MSW and BSW Programs. The MSW procedures are in full compliance with University regulations for graduate admissions, using a required standard application and financial assistance forms, and following reporting and recording procedures. The School is responsible for recruiting, evaluating, and admitting students into the MSW Program. The admissions process is supported by the MSW Program Admissions Committee composed of faculty members including the Admissions Coordinator and with facilitation by the Online Program Coordinator. Admissions standards, criteria, and processes are described fully in the catalog and the application packet distributed to applicants.

### **Criteria for Admission to the MSW Program**

Admission to the program is limited to graduates of accredited colleges and universities. Applicants must have acquired a foundational liberal arts perspective, as determined by a review of course work in the humanities and social sciences (see below) by the MSW Program Admissions Committee. It is suggested (but not required) that students take a statistics course before entering the program.

### **Admission Procedures**

The admissions process includes application to the University and application to the MSW program. To apply to the program, students should submit the following directly to the School of Social Work:

1. Complete the Application for Admission to Graduate Studies online at [www.sau.edu/apply](http://www.sau.edu/apply). Submit Supplemental Application Information for the MSW Program and official transcripts to the School of Social Work, 518 W. Locust St., Davenport, IA 52803 or by email to [msw@sau.edu](mailto:msw@sau.edu).
2. Submit a personal statement of educational and career goals as indicated by the prompts on the social work application and submit to MSW Program.
3. Submit two (2) references directly to the MSW Program. Use the digital reference forms provided. References should be professional or academic contacts who are in a position to judge your potential for social work practice and graduate study. It is the student's responsibility to see that references submit completed forms.

Application forms and a program description may be obtained by visiting the Master of Social Work Program website at <http://www.sau.edu/master-of-social-work>. Your application cannot be reviewed until all application materials are received. Application for admission is a rolling admission, meaning that applications are considered on an ongoing basis until the deadline for each admission period. Admission will close when all student positions are filled. It is to your advantage to complete the application process early.

Application deadlines are as follows: Two year program (fall)—May 1; Three year program (fall)—August 1; One year program (summer)—April 1. To be eligible for departmental scholarships, fellowships and graduate assistantships, students must be fully accepted into the MSW program.

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria of St. Ambrose Graduate Studies, the MSW program requires:

- A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university with evidence of a liberal arts foundation to include the following minimum credit hours: social and behavioral sciences (18 hours); humanities (9 hours)
- The Admissions Committee will review the applicant's transcript to determine that the liberal arts requirement is satisfied.

The social and behavioral sciences include:

- Anthropology, biomedical history, communications, economics, environmental studies, geography, history, international studies, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, urban planning, women's studies, and all ethnic studies courses.

Humanities include:

- Architecture, art, art history, classics, comparative literature, dance, drama, English, landscape architecture, linguistics, music, philosophy, religious studies, speech communication, all foreign languages and literature.

### **Admissions Decisions**

Decisions on admissions will be determined using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated potential for graduate studies by maintaining a 3.0 or better undergraduate grade point average for the last 60 credit hours.
- Evidence of interest, ability, and potential for professional social work practice on an advanced level as demonstrated by a personal statement responding to prompts in the application and two (2) letters of recommendation.

After each application is reviewed by the Admissions Committee, an admissions decision is made. The committee does not make its decision on one factor alone; each factor is considered in light of the total application. Decisions include acceptance, provisional acceptance, and denial of admission. Emailed notification of admission is sent to the applicant. Applicants can reply that they plan to attend, choose not to, or defer acceptance for up to one year.

All offers of admission are contingent upon receipt of final transcripts indicating conferral of a bachelor's degree. In special circumstances, students with a GPA below 3.0 may be admitted on a provisional basis. Additionally, applicants to the advanced standing program may be admitted on a provisional basis if they received a grade less than a B in one or more core social work courses in their undergraduate social work program. All decisions of provisional admission will be made at the discretion of the Admissions Committee.

For retention in the MSW program, provisional status requires students in the 2- or 3-year program to earn a 3.0 GPA in their first 12 credit hours. Students admitted with provisional status to the advanced standing program must earn a 3.0 GPA in their first 6 credit hours. GPAs are reviewed at the time of admission and again when final transcripts are submitted. Students initially admitted provisionally will be moved to non-provisional status if their final GPA is 3.0 or higher.

Students initially admitted non-provisionally will be moved to provisional status if their final GPA falls below 3.0. Failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA will automatically result in an Academic

Review.

### **Admissions Appeal Procedure**

Applicants for admission to the Master of Social Work program have a right to appeal an adverse recommendation related to admission to the MSW program to the Director of the School of Social Work.

### **Transfer of Credit**

Students transferring from other CSWE accredited graduate programs of social work must complete the standard application and submit the same documentation as other potential students. These applicants must meet the same admissions criteria used to evaluate all applicants and be in good standing with the former program. The course descriptions and syllabi are reviewed by the Director to ensure that the courses, for which transfer credit is awarded, are congruent with the mission and goals of the St. Ambrose MSW Program. Up to 30 credits can be transferred into the School of Social Work, with transfer students required to complete the specialization curriculum at St. Ambrose University. If the student has not completed equivalent required foundation courses, these must be taken before the student can progress to the advanced specialization curriculum. Only courses completed with a 3.0 or better can be transferred from another graduate social work program.

### **Credit for Life Experience**

Academic credit towards practicum or coursework for life experiences and previous work experiences is not given, in whole or in part, in lieu of the practicum or required coursework.

## **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS**

At St. Ambrose University, there are four basic ways to finance your graduate education: personal financing, loans, assistantships, and scholarships. To be considered for any type of financial assistance, you must complete a Free Application for Federal Students Aid (FAFSA) or a FAFSA renewal form. Students planning to begin studies during the summer session will need to complete a FAFSA for both the previous and current years. You may apply online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

St. Ambrose University Financial Aid: [www.sau.edu/Admissions-and-Aid](http://www.sau.edu/Admissions-and-Aid)

St. Ambrose University Master of Social Work program: [www.sau.edu/msw](http://www.sau.edu/msw)

### **Master of Social Work**

Applications for all MSW assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships will be available on the website listed above.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

The School of Social Work has three Graduate Assistantships (GA) available:

- GA for admissions, GA for research and GA for community organizing. Pay is approximately \$400 per month stipend on a nine-month contract for 10 hrs./week. No tuition remission is included. Please consult St. Ambrose University Human Resources for exact pay.

### **Graduate Assistantships at St. Ambrose University**

Additional GA positions are available throughout St. Ambrose University. For more information about these scholarships and the point of contact in each department, please go to [www.sau.edu/employment](http://www.sau.edu/employment).

### **St. Vincent Scholarships**

\$2,500 scholarships available to students with 9 or more credits per semester. (Two available per year)

### **St. Ambrose Graduate Fellowships**

\$2500 scholarships available to students with 9 or more credits per semester. (Two available per year)

### **Empowerment Scholarships**

\$5000 scholarships available to students with 9 or more credits per semester. (2 available per year)

### **University-wide financial aid/student loans**

Applications available through the Financial Aid office and have variable deadlines.

**Graduate Student Government Association (GSGA) Scholarships** GSGA has scholarships available for graduate students attending St. Ambrose University. Contact SAU Financial Aid or [gsga@sau.edu](mailto:gsga@sau.edu) with questions.

## PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Academic courses, including practicum, provide the knowledge and skills essential for advanced empowerment social work practice in the MSW Program. Teaching is reinforced by the scholarship and research interests of faculty, particularly in the areas of the interaction of the person and environment and the dynamics of change through the empowerment perspective to ensure a just society. Through faculty and student participation in community organizations, task forces, and scholarship, the School, including all programs, meets its responsibilities to the community and to the social work profession to improve quality of life and strengthen society.

The Master of Social Work Program at St. Ambrose University structures its curriculum for multiple cohort groups seeking a Master of Social Work degree: One-year MSW (Advanced Standing) on-ground or online, standard two-year MSW on-ground only, three-year MSW online only, MSW/MPH, MSW/MBA and one bachelor program, the Bachelor of Social Work. The cohort delivery structures have the same standards by level and require both academic course study and practicum experience. All MSW students follow the same sequence of required courses. One-year MSW Advanced Standing students join the program in the summer semester before becoming part of the empowerment specialization cohort of students.

***One-year MSW Advanced Standing program (on-ground or online)*** The MSW Program at St. Ambrose University offers an accelerated curriculum option available to highly qualified graduates of BSW programs accredited by the Council of Social Work Education. Consideration for advanced standing is given only to those social work graduates with superior academic standing and exceptional references.

Applicants for advanced standing must meet all the admissions criteria required for standard admission. Applicants for admission to the Advanced Standing program must meet the following admissions criteria:

- a) Demonstrated potential for graduate studies by maintaining a 3.0 or better grade point average for the last 60 credit hours; and
- b) Evidence of interest, ability, and potential for professional social work practice on an advanced level as demonstrated by two letters of recommendation and a written personal statement. Additionally, Advanced Standing applicants must have graduated from an accredited baccalaureate social work program with a B- grade in all required social work courses. When a number of years have passed between an applicant's BSW graduation and their MSW application date, it is expected that the applicant will have been working in a social work field in the interim (to be determined on a case by case basis). Applicants should submit an official transcript of their undergraduate work for review by the Admissions Committee of the MSW Program.

The Program may request a baccalaureate program summary, course syllabi, title and descriptions of courses, and reading lists. Decisions will be made on the basis of comparability of the undergraduate social work courses to relevant areas of foundation curriculum. Students given advanced standing may receive recognition of up to 24 credits toward the MSW. Students accepted for advanced standing must complete specialization requirements as well as those foundation courses that were not exempted. Full-time students admitted to advanced standing ordinarily begin an eight-week

summer session. During this special summer session students will register for 6 credit hours: MSW690: Diversity and Social Policy and MSW720: Social Work Program Evaluation. Advanced standing students who want to complete degree requirements in two years, will complete the core specialization courses and 2 electives in the first year and their practicum placement, requisite seminar, and up to 2 electives in the second year.

### ***Two-year MSW program (on-ground)***

This program calls for two academic years of study and completion of 60 credit hours. Students ordinarily spend two consecutive days a week on campus taking classroom courses and 912 total practicum hours over the 2 years in social work agencies or settings gaining social work experience under supervision.

### ***Three-year MSW program***

St. Ambrose University has a part-time online program, making it possible for the highly motivated student to obtain the MSW degree on a part-time basis over three years, including summer sessions. Some students find that a four-year schedule is necessary due to personal responsibilities. Students must fulfill all degree requirements within four years from date of initial enrollment. In the three-year schedule, students will complete two semesters of 6 credits and four semesters of 9 credits each. The final 12 semester hours are comprised of 4 electives which can be taken in the final year, over summers, or winterim terms. Part-time students complete 60 hours for the MSW degree.

### ***MSW/MBA***

This 3-year dual degree would increase an MSW graduate's ability to function in the workplace with the knowledge necessary to lead an agency to deliver quality services. This MSW MBA articulates an intentional path for social workers with administrative aspirations. Essentially, the curriculum entails one year of MSW coursework, one year of MBA coursework, and then the final year of MSW coursework. Students meet the degree requirements for both degrees, with a few course substitutions. Students should consult their advisor for degree pathway.

Dual degrees articulate an intentional path for social workers wanting to explore the practice of public health. Together, these two degrees elevate social work's strengths in cultural and community responsiveness, empowerment, inter-professional teamwork, and care coordination through public health's strategic and epidemiological approach to caring for the underserved and most vulnerable.

***MSW Courses Offered: (not all Electives are offered every semester)***

**Required:**

|         |                                       |         |                                   |
|---------|---------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| MSW 510 | Generalist Practice I (3)             | MSW 520 | Generalist Practice II (3)        |
| MSW 610 | Human Behavior Theories (3)           | MSW 620 | Diversity/Social Systems (3)      |
| MSW 710 | SW Research Design (3)                | MSW 720 | SW Program Evaluation (3)         |
| MSW 810 | Social Welfare Policy (3)             | MSW 820 | Social Policy Analysis (3)        |
| MSW 591 | Practicum Instruction & Seminar I (3) | MSW 592 | Practicum Instruct & Sem II (3)   |
| MSW 530 | Empowerment Practice I (3)            | MSW 540 | Emp. Practice II (3)              |
| MSW 593 | Practicum Instruction III (4)         | MSW 593 | Practicum Instruction IV (4)      |
| MSW 603 | Practicum Sem III: SW Ethics (2)      | MSW 604 | Practicum Sem IV: Ethical Dec (2) |

**Electives (choose 4 usually in specialization curriculum):**

|         |                                                                                           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MSW 550 | Empowerment Social Work in Mental Health (3)                                              |
| MSW 560 | Empowerment Social Work in Child Welfare (3)                                              |
| MSW 570 | Couple and Family Therapy (3)                                                             |
| MSW 580 | Empowerment Social Work in Aging (3)                                                      |
| MSW 590 | Introduction to Social Work with Military Service Members, Veterans, & Their Families (3) |
| MSW 596 | Disability and Social Justice (3)                                                         |
| MSW 830 | Supervision (3)                                                                           |
| MSW 850 | Empowerment Social Work in School Settings (3)                                            |
| MSW 860 | Economic and Social Justice (3)                                                           |
| MSW 870 | Management in Human Services (3)                                                          |
| MSW910  | Mental Health Policies and Practices in India and the US (3)                              |
| MSW 920 | Empowerment SW in Substance Using Disorders (3)                                           |
| MSW 930 | International SW and Social Welfare (3)                                                   |
| MSW 940 | Feminist Social Work (3)                                                                  |
| MSW 950 | Empowerment Social Work in Health Care (3)                                                |
| MSW970  | Spirituality in Social Work (3)                                                           |
| MSW980  | Trauma-Informed Social Work Practice (3)                                                  |

## **MSW PROGRAM ADVISING**

All full-time social work faculty members except the MSW Director, act as formal educational advisors in order to acquaint the student with the general curriculum, to assist students in the selection of specific courses, and to offer feedback regarding students' performance and development. Advisors are available to students for consultation on a regular basis and are fully knowledgeable about the MSW Program, Mission and Purposes.

All students are assigned MSW faculty academic advisors upon acceptance to the program. Although students have advisors assigned, they are free to seek out any faculty member to discuss academic and professional development matters. The assigned academic advisor maintains responsibility for giving or seeking official approval related to a student's academic decisions. Faculty advisors are available to students for general orientation to the MSW Program and its curriculum and the University at large.

