

**The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley  
School of Social Work**

**MSSW Program**

---

**Student Handbook**



UTRGV.EDU

**School of Social Work**

(Revised: August 2024)

# Table of Contents

Introduction to the School of Social Work	
Introduction	3
Administrative and Clerical Staff	3
Faculty	3
Overview of the Social Work Program	
Mission Statement	4
Goals & Objectives	5
Program History	5
Admission Criteria	6
Application Review	6
Offers of Admission to the Graduate College	6
Conditional Admission	7
Suspension/Probation Policy	7
MSSW Curriculum	8
Generalist Year	9
Specialization – Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families and Groups	9
Specialization – Community Practice and Administration	10
Full Time Plans of Study – Traditional/Face to Face	
Generalist Year	10
Specialization – Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families and Groups	13
Specialization – Community Practice and Administration	13
Full Time Plans of Study – Traditional Online Program	
Generalist Year	14
Specialization – Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families and Groups	16
Specialization – Community Practice and Administration	16
Academic Advising	17
Faculty Advisor Responsibilities	17
Student Responsibilities	17
Request for Exceptions	18
MSSW Program Option Transfer	18
Work or Life Experience	18
Field Education	
Requirements	19
Ethics	
Introduction	19
Student Responsibilities	19
Dismissal Policies and Procedures	
Academic Dismissal	20
Non-Academic Dismissal	20
Students' Rights on Confidentiality	20
Mandatory Meeting	21
Faculty Review Committee	21
Appeal of Program Director's Determination	22

Implementation of Remediation Plan or Pursuant Appeals	22
Student Complaints & Appeals	22
Appendix A	
CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards	23
Appendix B	
NASW Code of Ethics	26
Appendix C	28
Termination and Professional Conduct Forms	

# Introduction to the School of Social Work

## INTRODUCTION

The faculty and staff welcome you to the Master of Science in Social Work Program. The program is offered via two options, which are Traditional format and Accelerated Online format. The AOP is available to any student in the world. You have embarked on an academic path that will prepare you for social work practice at an advanced level. During your course of study, you will acquire values, knowledge, and skills that are essential for independent professional practice. We urge you to use the program resources that are available to you, including your Faculty Advisor, the MSSW Program Director, Director of Online & Distance Learning, the social work faculty, and the Graduate Association of Student Social Workers.

This handbook, along with the University's Graduate Catalog, should assist you in successfully progressing through your course of study.

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND CLERICAL STAFF

Dr. Luis Torres-Hostos, Dean	<a href="mailto:luis.torreshostos@utrgv.edu">luis.torreshostos@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Leticia Villarreal-Sosa, Associate Dean of Research & Faculty Development/Acting Associate Dean of Academic Affairs	<a href="mailto:leticia.villarrealrosa@utrgv.edu">leticia.villarrealrosa@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Denise A. Longoria, MSSW Program Director/Director of Online Programs & Distance Learning	<a href="mailto:denise.longoria@utrgv.edu">denise.longoria@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Heather Vitek, BSW Program Director	<a href="mailto:heather.vitek@utrgv.edu">heather.vitek@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Charleen Martinez-Rodriguez, MSSW Field Director	<a href="mailto:charleen.martinezrodriguez@utrgv.edu">charleen.martinezrodriguez@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Veronica Cano, BSW Field Director	<a href="mailto:veronica.cano@utrgv.edu">veronica.cano@utrgv.edu</a>
Ms. Marisol Guerra, Senior Administrative Associate	<a href="mailto:marisol.guerra@utrgv.edu">marisol.guerra@utrgv.edu</a>
Ms. Sarah Villarreal, Administrative Assistant II	<a href="mailto:sarah.villarreal@utrgv.edu">sarah.villarreal@utrgv.edu</a>
Ms. Cynthia Cisneros, Program Specialist	<a href="mailto:cynthia.cisneros@utrgv.edu">cynthia.cisneros@utrgv.edu</a>
Ms. Maria Valdez, Regional Outreach Representative	<a href="mailto:maria.valdez2@utrgv.edu">maria.valdez2@utrgv.edu</a>
Ms. Martha Herrera Gallardo, Administrative Assistant I	<a href="mailto:martha.herreragallardo@utrgv.edu">martha.herreragallardo@utrgv.edu</a>

## FACULTY

Prof. Noelia Alonzo, LMSW, Lecturer I	<a href="mailto:noelia.alonzo@utrgv.edu">noelia.alonzo@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Rebeca Cole	<a href="mailto:rebecca.cole@utrgv.edu">rebecca.cole@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Enedina (Nina) Enriquez, LCSW, Clinical Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:enedina.enriquez@utrgv.edu">enedina.enriquez@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Romeo Escobar, LCSW, ACSW, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:romeo.escobar@utrgv.edu">romeo.escobar@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Leyla Feize, LCSW, Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:leyla.feize@utrgv.edu">leyla.feize@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. John González, Ph.D., Professor	<a href="mailto:john.gonzalez@utrgv.edu">john.gonzalez@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Pedro Hernandez, LMSW, Clinical Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:pedro.hernandez03@utrgv.edu">pedro.hernandez03@utrgv.edu</a>

