

Master of Social Work - Online Program

Frequently Asked Questions about Field Placement and Field Planning

The following are questions frequently asked by students:

1. Some students who work 40 hours a week need to keep working full time. How realistic is that?

Students working 40 hours a week will not be able to complete the field placement requirement of the program unless some adjustment is made in their work schedule. Students are required to have a well-varied educational experience. While some agencies have evening and/or weekend hours, these tend to be limited. Placement hours during evenings/ weekends do not allow you, as a student, to maximize your learning in areas involving the community. You must complete some hours during the traditional Monday through Friday business day time. The field placement is **not** about completing hours but about having a solid educational experience. For example, being at a residential setting on weekends when very little is happening does not meet the definition of an educational experience. The student must be present at a time when meetings and activities are happening and staff, including the MSW Field Instructor, are present. The majority of agencies cannot provide this opportunity on weekends or during the evening.

2. What is the role of the Seminar Instructor vs. the Field Planner?

The Field Planner works with students through the orientation and helps them find a great field placement. The role of the Seminar Instructor is to work closely with students during the field placement and seminar to insure that students have the best possible educational experience in their field placement. The Field Seminar course is where theory and course content is linked to actual social work practice. It is important for students to maintain good communication with the Seminar Instructor throughout the course and field placement.

3. When does field planning begin?

Planning officially begins **about** eight (8) months prior to starting field. Students will be notified by email to begin the field planning process by engaging in the non-credit bearing field orientation on blackboard. Students are automatically enrolled in orientation. Students will be field planning while simultaneously enrolled in academic courses. Students can reach out to their Student Support Specialist earlier than their orientation start date to get more information regarding the process.

4. What is the first step in the field planning process?

Students will begin the SSWO 002(generalist)/004(specialization) Orientation to Field Education and Field Planning course located in Blackboard. **Students will need a web-cam, headset, and scanner for the orientation.**

5. What do I do in field planning?

Students will work closely with their field planner to learn the requirements of their field practicum experience, as well as the process to find and secure a practicum site. Students will engage weekly in the orientation for best results.

6. Are students able to select their own field placement and MSW Field Instructor?

It is the student's responsibility to find his/her own field placement and MSW Field Instructor contingent upon School of Social Work approval. The student's Field Planner will work closely with them during this time to help secure the best fit field placement.

7. What else has to be completed in that time period?

Once a student has found a field placement there is paperwork that must be completed, as well as a virtual meeting with the organization to finalize placement. All of this will be outlined in your orientation to field planning. If all of the forms have been submitted and approved, it is during this final meeting where the placement will be officially approved. Sometimes the forms need to be edited after this meeting, in which case the placement may be conditionally approved until all of the paperwork is completed and accepted.

8. How many agencies should students interview with?

In order to make a sound educational decision that meets the expected learning goals, students are required to interview with at least two agencies so that they can compare and contrast settings.

9. Can a student get paid for his/her placement?

A limited number of agencies do offer students a stipend or a paid internship. Students also have the opportunity to do their placement at their place of employment if certain criteria are met (see "Place of Employment (POE) criteria" and "Paid Internship options" in the Field Education Manual). We encourage students to ask about stipends at the time of their interview.

10. How many hours per week are students expected to be at their placement?

All Traditional track students are expected to complete a minimum of 450 hours in their generalist year field placement and 550 hours in their specialization year field placement. Advanced Standing students must complete 550 hours in their field placement. This averages out to 12-18 hours a week for 32 weeks. Students need to be in placement for a minimum of 12 hours/week. This includes the 60 minutes/week of field instruction. Students must attend the organization's staff meeting and plan to be at the site a minimum of 8 hours during regular business hours.

11. Can students set their own schedule at the placement?

The student and the agency work together to identify a schedule that meets both of their needs. Internships hours must include program times when primary interventions occur and the student is able to attend staff/team meetings. Note: residential programs typically use evenings and weekends as “downtime.” In this example, an internship that was scheduled 100% on evenings and weekends would not be approved.

12. How can students prepare themselves for the placement interview?

Students begin to prepare for their interviews during the field orientation. Students may work closely with their field planner to prepare for interviews.