Advisors may meet with students to discuss issues of concern, academic performance, professional development, and course selection. In the case of formal remediation, academic advisors will assist the student with the creation of and adherence to a plan of action. Advisors also refer students who have special circumstances, such as learning disabilities, writing issues, personal difficulties, and/or financial needs to the appropriate department at the University. In the case of an academic review, academic advisors are called upon to oversee compliance with the recommendations of the review committee.

Further information for students seeking support, including the Accessibility Resource Center, the Student Counseling Center, Graduate Writing Coordinator, and Student Health Services is found on the St. Ambrose University website and the University Student Handbook.

### **Access and Disability Services**

Students with disabilities who believe that they need accommodations are encouraged to contact Access and Disability Services (ADS) at 563-333-6275 or [ads@sau.edu](mailto:ads@sau.edu).

### **Integration of Cross-Cultural Content**

Social work courses focus attention on various ethnic groups and oppressed populations, particularly those disadvantaged by classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and regionalism in American society. We will discuss how these groups are differentially affected by policy, practices, and services within various settings.

## **POLICIES REGARDING ACADEMIC MATTERS**

As a student at St. Ambrose University, students are subject to the academic and conduct procedures of the university community as described in the St. Ambrose University Student Handbook. As an MSW student, students are also subject to the procedures, policies, and expectations of the MSW Program and the Social Work Profession.

The St. Ambrose University Master of Social Work Program prepares students for professional social work practice. An MSW degree is an indicator to the public and to the professional social work community that the person to whom it was awarded has demonstrated fitness to provide advanced professional social work services. An MSW professional is expected to effectively use a broad knowledge and skills base, adhere to a professional code of ethics, practice a philosophy of social and economic justice, and demonstrate appreciation for human resiliency and the strengths of diverse cultures.

### **NASW Code of Ethics**

All students are expected to conduct themselves within a standard of professional conduct. All faculty, staff, and students in the School of Social Work are expected to comply with the NASW Code of Ethics. A copy is available through the School of Social Work office. All students are provided with a copy as a part of practicum education. It is also available through the NASW website and distributed at the Fall Practicum orientation.

### **Grades in Academic Courses**

To meet the specific needs of graduate professional education, grading scales used in the MSW Program vary from the university standard as listed in the St. Ambrose University Course Catalog. Grades in academic courses are granted based on criteria included in the syllabus for each course. Letter grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, and F. To successfully complete the program without academic warning, probation, or dismissal, a student must maintain a "B" average (3.0 GPA). For the purposes of determining grade point averages, numerical equivalents of these letter grades are as follows:

|    |      |
|----|------|
| A  | 4.0  |
| A- | 3.67 |
| B+ | 3.33 |
| B  | 3.0  |
| B- | 2.67 |
| C+ | 2.33 |
| C  | 2.0  |
| F  | 0    |

In special circumstances, a student may initiate a request for the grade of “I” (Incomplete). The “I” grade is granted at the discretion of the course instructor only when illness or other compelling reasons prevent completion of the required course work. Students are required to submit a plan of completion to the course instructor with deadlines of when coursework will be completed. The plan of completion is reviewed and approved by the course instructor. The academic advisor is notified of the Incomplete Grade and plan of completion by the course instructor. Students must successfully complete the necessary course work within the time frame negotiated with the instructor and prior to registering for any subsequent course for which the incomplete course is a pre-requisite. If the coursework is not completed within that timeframe, a grade of “F” is automatically assigned to the course and the student must complete the entire course at a later time.

**\*\*Note that Academic Review procedures are triggered when two or more Incomplete grades are received by a student. See the Policies on Academic Criteria for Retention, Review, and Sanction of MSW Students in this volume for clarification.**

### **Grades in Practicum Instruction**

Grades in Practicum Instruction are earned by successful completion of course requirements. These include completion of the required practicum hours and contracted learning goals, completion and timely submission of required practicum documents, and the evaluation by the Agency Practicum Supervisor and Practicum Liaison. These culminate with a grade recommendation to the Director of Practicum Education, who assigns the final grade.

### **Withdrawal from Courses**

The MSW Program follows university guidelines for student withdrawal from classes as described in the University Course Catalog.

### **Class Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Excessive lateness and/or absences may affect course grades. Instructors will give notice of their classroom attendance and participation policies in the course syllabus.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity refers to behaviors and attitudes that honor the purposes and conditions of academic assignments and exercises. Academic honesty requires that the work submitted in response to a course assignment, whether in class or in practicum, represents the original and accurate work of the student or group who has taken responsibility for it. It also requires that work submitted is new work produced for the particular course and assignment to which it responds. Finally, it requires that where using the words, ideas, or findings of others in the assignment, proper credit be given to the original source of the material using appropriate APA Format. Lifting sentences from the works of others without citation or quotation marks is plagiarism that will be dealt with accordingly. The School of Social Work will handle breaches of academic honesty following St. Ambrose University’s policies and procedures (see St. Ambrose University Student Handbook.) Serious or repeated breaches of academic honesty will likely result in course failure or dismissal from the program.

### **Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Electronic devices should be used to support the learning activities in the classroom. These include such activities as taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. However, non-academic use of laptops and other devices are distracting and seriously disrupt the learning process for everyone. Laptops or other electronic devices are not to be used in the classroom for non-academic reasons. This includes emailing, texting, social networking, and use of the Internet. In the case of an emergency, students should step out of the room to take the call. Failure to meet these expectations may result in a loss of participation points or to be asked to leave class.

### **Policy for Independent Studies**

Independent studies are elective courses designed to increase a student's depth of knowledge of a particular subject area or broaden knowledge in a new subject. Students may choose to take an independent study for 1, 2, or 3 credit hours in any empowerment specialization semester. Students cannot fulfill the non-elective requirements of the degree through independent study; nor can they receive independent study credit in any course for which they have received - or will receive - academic credit from another graduate or undergraduate program. Consistent with CSWE requirements, independent studies will not be approved to grant students' academic credit for their life experiences. No more than 5 credit hours of independent study may be applied toward the MSW degree.

Each hour of credit granted for an independent study should reflect at least 50 hours of actual time expended on the study. Independent studies that are experiential in nature must also include a significant academic component.

### ***Setting up an independent study***

Students wishing to set up an independent study must develop a written proposal that includes:

- (1) a statement of the specific topic of the study;
- (2) a set of measurable objectives delineating learning outcomes;
- (3) a brief literature review of the topic;
- (4) a plan (with timeline) for meeting the objectives;
- (5) a preliminary description of the reading they will do and the product(s) they will produce to document the achievement of the objectives; and
- (6) a statement of how many credit hours they are seeking. Prior to developing the proposal, students are encouraged to discuss their ideas with one or

more faculty members. Students may consult any faculty member for advice on the project and on selecting a professor to supervise their independent study.

While developing a proposal, students should consult closely with the faculty member with whom they would like to collaborate on the study. Students should choose a faculty member whose interests and expertise most closely match the chosen subject matter.

After review and approval of the proposal by the consulting faculty member, the student then submits a copy of the proposal to the MSW Program's Curriculum Committee. Students should submit the proposal *at least one month, and preferably two months prior to registration for the semester in which they wish to take the independent study* to allow adequate time for faculty review and student revision of the plan of study. If the Curriculum Committee determines that revisions of the proposal are necessary, *the student must complete these revisions and receive approval of the final proposal by both the supervising instructor and the MSW Curriculum Committee at least two weeks prior to scheduled course registration.*

When a proposal has been approved by the Curriculum Committee, and *prior to scheduled course registration*, the student and consulting faculty member will develop a learning contract. If a third party such as an agency practicum supervisor will also be involved in the student's learning, then this third person should also be a party to the contract.