Prof. Alexis Herrera, LMSW, Clinical Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:alexis.herrera04@utrgv.edu">alexis.herrera04@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Nazanin Heydarian, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:nazanin.heydarian@utrgv.edu">nazanin.heydarian@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Vanessa Ibarra, LCSW, Clinical Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:vanessa.ibarra02@utrgv.edu">vanessa.ibarra02@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Lin Jiang, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:lin.jiang@utrgv.edu">lin.jiang@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Denise LaMore, LMSW, Clinical Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:denise.lamore01@utrgv.edu">denise.lamore01@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Denise Longoria, LCSW-S, Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:denise.longoria@utrgv.edu">denise.longoria@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Sudershan Pasupuleti, Professor	<a href="mailto:sudershan.pasupuleti@utrgv.edu">sudershan.pasupuleti@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Joe Redcliffe, Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:jo.redcliffe@utrgv.edu">jo.redcliffe@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Nelda Rodriguez, LMSW, Clinical Professor	<a href="mailto:nelda.rodriguez@utrgv.edu">nelda.rodriguez@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Lauren Serafy, LMSW, Lecturer I	<a href="mailto:lauren.serafy@utrgv.edu">lauren.serafy@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Susheelabai Srinivasa, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:susheelabai.srinivasa@utrgv.edu">susheelabai.srinivasa@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Kriti Vashisht, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:kriti.vashisht@utrgv.edu">kriti.vashisht@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Griselda Vasquez, LMSW, Clinical Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:griselda.vasquez01@utrgv.edu">griselda.vasquez01@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Susy Villegas, LCSW, Associate Professor	<a href="mailto:susy.villegas@utrgv.edu">susy.villegas@utrgv.edu</a>
Prof. Heather Vitek, Lecturer I	<a href="mailto:heather.vitek@utrgv.edu">heather.vitek@utrgv.edu</a>
Dr. Minzhi Ye, Assistant Professor	<a href="mailto:minzhi.ye@utrgv.edu">minzhi.ye@utrgv.edu</a>

## Overview of the Social Work Program

### MISSION STATEMENT

#### School of Social Work Mission

To prepare social work professionals who will have a positive impact on individuals, families, and communities through excellence and leadership in education, research, and community engagement, with a commitment to social and economic justice, health equity, and sustainability, locally and globally.

#### MSSW Mission

The MSSW program prepares graduates to engage in specialized practice to meet the needs of a binational and multicultural community. The program's educational focus is on social work practice with diverse communities, with an emphasis on Latino/a<sup>1</sup> communities, *emphasizing multicultural competence*, ethical practice, knowledge building, and the delivery of high-quality social services that promote the advancement of human rights, health equity and social, economic, and environmental justice for individuals, families, groups, and communities, from a local to global context.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Council on Social Work Education delineates critical components in its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) in Social Work Education (Appendix A). Based on these practice expectations, UTRGV social work graduates are taught the following knowledge and skills.

The MSSW program:

1. Prepares students for specialized practice with Latino/a individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations.
2. Prepares graduates to practice with diverse, vulnerable, and at-risk populations to promote human well-being and social and economic justice especially in the Texas-Mexico border.
3. Applies critical thinking skills in social work practice and practice according to the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles.
4. Critically analyzes, evaluates, and applies research findings and best practices to professional practice, programs, and service delivery.
5. Prepares graduates for leadership in developing and implementing policies and services for at-risk populations with an emphasis on the Texas-Mexico border region.
6. Promotes interprofessional education within the program and the university
7. Encourages students to lead collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders that leverage community strengths and address unmet needs and rights.

## **PROGRAM HISTORY**

The Master of Science in Social Work was granted Candidacy Status by CSWE in 1999 and received initial accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education in 2003. Graduates of the MSSW Program are eligible to take the LMSW examination. The master's degree was initiated to meet the growing demand for increased social work practice at the supervisory and independent levels in the Rio Grande Valley. Since the closest master's program available was in San Antonio, the necessary commute discouraged baccalaureate level social workers from pursuing graduate degrees at the rate needed to fulfill the social service needs of the Rio Grande Valley. The MSSW Traditional Online Program (TOP) option was initiated in 2023. This program option is offered in a 7-week module format, and it has allowed students from all over the world to engage in a unique MSSW program whose focus is working with Latino/a populations.

Community agencies and social service providers have been a strong mechanism in providing the needed support required for a successful master's degree program. With the added field sites across the nation and in different countries across the world, students can experience the practicum component of the program in their own communities. Our field program relies heavily on this community support.