A contract incorporates many elements of the student's original independent study proposal including:

- (1) a descriptive title for the study
- (2) a brief description of the topic and scope of the study
- (3) a timeline for completion of the study
- (4) a list of readings that will be completed (the list of reading need not be exhaustive to allow for flexibility in choosing readings that will actually be done as the independent study progresses)
- (5) a description of and grading criteria for the products (exam, presentation, paper, etc.) that will demonstrate accomplishment of the learning objectives
- (6) any special criteria agreed upon by the student, instructor, and others; and
- (7) a schedule of meetings with the instructor and others.

If a student fails to meet the deadlines for submitting a final proposal or developing the learning contract, the program reserves the right to deny permission for or delay the independent study until a subsequent semester. Students are expected to complete the independent study in the agreed-upon time frame. At the discretion of the instructor, a grade of "Incomplete" may be granted if the work is not completed within the contracted time period, provided that the instructor is satisfied that at least 2/3 of the work has been completed.

## **POLICIES ON ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL CRITERIA FOR RETENTION, REVIEW, AND SANCTION OF MSW STUDENTS**

The Master of Social Work degree is both a scholarly and professional degree. Admission to the program is granted to students who have demonstrated potential to complete high quality academic work beyond the baccalaureate degree. Retention in the program requires students to achieve academic goals and maintain professional standards by adhering to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#).

Professional actions and decisions of social workers impact the lives of vulnerable persons and persons in precarious life situations. More than simply applying the knowledge, skills, and values of the social work profession, social workers must also demonstrate qualities of emotional stability, self-control, reliability, good judgment, empathy, collegiality, genuineness, and integrity. Social work is a demanding profession that has potential to do harm as well as good to vulnerable people. In response, the St.

Ambrose MSW Program holds students accountable to both academic and professional standards.

Course and Practicum grades reflect class participation (including attendance), oral and written communication skills, and mastery of the knowledge, skills, and values of social work. Students are expected to demonstrate professional attitudes and skills congruent with the NASW Code of Ethics, which guides the social work profession. This includes self-awareness, ethics in action, respect for human dignity, and a commitment to social justice. Failure to meet course expectations and/or abide by the professional standards set by the MSW Program and the NASW Code of Ethics constitutes academic failure and may result in a student's dismissal from the MSW Program.

### **Student Role and Responsibilities**

Students bear primary responsibility for monitoring their own achievement and behavior to ensure they are making satisfactory progress. Students should ascertain instructors' classroom policies and grading criteria (e.g. policies on attendance, late assignments). Students are also responsible to learn and follow MSW Program and University policies, practicum site policies within the Practicum Education setting, and the NASW Code of Ethics.

All students should seek clarification and feedback from their instructors as necessary. Students who sense they are in academic or professional jeopardy should initiate meetings with their instructors, practicum liaisons, and/or academic advisors to discuss their situations. Students are encouraged to address academic and professional problems early to maximize opportunities for corrective action and seek University support services and resources as appropriate.

### **Academic and Professional Standards for Retention**

To remain in good standing in the MSW Program, students are expected to make consistent progress toward graduation.

Performance indicators that students are making satisfactory progress include:

1. A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0-point scale).
2. Grades of C or above in each course (only courses with a grade of C or above count toward the degree).
3. Successful completion of courses in sequence (indicators of less than satisfactory progress includes course withdrawal or receiving a grade of “incomplete”).
4. Continued satisfactory progress in Practicum.
5. Behavior consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics in classroom, community, and Practicum Education.

Examples of ***appropriate*** behaviors include but are not limited to:

- a. basing professional practice on the social work values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence
- b. developing constructive professional relationships with clients and others
- c. avoiding dual relationships and conflicts of interest with agencies and clients
- d. working constructively and cooperatively with supervisors, peers, instructors and other professionals
- e. complying with practicum site policies and MSW program standards and procedures maintaining client, agency, and classroom confidentiality
- f. disclosing any dual relationships, conflicts of interest, legal issues, or criminal justice issues that may affect their performance or admissibility to a particular practicum setting

- g. applying established social work methods and skills as well as research and theories of human behavior to social work situations

### **Academic Criteria for Automatic Non-Retention in the MSW Program**

Some situations will result in automatic non-retention (dismissal) in the MSW Program. No Academic Review is necessary. These circumstances are:

1. For students admitted to the program with provisional status
  - a. failure to achieve a 3.0 GPA in the first 12 credit hours completed
2. For all students
  - a. grades of “F” in any 2 courses during the program of study
  - b. one grade of “F” and two grades of “C” in any 3 courses during the program of study
3. For students previously reviewed in an Academic Review
  - a. failure to meet the conditions for retention set at the previous review
  - b. compliance review timelines, procedures, and personnel involved will be specified in the academic review report
4. For students placed on academic probation because their GPA fell below 3.0
  - a. failure to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester or to maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 the semester following the probationary semester

Other situations may also lead to a student’s dismissal from the program. Such situations will be considered individually in an Academic Review.

### **Review and Monitoring Procedures**

The MSW Program monitors each student’s progress using procedures implemented by course instructors, practicum supervisor(s), practicum liaisons, academic advisors, and administrative personnel. At midterm and the end of each semester, faculty members will review all students’ grades and progress in Practicum to determine if any students are falling short of academic standards for retention. The steps listed below will be followed in the event of academic and/or behavioral concerns to ensure appropriate notification, necessary identification, and provide support during remediation.

### **Circumstances that Justify Processes for Remediation**

Certain academic and/or behavioral indicators may signal the need for remediation with those persons directly involved in the situation (e.g. classroom

instructor/student, practicum supervisor/student). The Remediation process is meant to engage the student collaboratively and proactively when concern(s) arise to provide necessary professional and/or academic support and mentoring. Examples of such concern(s) may include:

1. Poor academic performance (e.g. the student is not maintaining a 3.0 grade during the semester or the class or the student receives a C or below in the course).
2. Two grades of “Incomplete”.
3. Disrespectful, antagonistic, or distracting behavior.
4. Breaches of NASW Code of Ethics, MSW Student Handbook, or University Student Handbook.
5. Concern of academic dishonesty, including inappropriate use of AI.
6. Absences, tardiness, lack of class participation, or late coursework.
7. Violation of classroom policies (e.g. misuse of electronic devices).
8. Marginal or unsatisfactory performance in Practicum, including the practicum placement planning process.
9. Concerns about a lack of fit between the student and the MSW Program or the social work profession
10. Other circumstances in which faculty members or other persons involved recognize the need for intervention to ensure student success

### **Steps of Remediation**

The steps listed below will be followed in the event of academic and/or behavior concerns to ensure appropriate notification, necessary identification of concern(s) and expectations, and provide support through remediation. The Remediation process is meant to engage the student early, collaboratively, and proactively when concern(s) arise to provide necessary academic and/or professional support and mentoring.

#### **Step 1: Remediation**

1. Faculty and/or adjunct faculty notifies the student of academic, professional, and/or behavioral concerns (as referenced above).
2. Faculty meets with the student to:
  - discuss concern(s) in connection to programmatic and professional requirements and expectations

- hear the student's perspective and experience
  - review specific expectations moving forward
  - identify resources and supports to help student be successful moving forward
3. Following the meeting, an email will be sent by the faculty to the student with the academic advisor included summarizing the meeting and expectations moving forward.
  4. If concern(s) is not remedied moving forward, the student will be notified of the next step in this process, which would be Step 2- Formal Corrective Action.

## **Step 2: Formal Corrective Action Plan**

1. This step will occur if:
  - Concern(s) not addressed and/or progress is not made after the Step 1- Remediation meeting
  - Faculty and/or Academic Advisor identifies a pattern of behavior in the Program
  - A situation needs immediate remediation with a Corrective Action Plan
2. A face-to-face meeting will be held with concerned faculty, academic advisor, and student.
  - If the concerned faculty serves dual roles, an additional faculty member will be included for additional support.
  - If the concerned faculty is an adjunct, a full-time faculty member may represent the adjunct for the meeting.
3. Documentation of concern(s) will be provided to student and Academic Advisor prior to the face-to-face meeting.
4. Faculty and the Academic Advisor meets with the student to:
  - discuss concern(s) in connection to programmatic and professional requirements and expectations
  - hear the student's perspective and experience
  - review specific expectations moving forward
  - identify resources and supports to help student be successful moving forward
  - create a Corrective Action Plan within the meeting in collaboration with the student that addresses the identified concern(s). The Plan will specify the concern(s), concrete steps necessary for resolution, timeframe, supports available and needed, and criteria for evaluation of success.
5. Following the meeting, an email will be sent by the faculty to the student and Academic Advisor including a copy of the Corrective Action Plan.

6. If the student fails to remediate the concern(s) as defined in the Corrective Action Plan, the student will be notified of the next step in this process, which would be Step 3-Academic Review. The Program Director will be notified with a request for an Academic Review to be scheduled.

### **Academic Review**

When serious concerns arise about a student's academic performance or compliance with Program or professional standards, the MSW Director will convene the faculty to conduct an Academic Review. Such concerns may arise from the ongoing monitoring of the student through the Remediation process as described above or may result from a precipitating incident at any time during the student's course of study. An Academic Review is a decision-making process of the faculty regarding the status of students whose academic or professional success is in jeopardy. Potential outcomes of an Academic Review range from developing a plan of correction to dismissal from the MSW program. Circumstances that warrant an Academic Review include the following:

1. A cumulative GPA below 3.0.
2. An unsatisfactory evaluation in Practicum (such as receiving a No-Credit/Fail grade thereby failing to meet the pre-requisite for the next semester of the Practicum experience).
3. In the event of a Practicum termination.
4. Failure to meet behavioral standards for professional social work (as described in the NASW Code of Ethics).
5. Behavior that poses an immediate threat to individuals or organizations.
6. Failure to remedy difficulties that were previously addressed through Steps 1 and/or 2 of the Remediation process.
7. Substantial incongruities between the student's values and attitudes and the value base of the social work profession as articulated by the NASW Code of Ethics.
8. Failure to meet automatic academic standards for retention when any faculty member believes there are extenuating circumstances that warrant review.

9. Gross violations of the University academic integrity policy (as outlined in the University student handbook).
10. Other serious concerns about a student's academic performance or compliance with MSW Program or social work professional standards

Faculty processes to monitor student performance will determine the need for an Academic Review. To initiate an Academic Review process, faculty will notify the MSW Director of the need for an Academic Review. The MSW Director will notify the student in writing within at least 3 days to schedule the Review. The letter of notification will include:

1. circumstance(s) from the list above that warrant an Academic Review
2. specific academic and/or behavioral concern(s)
3. the student's right to present their experience and/or information to the faculty orally during the meeting or in writing prior to the meeting
4. the proposed date, place, and time of the meeting
5. a copy of this policy will accompany the notification.

The Academic Review Panel consists of all available full-time faculty members (excluding the Program Director). The Program Director will appoint a faculty member to be the Chair of the Academic Review Panel. Once a student is notified of the Academic Review, all communication regarding the Academic Review must be with the Chair of the Academic Review Panel. The Chair will:

1. develop a meeting agenda
2. send a calendar invite to all participants in the Academic Review
3. gather input from faculty members, practicum supervisor(s), the student and/or others
4. provide submitted documentation and meeting agenda to all parties at least 24 hours ahead of the scheduled Academic Review meeting
5. be available to answer Academic Review questions in relation to the Academic Review procedures only

For students who work with the SAU Access and Disability Services (ADS), they may invite their SAU ADS staff member to attend the meeting. The role of the SAU ADS staff member in this meeting is to understand the situation and expectations moving forward to support the student following the meeting. If the student wants to invite their SAU ADS staff member, the student must notify the Chair prior to the meeting. It is the student's responsibility to provide any supplemental documentation to the SAU ADS staff member prior to the meeting.

During the Academic Review meeting, the student and faculty perspectives will be heard. Panel Members will then dismiss the student from the meeting to enter into a closed session to decide on a course of action. The Chair of the Review Panel will send a written report of the Panel's decision to the student within 3 business days. [See Resolutions and Sanctions for possible courses of action.] Within 3 business days of the date of the notification, the student will notify the Chair of either their acceptance of the conditions of the Academic Review or their intention to appeal. If the student does not notify the Chair of their decision, the Program Director will formally accept the Panel's decision and convey this to the student. If the student has accepted the conditions of the Academic Review, they waive their right to an appeal.

If the student decides to appeal, they must submit a written request for an appeal of the decision to the Program Director within 3 business days for the appeal. The Program Director will hear the appeal within 3 business days of receiving the request. The Program Director may either uphold the Academic Review decision or, after additional consultation with the faculty, arrive at an alternative decision. The Program Director's decision regarding the students' appeal will be conveyed to the student within 3 business days of the appeal hearing. Within 3 business days of the date of the Program Director's decision notification, the student will notify the Program Director if they accept the Program Director's decision or their intent to appeal further. If the student does not notify the Program Director of their intent to appeal, the student has accepted the Program Director's decision; they waive their right to further appeal.

If the student chooses to appeal further, the student must submit a written request for an appeal to the Associate Dean for the School of Human Services within 3 business days. The Associate Dean for the School of Human Services will hear the appeal within 3 business days of receiving the request. The Associate Dean for the School of Human Services may either uphold the Academic Review decision or, after additional consultation with the faculty, arrive at an alternative decision. The Associate Dean's decision regarding the students' appeal will be conveyed to the student within 3 business days of the appeal hearing. Within 3 business days of the date of the Associate Dean's decision notification, the student will notify the Associate Dean if they accept the Associate Dean's decision or their intent to appeal further. If the student does not notify the Associate Dean of their intent to appeal, the student has accepted the Associate Dean's decision; they waive their right to further appeal.

Any further appeal must be made beyond the School of Human Services and will go to the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, according to university policies.

### **Resolutions and Sanctions**

In an Academic Review process, the faculty can determine any reasonable course of action that fits the circumstances and concern(s) present. This course of action may include, but is not limited to, the following resolutions and sanctions:

1. A determined action plan to resolve the specific concern(s).

2. Withdrawal from one or more courses.
3. Immediate removal from Practicum and co-requisite courses.
4. Academic probation for a semester or academic year during which the student's performance will be closely monitored, followed by an Academic Review at the conclusion of the probationary period.
5. Completion of current courses without the option of continuing in the program the following semester.
6. Required withdrawal from all courses in the current semester with re-evaluation consideration for admission in a subsequent semester.
7. Immediate dismissal from the program.
8. Modification of a student's Plan of Study to ensure student achievement of Program outcomes.
9. Completion of a critical self-reflection paper.
10. Any combination of the options above with a requirement that the student be reevaluated for reinstatement or re-admission at a future date. In this circumstance, the Panel may require the student to provide evidence and specific documentation that they have resolved critical concerns or that the precipitating circumstances have changed materially.