The School of Social Work is administratively under Academic Affairs, and the faculty is housed in the Innovation Building.

## ADMISSION CRITERIA

MSSW Program admission requirements for both program options include:

1. Clear admission to the UTRGV graduate school, based on a 3.0 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
2. Admission into the 33-hour (Specialized) program requires a 3.0 cumulative GPA and a 3.2 GPA in core undergraduate social work courses.
3. A course in statistics (3 credit hours) before admission into the MSSW Degree Program.
4. Copies of all academic transcripts
5. Copy of resume
6. A Personal Statement: see School of Social Work webpage for [instructions](#) related to the content of the narrative.
7. Three [letters of reference](#) from each of the following: Current or former professor, current or former employer/supervisor and field instructor (if applying for the Specialized Program)
8. Signature attesting that student will adhere to the National Association [Code of Ethics](#) (NASW). Download the form for signature found in the following link. [MSSW National Association Code of Ethics signature form](#)

### Application Review

The evaluation process for admission to the program begins after the deadline for receipt of all materials. At least two reviewers of the MSSW committee review completed applications. Reviewers assign points based on accomplishments in four categories: GPA, three letters of reference, professional experience, and a personal statement in narrative form.

### Offers of Admission to the Graduate College

The Graduate College officially makes admission offers, and these are valid only for the semester requested on the application. Through the online application web site, you will be able to view the status of your application. Students who are accepted but do not attend the semester requested on the application must apply for readmission to enroll for a later semester. An additional fee will be charged if the student applies more than one year from the semester originally requested. Students can submit a request for deferred admission for up to one year by filling out the required [form](#).

### **Conditional Admission**

Conditional Admission may be offered to applicants with a lower GPA in exceptional cases. These students may not enroll for more than twelve (12) credits. A student on conditional status must earn a grade of B or better in each of the first four courses. Students who earn any grade less than a B will not be allowed to continue in the MSSW program. Additionally, students will not be eligible for financial aid until the requirements of the conditional status have been fulfilled.

### **SUSPENSION/PROBATION POLICY**

Whether or not in repeated courses, a student is automatically dismissed from the MSSW program for the reasons listed below. A student who is dismissed is ineligible for an MSSW degree from our School of Social Work and will not be permitted to re-enroll in the MSSW Program. Graduate College Academic Probation and Suspension policies are found at [Academic Probation and Suspension | UTRGV](#) and summarized here.

1. For a degree-seeking student in a master's program to remain in good academic standing, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (3.0=B on a 4.0 scale) and meet their department's academic progress criteria toward degree completion. The minimum GPA of 3.0 is based on all course work taken regardless of whether the courses are part of the student's degree plan.
2. A student whose overall GPA falls below a 3.0 in each semester is automatically placed on academic probation the following semester. Within the following nine semester credit hours, the overall GPA must return to 3.0 or the student will be suspended for a minimum of one semester.
3. A student who receives an F in any course is automatically dismissed from the graduate program.

Specific to the School of Social Work:

1. If a student who is on academic probation does not raise their GPA to 3.0 within the next twelve (12) semester credit hours, they will be dismissed from the MSSW program. This includes pass/fail courses and any course attempted at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, whether inside or outside of the School of Social Work.
2. Students who are admitted conditionally must earn a grade of B or better in each of the first four courses to remain in the MSSW program. Failure to do so will result in termination from the MSSW program.



In addition, the School of Social Work has internally approved the following policy, which has received University approval and will go into effect September 1, 2022.

Three “C” Rule: a student who receives a grade of C or lower in three (3) graduate courses attempted at this university, whether or not in repeated courses, will be permanently suspended from the program. Additionally, a student who receives an F in any course is automatically dismissed from the graduate program.

## **MSSW Curriculum**

The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all person, locally and globally.

Social work educators serve the profession through their teaching, scholarship, and service. Social work education at the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral levels shapes the profession’s future through the education of competent professionals, the generation of knowledge, the promotion of evidence-informed practice through scientific inquiry, and the exercise of leadership within the professional community. Social work education is advanced by the scholarship of teaching and learning, and scientific inquiry into its multifaceted dimensions, processes, and outcomes.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) uses the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit baccalaureate and master’s level social work programs. EPAS supports academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. It permits programs to use traditional and emerging models and methods of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparable outcomes across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate.

The nine (9) Social Work Competencies are listed below. Programs may add competencies that are consistent with their mission and goals and respond to their context. Each competency describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that comprise the competency at the generalist level of practice, followed by a set of behaviors that integrate these components. These behaviors represent observable components of the competencies, while the preceding statements represent the underlying content and processes that inform the behaviors.

Competency 1: Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior

Competency 2: Engage diversity and difference in practice

Competency 3: Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

Competency 4: Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice

Competency 5: Engage in policy practice

Competency 6: Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 7: Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 8: Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 9: Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

The MSSW program offers two options to earn the degree, which are the traditional face-to-face and the traditional online program (TOP). In either option, the curriculum is identical.

### **Generalist Year - 30 hours**

The Generalist year consists of eight (8) courses, and a 400-hour internship that can be completed in one (1) semester (SOCW 6370 & 6371) or two (2) semesters (SOCW 6370 & 6371). The courses are listed below:

SOCW 6311 Social Work as a Profession  
SOCW 6300 Human Behavior & the Social Environment I  
SOCW 6301 Human Behavior & the Social Environment II  
SOCW 6302 Social Welfare Policy  
SOCW 6321 Generalist Social Work Practice I  
SOCW 6322 Generalist Social Work Practice II  
SOCW 6323 Generalist Social Work Practice III  
SOCW 6381 Research Designs and Applications  
SOCW 6370 Field Practicum  
SOCW 6371 Field Practicum

We offer two different specializations: Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families & Groups, and Community Practice & Administration. The curricula for each are listed below:

### **Specialization Year – 33 hours (*Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families & Groups*)**

The Specialization Year consists of nine (9) courses, and a 500-hour internship that can be completed in one (1) (SOCW 6376 & 6377) or two (2) semesters. The courses are listed below:

SOCW 6315 Social Work with Diverse Populations  
SOCW 6330 Advanced Family Practice I  
SOCW 6331 Advanced Family Practice II  
SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos

SOCW 6335 Advanced Clinical Assessment  
SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis and Development  
SOCW 6350 Advanced Social Work Practice with Individuals  
SOCW 6351 Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups  
SOCW XXXX Graduate Elective (3 hours)  
SOCW 6376 & 6377 Field Practicum

**Specialization Year – 33 hours (*Community Practice and Administration*)**

The concentration curriculum consists of nine (9) courses, and a 500-hour internship which can be completed in one (1) (SOCW 6378 & 6379) or two (2) semesters. For this concentration, students must enroll in two social work electives. The courses are listed below:

SOCW 6315 Social Work with Diverse Populations  
SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos  
SOCW 6336 Advanced Macro Assessment  
SOCW 6340 Advanced Social Work Practice with Organizations  
SOCW 6341 Advanced Social Work Practice with Communities  
SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis and Development  
SOCW 6380 Accountability and Evaluation in Macro Practice  
SOCW XXXX Graduate Elective (3 hours)  
SOCW XXXX Graduate Elective (3 hours)  
SOCW 6378 & 6379 Field Practicum

**Full Time Plans of Study  
Regular Program (63-hour)  
Traditional / Face-to-face**

**Generalist Year**

<b>Semester:</b>	<b>Course &amp; Title:</b>
1st Year-Fall	
	SOCW 6300 Human Behavior and the Social Environment I
	SOCW 6302 Social Welfare Policy
	SOCW 6311 Social Work as a Profession
	SOCW 6321 Generalist Social Work Practice I
	SOCW 6381 Research Designs & Applications
1st Year-Spring	
	SOCW 6301 Human Behavior and the Social Environment II
	SOCW 6322 Generalist Social Work Practice II
	SOCW 6323 Generalist Social Work Practice III
	SOCW 6370 & 6371 Field Practicum (400-hour Agency Internship; must have a 3.0 GPA to begin)

**SPECIALIZATION: Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families, and Groups**

<b>Semester:</b>	<b>Course &amp; Title:</b>
1st Year-Summer	SOCW XXXX Elective
	SOCW 6315 Social Work with Diverse Populations
2nd Year-Fall	
	SOCW 6330 Advanced Family I
	SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos
	SOCW 6335 Advanced Clinical Assessment
	SOCW 6350 Advanced Social Work Practice with Individuals
2nd Year-Spring	
	SOCW 6331 Advanced Family Practice II
	SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis
	SOCW 6351 Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups
	SOCW 6376 and 6377 Field Clinical Practicum (500-hour Agency Internship; must have a 3.0 GPA to begin)

**SPECIALIZATION: Community Practice & Administration**

<b>Semester:</b>	<b>Course &amp; Title:</b>
1st Year Summer	SOCW XXXX Elective
	SOCW XXXX Elective
	SOCW 6315 Social Work with Diverse Populations
2nd Semester – Fall	
	SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos
	SOCW 6336 Advanced Macro Assessment
	SOCW 6340 Advanced SW Practice with Organizations
	SOCW 6341 Advanced SW Practice with Communities
3rd Semester – Spring	
	SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis
	SOCW 6380 Accountability & Evaluation
	SOCW 6378 and 6379 Field Clinical Practicum (500-hour Agency Internship)