## **ADDRESSING CONCERNS IN THE PRACTICUM PLACEMENT**

All practicum placements are made for the entire academic year. Students with a practicum placement secured are expected to fulfill the agreement made with the practicum agency. Agency Practicum Supervisors likewise agree to provide a learning environment for the student for the entire academic year. In the event there are concerns with the student or the practicum placement, it is best to have the necessary parties involved in addressing and planning for remediation. The Agency Practicum Supervisor should inform the student and Practicum Liaison of any student performance concerns and/or behaviors that cause the Agency Practicum Supervisor to question the student's appropriate professional development. It is critical to address concerns as soon as possible. The School of Social Work is focused on and committed to addressing any concerns in a way that supports the student and the practicum agency while adhering to agency policy, university policy, and the Social Work Code of Ethics.

Below are the steps to address concerns:

1. Face-to-face meeting between the student and Agency Practicum Supervisor to discuss the situation.
2. If the situation is not resolved, the student and/or Agency Practicum Supervisor contacts the Practicum Liaison.
3. A face-to-face meeting will be held with the student, Agency Practicum Supervisor, and Practicum Liaison to address the situation and develop a remediation plan with a mutually agreeable result to maintain the placement. The Practicum Liaison will document the meeting, including the identified concern(s), and the proposed remediation plan. This document will be emailed to the Director of Practicum Education, student, and Agency Practicum Supervisor.
4. The Director of Practicum Education will notify the student's Academic Advisor and provide the remediation plan. The Academic Advisor will meet face-to-face with the student to provide additional support.
5. If the remediation plan does not address the situation, the Director of Practicum Education is notified.
6. The Director of Practicum Education will hold a face-to-face meeting with the student, Practicum Liaison, and Agency Practicum Supervisor to discuss the ability of the student and agency to work together for the remainder of the placement and determine the likelihood that the placement can have a successful outcome. The student's academic advisor will be notified and updated on the situation.

## **TERMINATION OF PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE**

When remediation has been unsuccessful, the student, Agency Practicum Supervisor, and/or the Practicum Liaison can initiate practicum placement termination by submitting a letter to the Director of Practicum Education. The practicum placement termination letter must include the reason(s) for termination, summary of the events, and attempts at remediation. In addition, the Practicum Agency and the MSW Program have the discretion to immediately remove a student from the agency setting if either believes such removal is warranted. Situations where removal will be considered warranted include but are not limited to the following:

1. The level of performance in the practicum placement is determined to be far below the standards expected of an MSW student and the student is unable to remedy deficiencies. This includes lacking knowledge and skills for effective social work practice, poor interpersonal communication and relationship skills, inappropriate presentation of self, and showing a lack of commitment to investing in the practicum placement learning opportunities. The Agency Practicum Supervisor and Practicum Liaison attempted to remedy performance concerns, but efforts were unsuccessful in bringing the student up to the 'Satisfactory' level for the given semester and its Competency standards. This will constitute grounds for an Academic Review to determine the student's fit and/or continuation in the MSW program.
2. Serious or repeated violations of the agency's policies and procedures.
3. Failure to disclose previous and/or new critical background information in application forms, pre-placement forms, or during the interview process.
4. Exhibiting behaviors and attitudes that are inconsistent or at odds with the values of the social work profession.
5. Violation of professional ethics and standards for ethical practice.
6. Unexcused and prolonged absences from the practicum placement.
7. Attempts to harm oneself or others.
8. Any sexual relationship with an agency client.
9. Reporting to the practicum site under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The Director of Practicum Education will notify the student of the practicum placement termination and provide the practicum placement termination letter. The MSW Director, Agency Practicum Supervisor, Practicum Liaison, and the student's Academic Advisor will be included in the email notification of the practicum placement termination. An exit meeting will occur as soon as possible with student, Agency Practicum Supervisor, Practicum Liaison, and the Director of Practicum Education. The Director of Practicum Education will ensure the termination from the practicum agency is conducted in a professional manner. All agency materials, keys, or other equipment provided to the student will be returned immediately to the practicum agency. Partial credit for the time spent in the practicum placement will not be granted. The School of Social Work policies require students who drop Practicum Instruction to also withdraw from concurrent seminar courses.

Following the practicum placement termination, the MSW Director will convene the faculty to conduct an Academic Review to determine the student's standing in the MSW program. (See the *St. Ambrose University School of Social Work Graduate Student Manual*). Students are not guaranteed that an appropriate alternative placement may be secured. In cases where an appropriate re-placement cannot be made, as determined by the Director of Practicum Education, the student may need to drop Practicum Instruction and co-requisite courses for the remainder of the academic year.

**All other policies related to Practicum Education can be found in the Practicum Education Manual.**

## **ETHICAL CONDUCT IN THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT**

Within its Student Handbook, St. Ambrose University offers a code of conduct as a framework “for an academic society in which students, faculty and staff can realize their potential. It protects the rights of the St. Ambrose community to learn, teach and do research. It preserves the right of free expression, peaceful assembly and orderly protest, yet it also recognizes the need for normal university activities to continue undisturbed.” Any student who violates this code or any specific regulation adopted by the university is liable to disciplinary action according to university procedures outlined in the St. Ambrose University Student Handbook. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with this code of conduct and all university regulations, policies, and procedures regarding behavior within the university community.

### **Human Rights Policy**

The School of Social Work is committed to the highest standard of conduct in human interaction. Founded on the fundamental belief that all individuals should be treated with dignity and respect in all situations and interactions, the School of Social Work recognizes the right of just treatment for all persons regardless of race, gender identity, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, physical or cognitive abilities, and social or economic class.

Professional behavior by social workers is defined by the NASW Code of Ethics. Students, faculty, and staff within the social work program are expected to act in ways consistent with this code throughout their association with the program both in and out of the classroom context. Behavior in keeping with this code goes beyond simple compliance but extends to a duty to speak out against discrimination, oppression, and injustice in its many forms.

St. Ambrose University creates a policy context for the respectful interaction within the School of Social Work. The University articulates its policy statements contained within its Student Handbook. Students are expected to review these policies carefully to ensure that their behavior is in compliance with university requirements for respectful and ethical behavior.

### **Harassment and Discrimination**

The St. Ambrose University Student Handbook explicitly states that “its students, faculty, and staff have a right to be free from sex discrimination in the form of sexual harassment by any member of the academic community.” The School of Social Work reaffirms this principle and expects all program constituents to treat one another with dignity and respect. The Student Handbook offers specific definitions of behavior defined as sexual harassment and offers a process for students to complain if they feel they are victims of sexual harassment.

### **Student-Faculty Relationships**

The student-faculty relationship is at the core of social work education. Faculty members have important roles in teaching, mentoring, and advising students in preparation for professional practice. Students have important roles in learning and asserting their professional development needs. Both faculty members and students are

expected to be aware that faculty positions in respect to students carry considerable power and authority. In respect to this faculty-student power differential, the issue of how faculty members and students relate both inside and outside of the academic context requires careful consideration, reflection, and professional integrity.

Consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics, social work faculty and students should not engage in dual relationships that have the potential to exploit or do potential harm to students. Specifically, faculty members should not see students as clients and students should not seek to be clients of faculty members. Faculty members and students should not have financial transactions with one another. And, faculty members and students should also not have sexual relationships. In all student-faculty relationships, both parties should recognize the power differential and avoid redefining the relationship away from its primary educational purpose.

The University policy on sexual harassment also applies to faculty/student relationships in the School of Social Work. In fact, as stated in this policy, sexual harassment of a student by a faculty member is seen as especially serious given the fundamentally asymmetric nature of the relationship. Students who experience sexual harassment by a faculty member may obtain redress through established university procedures.

### **Confidentiality**

Faculty and staff within the MSW Program work to maintain student confidentiality to the extent possible. To meet the educational needs of students, the MSW Program will exchange relevant information within its collegial system including classroom instructors, practicum supervisors, practicum liaisons, program administrators, and program staff and others within the university community in keeping with university policy and procedures. Students do have the right to request that a faculty member or other program personnel maintain confidentiality about specific information to the extent that the person can do so in compliance with state and federal laws and university policy.

However, even confidential information will be shared among program personnel for compelling educational reasons.

The integration of classroom learning and professional practice requires a free and open exchange of information about practicum and work experiences in the classroom setting. Students should work to protect the confidentiality of the client and agency situations about which they are talking. Students should also maintain the boundary of the classroom by refraining from divulging confidential classroom-generated information outside of the classroom setting. As an exception, faculty members maintain their “mandatory reporting” and “duty to warn” responsibilities.

### **Environmental Consciousness**

An elevated consciousness about the impact of social and physical environments on human development and behavior is a defining characteristic of the social work profession. As such students, faculty, and staff within the program are expected to demonstrate behaviors consistent with a heightened environmental awareness. Behaviors that demonstrate environmental responsibility include the judicious use of program resources and respectful treatment of university property and equipment. The university provides easy access to containers for the recycling of paper and cardboard in

clearly marked bins and for the recycling of plastic and glass beverage containers near vending machines. Students should survey the classroom and office areas to locate recycling bins and use them to dispose of recyclables. Students should also be aware of their impact on air quality within classroom buildings and limit their smoking to designated areas as well as monitor their use of fragrances and other products toward which other program constituents may have sensitivities.

### **Alcohol Policy**

Student consumption of alcohol is subject to state law and university regulations. Fundamentally, no individual under the age of 21 may purchase or consume alcoholic beverages. Any student-sponsored event on campus at which alcohol will be served requires prior approval, participation by program sponsors in a university run alcohol training program, and on-site supervision. The university handbook offers specific guidelines and procedures for students regarding the distribution and consumption of alcohol in relationship to the university and its activities.

### **St. Ambrose University Student Handbook**

This can be found on the SAU website and the portal.

## **STUDENTS' RIGHTS IN THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

### **School of Social Work Statement of Student Rights**

The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work has developed and approved the following statement of student rights:

1. The right to have representation and participation on standing committees of the School.
2. The right to petition through proper channels for changes in curriculum, practicum experience, and grades; and to petition through established channels in the case of grievance.
3. The right of students who are participating in research or writing for publication under faculty direction as a part of their formal academic program to receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to the process.
4. The right of students to organize within their own interests.
5. The right of students to recognize student organizations to invite and hear speakers of their choice on subjects of their choice.
6. The right of students, individually or collectively, to engage at will in off campus activities, thus exercising their rights as a citizen of the community, state and nation. Students shall not claim to formally represent the School of Social Work or St. Ambrose University unless authorization has been attained.
7. The right to ethical relationships and interactions with all School of Social Work constituents in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers.
8. The right of equal access to social work resources without regard to race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, religious creed, or political beliefs.

### **Nondiscrimination**

The policy of St. Ambrose University is to provide equal opportunity in all terms and conditions of employment and education for all students.

The University is a non-profit educational institution which admits academically qualified students of any race, color, age, sex, religion or national origin without regard to any physical handicap, and extends all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally available to students at the University. It does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran status, or disability, in the administration of any of its educational policies or programs including admissions, financial aid, and athletics. It also is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. St. Ambrose University is authorized under federal law to enroll non-immigrant alien students.

The School of Social Work at St. Ambrose University admits academically qualified students of any race, color, age, sex, religion, political orientation, sexual orientation, or national origin without regard to any physical handicap, and extends all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally available to students at the University. The School does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran status, political orientation, sexual orientation, or disability in the administration of any of its educational policies or programs including admissions and financial aid. It also is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

### **Governance**

The School of Social Work has implemented a governance structure for collaboration among the School of Social Work Director, MSW Program Director, faculty, students, and other program constituents in setting program goals, implementing program objectives, evaluating program impact and recommending program changes.

Committee recommendations regarding policies and procedures are forwarded to the program faculty as a whole for discussion and approval. Two students chosen by MSW SGA, may serve on each of the following standing committees: Policy, Curriculum, and Practicum Advisory Board. The facilitator of MSW SGA serves on the Program Advisory Committee. The faculty, in consideration of the committee's function, will determine student membership on ad hoc committees.

### **Student Evaluation of the Social Work Program**

Student experience and feedback is a critical component in the continuing development of the program and curriculum. Students in all courses offered by the School of Social Work complete course evaluations on completion of the course competencies. These course competencies evaluate the extent to which the course met the program goals for practice behavior skill development. On an annual basis, students also evaluate all aspects of Practicum Education. Social work faculty value student feedback and will make modifications as indicated. Students' comments on written mid-semester and end of semester evaluations are reviewed each semester. Particular attention is paid to students' reactions to texts, teaching methods and assignments. Based on faculty review of these evaluations, recommendations may be made relative to mission, goals, objectives and curriculum design. Program outcomes are regularly reviewed as well.

### **Complaint Procedures**

St. Ambrose University has grievance procedures which may be used by social work students. Sexual harassment grievances follow the standard procedures of St. Ambrose University. These procedures can be found in the St. Ambrose Student Handbook.

General grievance procedures follow a similar process and are facilitated by the Director of Human Resources for St. Ambrose University.

Students are encouraged to work with faculty about complaints on grading, faculty or other student conduct, or student development. Any issue which cannot be resolved can be referred to the Director of the MSW Program by either the faculty or student. If the student is dissatisfied with the committee's decision, they may appeal to the Director or the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services.

## **Study Time and Books**

Courses at the School of Social Work require significant study time and individual preparation outside of class. Students should assume that for each hour of class time two or three hours of outside of class will be spent reading, studying, and preparing for assignments. Thus, for full time students enrolled in 12 credit hours of classroom courses, a minimum of 30-40 hours of time must be available on average each week for class and class preparation plus 16 hours for practicum instruction. First year part time students enrolled in 6 credit hours of classroom courses will likewise require a minimum of 15-20 hours a week on average for both class and out of classroom preparation. Second and third year part-time students will also require a minimum of 15-20 hours a week for class and out of classroom preparation in addition to fifteen practicum hours a week.