**Full Time Plans of Study  
Specialized Program (33-hour)  
Traditional / Face-to-face**

**SPECIALIZATION: Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families and Groups**

<b>Semester:</b>	<b>Course &amp; Title:</b>
1st Semester – Summer	
	SOCW 6315 Social Work with Diverse Populations
	SOCW XXXX Elective
2nd Semester – Fall	
	SOCW 6330 Advanced Family Practice I
	SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos
	SOCW 6335 Advanced Clinical Assessment
	SOCW 6350 Advanced Social Work Practice with Individuals
<u>3rd Semester – Spring</u>	
	SOCW 6331 Advanced Family Practice II
	SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis
	SOCW 6351 Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups
	SOCW 6376 and 6377 Field Clinical Practicum (500-hour Agency Internship; must have a 3.0 GPA to begin)

**SPECIALIZATION: Community Practice and Administration**

<b>Semester:</b>	<b>Course &amp; Title:</b>
1st Semester – Summer	
	SOCW 6315 – Social Work with Populations
	SOCW XXXX – Elective I
	SOCW XXXX – Elective II
2nd Semester – Fall	
	SOCW 6332 Social Work Practice with Latinos
	SOCW 6336 Advanced Macro Assessment
	SOCW 6340 Advanced SW Practice with Organizations
	SOCW 6341 Advanced SW Practice with Communities
<u>3rd Semester – Spring</u>	
	SOCW 6342 Advanced Policy Analysis
	SOCW 6380 Accountability & Evaluation
	SOCW 6378 and 6379 Field Clinical Practicum (500-hour Agency Internship; must have a 3.0 GPA to begin)

**Full Time Plans of Study: Regular Program (63-hour)**  
**Traditional Online Program (TOP)**  
**SPECIALIZATION: Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families, and Groups**  
**Fall Start**

**Year 1:**

Fall Semester	6300 – HBSE I	Online Synchronous
	6311 – Social Work as a Profession	Online Synchronous
	6321 – Generalist Practice I	Online Synchronous
	6302 – Social Welfare Policy	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester *	6301 – HBSE II	Online Synchronous
	6322 - Generalist Practice II	Online Synchronous
	6323 – Generalist Practice III	Online Synchronous
	6381 – Research Design & Applications	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester	6370 – Generalist Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6371 – Generalist Practicum II	Online Synchronous

**Year 2:**

Fall Semester	6332 -SW Practice with Latinos	Online Synchronous
	6330 – Advanced Family Practice	Online Synchronous
	6335 – Advanced Clinical Assessment	Online Synchronous
	6350 – Advanced Practice with Individuals	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester *	6342 – Advanced Policy Analysis	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
	6315 – Social Work with Diverse Populations	Online Synchronous
	6351 – Advanced Practice with Groups	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester **	6331 – Advanced Family Practice II	Online Synchronous
	6376 – Clinical Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6377 – Clinical Practicum II	Online Synchronous

**Full Time Plans of Study: Regular Program (63-hour)**  
**Traditional Online Program (TOP)**  
**SPECIALIZATION: Community Practice and Administration**

**Year 1:**

Fall Semester	6300 – HBSE I	Online Synchronous
	6311 – Social Work as a Profession	Online Synchronous
	6321 – Generalist Practice I	Online Synchronous
	6302 – Social Welfare Policy	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester*	6301 – HBSE II	Online Synchronous
	6322 - Generalist Practice II	Online Synchronous
	6323 – Generalist Practice III	Online Synchronous
	6381 – Research Design & Applications	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester	6370 – Generalist Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6371 – Generalist Practicum II	Online Synchronous

**Year 2:**

Fall Semester	6341 – Advanced SW Practice with Communities	Online Synchronous
	6340 – Advanced SW Practice w/Organizations	Online Synchronous
	6336 – Advanced Macro Assessment	Online Synchronous
	6332 – SW Practice with Latinos	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester *	6342– Advanced Policy Analysis	Online Synchronous
	6315 – Social Work with Diverse Populations	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester **	6380 – Accountability & Evaluation	Online Synchronous
	6378 – Macro Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6379 – Macro Practicum II	Online Synchronous



**Full Time Plans of Study: Specialized Program (33-hour)**  
**Traditional Online Program (TOP)**  
**SPECIALIZATION: Direct Practice with Latino Individuals, Families, and Groups**

Fall Semester	6332 -SW Practice with Latinos	Online Synchronous
	6330 – Advanced Family Practice	Online Synchronous
	6335 – Advanced Clinical Assessment	Online Synchronous
	6350 – Advanced Practice with Individuals	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester*	6342 – Advanced Policy Analysis	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
	6315 – Social Work with Diverse Populations	Online Synchronous
	6351 – Advanced Practice with Groups	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester **	6331 – Advanced Family Practice II	Online Synchronous
	6376 – Clinical Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6377 – Clinical Practicum II	Online Synchronous

**Full Time Plans of Study: Specialized Program (33-hour)**  
**Traditional Online Program (TOP)**  
**SPECIALIZATION: Community Practice & Administration**

Fall Semester	6341 – Advanced SW Practice with Communities	Online Synchronous
	6340 – Advanced SW Practice w/Organizations	Online Synchronous
	6336 – Advanced Macro Assessment	Online Synchronous
	6332 – SW Practice with Latinos	Online Synchronous
Spring Semester*	6342– Advanced Policy Analysis	Online Synchronous
	6315 – Social Work with Diverse Populations	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
	Elective	Online Synchronous
Summer Semester **	6380 – Accountability & Evaluation	Online Synchronous
	6378 – Macro Practicum I	Online Synchronous
	6379 – Macro Practicum II	Online Synchronous

## **ACADEMIC ADVISING**

MSSW majors are assigned an academic advisor at the time of admission into the program. Normally, the student will have the same advisor during his/her entire academic tenure. If changes must be made, students will be advised accordingly. Faculty advisors are selected from faculty who are assigned primary teaching responsibility in the MSSW Program. Students are responsible for making an appointment with their respective advisors each semester to ensure they are following the plan of study. Additionally, students should consult with the advisor before making any changes, including withdrawal from courses, changes from full-time to part-time or vice versa, and a change in specialization. If students deviate from their plan of study, it may result in a delay in graduation.

### **FACULTY ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The advisor will:

- A. Engage the student in a process of orienting and assisting the student in evaluating his/her aptitude and motivation for a career in social work.
- B. Engage the student in a process that allows for early and periodic evaluation of his/her performance in the total educational program.
- C. Refer students with academic or personal problems to appropriate resources within the university and in the community, e.g., tutorial, medical, psychological, financial, housing, childcare, employment, or career counseling.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The social work faculty is committed to the provision of quality academic advising; however, the student has the major responsibility for the satisfactory completion of his/her degree program. The specific responsibilities of the student include:

1. Planning his/her schedule each semester to ensure that there is reasonable progress toward completion of the degree.
2. Maintaining updated contact information (UTRGV e-mail, telephone numbers) in student "ASSIST" system.
3. Satisfactorily completing all courses for which he/she registers.
4. Reviewing the [Graduate Catalog](#) to be aware of the academic policies and procedures related to admission, tuition, financial assistance, registration, library services, graduation, student services, and the learning assistance and guidance center.
5. Maintaining contact with his/her faculty advisor during each semester for academic planning.

6. Participating in registration advising.
7. Maintaining a current mailing address with the office of admissions and records and responding promptly to all communications from the School of Social Work. The UTRGV email is the official communication of the University.
8. If a student must take a semester off, the student is responsible for submitting a [Leave of Absence form](#) to the respective Program Director.

### **Request for Exceptions**

A student who wishes to take a three (3)-credit hour graduate elective outside of the School of Social Work must obtain approval from his/her academic advisor and from the respective MSSW Program Director. A written request should be initiated by the student.

The same process should be followed for other requests.

### **MSSW Program Option Transfer**

Students requesting a transfer from the one program option to another (e.g. from Traditional Face-to-Face to Traditional Online or vice versa) must meet the following criteria:

1. Student **MUST** have followed the Plan of Study.
2. Student cannot be in the final semester immediately prior to practicum.

Additionally, the following applies:

Advanced standing students (33 hour) may transition **ONLY** when there are extenuating circumstances.

Regular students (63 hour) may transition **ONLY** in the semester immediately following completion of all foundation courses.

### **Work or Life Experience**

In accordance with the Council on Social Work Education Standards (AS 3.1.5), the School of Social Work does not grant school course credit for work of life experience.

# Field Education

## REQUIREMENTS

Students who will be entering field will be contacted by the Director of Field Education during the semester immediately preceding. A 3.0 GPA is required to enter any of the field courses; a GPA lower than 3.0 will require a delay.

## Ethics

### INTRODUCTION

Social work is a value-based profession with a strong ethical foundation. The Code of Ethics is found in Appendix B. This section deals with ethical standards that are particularly relevant to the student role and must be adhered to by the student.

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the privileges that are associated with admission into the MSSW Program, students assume personal and professional responsibilities. Implicit in the process of being admitted into the program is the expectation that the National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics (Appendix B) will guide the student's behavior. The Code of Ethics addresses six areas outlined below:

- 1) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Clients
- 2) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues
- 3) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings
- 4) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals
- 5) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession
- 6) The Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

Students at the graduate level are expected to conduct themselves as professional social workers; they are expected to use the NASW Code of Ethics to guide their interaction with faculty, program support staff, peers, and clients. Additionally, students must adhere to university rules and regulations – see [University Handbook of Operating Procedures](#):

STU 02-100 STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE  
STU 02-200 STUDENT GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

Additional information can be found in the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) webpage.

# **Dismissal Policies and Procedures**

## **ACADEMIC DISMISSAL**

Policies and procedures from the university and its academic programs are explained in the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Graduate Catalog, specifically the section on [Academic Probation and Suspension](#). For additional information, please refer to page six (6) of this handbook.