Most required reading for courses is on the Blackboard site for the course. Required and recommended texts may also be purchased at the University Bookstore. As textbook prices have increased significantly in recent years, students should plan on spending at least \$100 per course for texts.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic Integrity refers to behaviors and attitudes that honor the purposes and conditions of academic assignments and exercises. Academic honesty requires that the work submitted in response to a course assignment represents the original work of the student or group who has taken responsibility for it. It also requires that work submitted is new work produced for the particular course and assignment to which it responds. Finally, it requires that where using the words, ideas, or findings of others in the assignment, proper credit be given to the original source of the material. The School of Social Work will handle breaches of academic integrity following Academic Review policies in this handbook. St. Ambrose University's policies and procedures are also noted in the Student Handbook if not resolved within the department.

## **Theta Sigma**

The St. Ambrose University School of Social Work has a chapter affiliation with the Phi Alpha National social work honor society. The Theta Sigma Chapter at St. Ambrose University recognizes scholastic achievement among students and faculty in the graduate social work program at St. Ambrose University. The Theta Sigma Chapter encourages continued study and research at the post-graduate level; recognizes professional social workers whose service, contributions, and leadership are exemplary; and furthers the empowerment goals of social work. Invitation into the Honor Society will be based on a grade point average in the top 10% of the class toward the MSW degree.

## **Personal Safety and Security**

The Department of Security serves members of the university community by providing protection, service and education. Information about personal security education programs, campus law enforcement, and incident reporting is in the *St. Ambrose University Student Handbook*.

The School of Social Work attempts to make students aware of safety issues and to be

prepared to handle potentially dangerous situations. The Practicum education manual includes general information on risk assessments and reduction, agency safety guidelines, and information on student health care safety preparation. In the agency setting, practicum students are encouraged to be familiar with agency policies and practices regarding risk assessment and reduction and agency guidelines for safety.

### ***Weapons Policy***

Consistent with St. Ambrose University policy, weapons are prohibited on campus, including off campus locations.

## **Insurance Coverage**

***Malpractice and Liability Insurance.*** The St. Ambrose University retains group professional liability insurance for students in practicum education. Students may also wish to consider purchasing individual liability coverage against claims arising out of professional training to cover activities while in the practicum placement. Students may obtain coverage with the National Association of Social Workers Insurance Trust, a program of the American Professional Agency. Information and applications are available on the NASW Assurance services website. In order to qualify for this insurance, membership to the National Association of Social Workers is required.

***Automobile Insurance.*** Students in practicum may be asked to use their own cars for agency business (e.g. making home visits, transporting clients, and attending case conferences or organizational meetings). Students are advised to check with the agency to determine if the agency insures the student in these activities. The student is also advised to check with his or her own carrier to determine coverage for these activities. If a student is required to use his or her own car for agency business, it may be advisable to increase insurance coverage. In no case should a student undertake agency business in his or her personal vehicle without adequate coverage.

***Health Insurance.*** At St. Ambrose University, it is the desire that all students have health insurance, but does not REQUIRE coverage. However, a practicum agency may require coverage based on the nature of the social work services provided. If a student does not have health insurance, there is information on the University Health Services webpage.

## **St. Ambrose University Policies Affecting Students**

Students in the School of Social Work are expected to become familiar with University policies affecting students and to abide by the rules and regulations explicated in these policies. Information regarding Students' Academic Rights and Responsibilities, rights regarding Students Records, the Students Code of Conduct, University Policy Statements, Campus Services, and Student Activities may be found in the *St. Ambrose University Catalog* and the *St. Ambrose University Student Handbook*. The *Student Handbook* is available on the St. Ambrose University Dean of Students web page.

### **Registration**

While University faculty and staff members provide students with academic advice and assistance, each student is expected to take responsibility for his or her education and personal development. The students must know and abide by the academic and disciplinary policies of the School and University. The students must know how and meet requirements of his or her own program of study, enroll in courses appropriate to the program, meet prerequisites and take courses in the proper sequence to ensure orderly and timely progress. Students must seek advice about degree requirements and other University policies when necessary.

Registration may be completed online through the St. Ambrose University system after coordination with the student's academic advisor. Students should meet with their academic advisor to assist in course selection, career direction, and plan of study.

Students are responsible to provide the University with current local and permanent address and telephone numbers. Official correspondence is sent to the address last given to the School of Social Work; if the student has moved and fails to correct this address, they will not be relieved of responsibility on the grounds that correspondence was not delivered.

### **Student Records**

Student rights regarding educational records are articulated in the *St. Ambrose University Student Handbook* and these policies are consistent with the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Categories of student information that are public and may be disclosed are identified and students' right to privacy is discussed. Students may review their academic records by requesting them from Records and Registration Office. Students who believe their educational records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading, or is otherwise in violation of their privacy or other rights, are provided with procedures to challenge the information in their record in the *St. Ambrose University Student Handbook*.

The School of Social Work also maintains student records and the policies of the School of Social Work conform to FERPA and University policy. The School of Social Work maintains student and alumni records primarily to benefit students and graduates in educational and professional endeavors. Students are responsible to advise the School of Social Work regarding changes in name, address, telephone, and email. Alumni are encouraged to advise the School of Social Work regarding changes in their personal and professional status. If requested, these updates in information will be electronically

distributed to alumni.

The following are guidelines for the management of these records:

1. Student records in the School of Social Work include admissions material, copies of grade reports, correspondence regarding the student from University offices, correspondence from the School of Social Work to the student or concerning the student and practicum experience information.
2. Student shall have access to their records insofar as access does not violate the rights of others, in keeping with the University's policy concerning student records. Request for review of School of Social Work records is made in writing to the Program Director. Copies are available to students for the cost of duplication.
3. Data maintained solely for research purposes shall not be personally identifiable.
4. Alumni news is shared electronically and/or in print when graduates of the School of Social Work notify the School regarding a professional or personal life change. Students who do not wish to have this information shared with faculty and alumni are asked to notify the Admissions Coordinator in writing.

### **MSW STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

The MSW-SGA is an organization that assists students in their development as professional social workers who will become valuable assets to the school, university and community. The MSW-SGA serves educational and social purposes. As such, it is a vehicle for students to interact with the School, for students to promote effective communication, and is an instrument of student action for social justice.

The MSW-SGA is comprised of all students enrolled in the MSW program at St. Ambrose University. The advisory board is elected by student vote and works collaboratively with each group of students, in order to facilitate effective communication between faculty, students, and staff of the School of Social Work and the larger community. Additionally, the MSW SGA provides an avenue for student action for social justice. Specialization and Foundation MSW students are welcome.

### **SAU GRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

GSGA exists to support and enrich the academic experience and environment for all existing and future graduate programs. Our success is measured by the student's awareness and access to reliable and timely information, services and programs aiding the graduate level student in achieving their academic and professional goals. The group consists of representatives from every graduate and doctoral program to ensure the voices of all students are heard.

### **CANCELLATION OF CLASSES DUE TO HAZARDOUS WEATHER**

The established schedule of class meeting times will be followed unless students are notified otherwise. Please consult the your SAU email, your classroom instructor, Blackboard, the St. Ambrose website, local media, or School of Social Work Facebook page see if St. Ambrose University has cancelled classes. Emergency changes will be posted on classroom doors and the bulletin board if the campus is open at the time of the cancellation. In case of class cancellations, attempts will be made to contact students directly.

In addition, students should sign up for the University Emergency Notification System. The online registration form can be accessed through the SAU Security Office website. By doing this, students can receive alerts regarding class/event cancellations or postponements via email or text message. Students should always use good judgment in deciding on attendance during hazardous weather conditions.

**FOR ALL OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES INFORMATION,  
CONSULT THE ST. AMBROSE UNIVERSITY STUDENT HANDBOOK.**