## **NON-ACADEMIC DISMISSAL (Professional Social Work Misconduct)**

The profession of social work embraces a set of core values that provide the basis for its standards of professional conduct. These values include service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. The National Association of Social Work (NASW) has established a code of ethics to guide the professional conduct of members of the profession. Students enrolled in the MSSW or BSW in the UTRGV School of Social Work are expected to demonstrate conduct consistent with those values and ethics. It is the policy of the MSSW Program that students who are found to consistently disregard the values and ethics of the profession may be subject to termination from their respective Social Work Program. The NASW Code of Ethics will be the guiding framework and source for identifying professional misconduct.

## **STUDENTS' RIGHTS ON CONFIDENTIALITY**

All procedures relating to the performance review shall be carried out in a manner that will protect the student's right to privacy consistent with federal and state privacy laws. Members of the committee and all other persons who appear at the review meeting are expected to observe the confidential nature of the information made available to them, as well as any discussion held during the meeting. Actions and recommendations of the committee are to be confidential and shared only with those persons involved with the student in educational capacity or University personnel on a need-to-know basis.

The faculty operates under the professional concept of a "circle of confidentiality," which means that School of Social Work faculty, staff, and field instructors have a right and an obligation to exchange information about students. Such an exchange is necessary because student performance may impact the operation of any part of the program, integrity of the program in meeting its goals and objectives, student's potential for success, and the safety and well-being of UTRGV Faculty and field agency personnel, other students, and agency clients.

## **MANDATORY MEETING**

Within seven (7) academic days of receipt of the Termination and Professional Misconduct Form (see Appendix C), the respective Program Director will hold a mandatory meeting with the student to review and discuss the professional misconduct concern.

A student's refusal to attend the meeting or to cooperate with any part of the process will result in referral to the Office of the Dean of Students for the initiation of disciplinary action for misconduct pursuant to the hearing and appeals procedures outlined the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures (H.O.P.).

Before meeting with the student, the respective Program Director may seek clarification of the misconduct concern from the faculty member initiating the action. At the meeting, the student will be apprised of the concern and will be asked to submit a written response within seven (7) days to the respective MSSW Program Director with a copy to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in the School of Social Work.

Within seven (7) days of receipt of the student's response, the respective Program Director will issue his/her written opinion regarding the alleged misconduct, recommending one of the following actions: 1) develop a remediation plan; 2) refer to a Faculty Review Committee, which is a sub-committee of the MSSW committee; 3) initiate the termination process; or 4) no action to be taken. The Advisor's recommendation will be submitted to the MSSW Program Director.

## **FACULTY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

If the respective Program Director recommends referral to the Faculty Review Committee, the Committee will hold a hearing within seven (7) academic days. The student, the faculty member initiating the proceedings and the Advisor may appear in person before the Committee. The hearing will be closed to the public and no persons other than the student, the faculty member initiating the proceedings and the committee members may attend the hearing. Within three (3) days, the Committee will submit a written opinion to the Program Director, proposing termination or a remediation plan. A copy of their recommendation will be sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Within seven (7) days of receipt of the Committee's decision, the Program Director will issue his/her determination. In the case of a remediation plan, the Program Director, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, will have the authority to amend the plan proposed by the Committee.

## **APPEAL OF PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S DETERMINATION**

Within seven (7) days of receipt of the Program Director's determination, the student may appeal to the School of Social Work Dean, who will review all documents and testimony presented at every stage of the proceedings. The Dean of School of Social Work will issue his/her determination within seven (7) days.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF REMEDIATION PLAN OR PURSUANT APPEALS**

If a remediation plan is developed and is accepted by the student, the respective MSSW Program Director will be responsible for monitoring the plan. Should the student fail to comply with the mandates of the remediation plan, the respective Program Director will inform the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, who will meet with the student within five (5) academic days to discuss the noncompliance. If there is no resolution, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs may withdraw the remediation plan and initiate the termination process.

Upon a decision to initiate the termination process, the student may appeal the decision under the university's Student Disciplinary Hearing and Appeals Procedures, as outlined in [the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures](#).

Students may also be dismissed for other misconduct outlined in University policies and procedures found in Sections [the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures](#).

## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

The procedures for appealing grades and addressing misunderstandings related to academic standards and expectations in individual courses are found in Section 5.2.1 of the H.O.P. Students are encouraged to discuss these matters with the instructor of the individual class before resorting to the formal appeals process.

Student complaint procedures for resolving complaints against faculty or staff related to matters other than discrimination or grade appeals are found in Section 5.8.1 of the H.O.P. Students are encouraged to resolve complaints informally, including discussing the complaint with the Chair of the department.

**Note:** The provisions of this handbook are not contractual in nature. They are simply a description of the program that attempts to summarize the practices, policies and procedures currently used in the MSSW Program. Some of these practices, policies and procedures are prescribed by the CSWE, our accrediting body, and others are not. This handbook is a working document subject to change and designed to better serve our student population.

## **Appendix A**

### **CSWE Education Policy and Accreditation Standards**

**Below are excerpts from the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) that explains the use of EPAS, its curriculum standards in the form of ten core competencies, advanced practice, field education as signature pedagogy and its requirements for student development.**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) uses the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit baccalaureate and master's social work programs. EPAS supports academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. It permits programs to use traditional and emerging models of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparability across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate.

#### **Core Competencies**

Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The nine core competencies are listed below:

**Competency 1** – Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.

**Competency 2** – Engage diversity and difference in practice

**Competency 3** – Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

**Competency 4** – Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice

**Competency 5** – Engage in policy practice

**Competency 6** – Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

**Competency 7** – Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

**Competency 8** – Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

**Competency 9** – Evaluate individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

#### **Explicit Curriculum**

##### **Educational Policy 2.0— Generalist Practice**

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with



the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice.

### **Educational Policy M2.1—Specialized Practice**

Specialized practice builds on generalist practice as described in EP 2.0, adapting and extending the Social Work Competencies for practice with a specific population, problem area, method of intervention, perspective or approach to practice. Specialized practice augments and extends social work knowledge, values, and skills to engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate within an area of specialization. Specialized practitioners advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies in their area of specialized practice. Specialized practitioners synthesize and employ a broad range of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge and skills based on scientific inquiry and best practice, and consistent with social work values. Specialized practitioners engage in and conduct research to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

The master's program in social work prepares students for specialized practice. Programs identify the specialized knowledge, values, skills, cognitive and affective processes, and behaviors that extend and enhance the nine Social Work Competencies and prepare students for practice in the area of specialization.

### **Educational Policy 2.2—Signature Pedagogy: Field Education**

Signature pedagogies are elements of instruction and socialization that teach future practitioners the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline – to think, to perform, and to act ethically and integrity. Field education is the signature pedagogy for social work. The intent of field education is to integrate the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum -- classroom and field – are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the social work competencies. Field education may integrate forms of technology as a component of the program.

## **Implicit Curriculum**

### **Education Policy 3.0 - Diversity**

The program's expectation for diversity is reflected in its learning environment, which provides the context through which students learn about differences, to value and respect diversity, and develop a

commitment to cultural humility. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. The learning environment consists of the program's institutional setting; selection of field education settings and their clientele; composition of program advisory or field committees; educational and social resources; resource allocation; program leadership; speaker series, seminars, and special programs; support groups; research and other initiatives; and the demographic make-up of its faculty, staff, and student body.

### **Educational Policy 3.1—Student Development**

Educational preparation and commitment to the profession are essential qualities in the admission and development of students for professional practice. Student participation in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs are important for students' professional development.

To promote the social work education continuum, graduates of baccalaureate social work programs admitted to master's social work programs are presented with an articulated pathway toward specialized practice.

# Appendix B

## NASW Code of Ethics

### Summary of Major Principles

#### I. The Social Worker's Conduct and Comportment as a Social Worker

- A. *Propriety*. The social worker should maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identify as a social worker.
- B. *Competence and Professional Development*. The social worker should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions.
- C. *Service*. The social worker should regard as primary the service obligation of the social work profession.
- D. *Integrity*. The social worker should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.
- E. *Scholarship and Research*. The social worker engaged in study and research should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry.

#### II. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Clients

- F. *Primacy of Clients' Interests*. The social worker's primary responsibility is to clients.
- G. *Rights and Prerogatives of clients*. The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients.
- H. *Confidentiality and Privacy*. The social worker should respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.
- I. *Fees*. When setting fees, the social worker should ensure that they are fair, reasonable, considerate, and commensurate with the service performed and with due regard for the clients' ability to pay.

#### III. The Social Workers Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues

- J. *Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy*. The social worker should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.
- K. *Dealing with Colleagues' Clients*. The social worker has the responsibility to relate to the clients of colleagues with full professional consideration.

#### IV. The Social Worker's Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations

- L. *Commitments to Employing Organizations.* The social worker should adhere to commitments made to the employing organizations.

#### V. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to the Social Work Profession.

- M. *Maintaining the Integrity of the Profession.* The social worker should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession.
- N. *Community Service.* The social worker should assist the profession in making social services available to the general public.
- O. *Development of Knowledge.* The social worker should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge for professional practice.

#### VI. The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Society

- P. *Promoting the General Welfare.* The social worker should promote the general welfare of society.

NASW membership applications are available at [NASW Texas](#).

## **Appendix C**

### **Termination and Professional Misconduct Form**

Submit to MSSW Program Director

Person(s) Making Referral \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Decision Page**  
To be completed during meeting with student

Committee members present: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

---

Printed Name

---

Printed Name



To be completed during progress review meeting

Committee members present \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

Meeting Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature Printed Name