13. Should students bring a resume and references to the interview?

Yes. Students work on their resumes as an assignment during the field orientation. It is recommended that students bring their resume, names of references (in case they are requested), the final paperwork needed, and the learning competencies and outcomes.

14. What is the difference between the Field Planner, MSW Field Instructor and Seminar Instructor?

Field Planner:

- Member of the UNE SSWO Field Education Faculty
- Assigned to students by the school to provide assistance and support around field planning
- Teaches the Orientation to Field Education and Field Planning course
- Assists students prior to entering field placement and works with students to solidify and ultimately approve field placements.

MSW Field Instructor:

- MSW social worker identified in the community who is responsible for the student’s education in the field
- Meets with students for one hour a week for field instruction
- Works with students to develop the learning contract
- Evaluates the student’s performance based on the successful completion of all the learning competencies and objectives in the learning contract and recommends a grade to the seminar instructor.
- Is the student’s advocate/supporter at his/her field placement

Seminar Instructor:

- Member of the UNE SSWO field education faculty including adjunct faculty members
- Acts as liaison between the school and the placements
- Conducts virtual (online) field visits with the placements
- Teaches the integrating Field Seminar

- Determines the student's final grade for Field Placement/Seminar
- Is the student's additional advocate/supporter during the field placement

15. Must the MSW Field Instructor be licensed?

The UNE School of Social Work only requires that the MSW field instructor be a graduate of an accredited school of social work and have two years post-master's experience. However, some state licensing boards require that the Field Instructor be licensed. It is a required assignment in the field orientation that students find out if their state or country has additional requirements.

16. What can students expect in the placement interview?

The interview process varies from agency to agency. However, the agency is interested in making sure there is a good fit. As a result, they will be asking questions to ensure that this is the right place. They will also be looking for students to play an active role in the interviewing process, so it is important for students to be prepared and show an interest in the agency. This is a part of the field planning process and the Field Planner is available to guide the student through this.

17. What if the person with whom the student interviews is not the person who can be the MSW Field Instructor?

Because the MSW Field Instructor plays such a key role in the student's education, it is extremely important for the student to meet with this person. If there is not an opportunity during the interview, we strongly encourage students to ask to meet the person before making a final decision. The Field Instructor will be meeting with students for one hour of field instruction weekly. They will also be responsible for evaluating the successful completion of all the learning objectives. It is critical that students feel comfortable working with their Field Instructor. It needs to be a good fit to maximize learning.

18. What if a student really likes the agency but the agency doesn't have an MSW available to be a Field Instructor?

There are situations where an agency would provide an excellent education for a student but, for a variety of reasons, does not have an MSW on staff. In these cases, the student would receive their weekly field instruction from an off-site MSW. This is a person found by the agency or the student (with support and guidance from the Field Planner) and approved by the school. The student will also receive day-to-day supervision from an identified staff member at the agency who does not have to be an MSW. This person is the on-site supervisor. Since both the Field Instructor and the on-site supervisor are responsible for the student's educational experience, it is extremely important for there to be good communication between the two. The three (student, Field Instructor, and on-site supervisor) need to meet monthly.

19. Is there anything that needs to be done after the interview?

Before ending the interview, the student and the agency should be clear about the next step. It is also nice to send a follow-up email or thank-you note of appreciation for their time.

20. Will a criminal background check and/or fingerprints be required by the agency?

This is an important question to ask at the time of the interview, as many agencies that provide field placement opportunities for students require a criminal background check. If a criminal background check indicates a conviction, it may prevent a student from securing a field placement. A conviction may also negatively impact the student's ability to get a social work license. It is recommended that students contact the Social Work Licensure Board in the state(s) they plan to practice to get more information regarding their requirements.

21. Will the placement require the student to have certain immunizations?

Some agencies require certain immunizations/tests. This should be determined at the time of the interview.

22. Does the student have to pay for background checks/fingerprinting/immunizations, etc., if the placement requires these?

It depends on the agency. Some will assume the responsibility, while others ask the student to pay. It is important to ask at the time of the interview.

23. Do students need to complete HIPAA in order to enter field placement?

Yes, the University requires that all students complete University HIPAA training each year. Students complete HIPAA during their student orientation and every subsequent year thereafter.

24. Will the placement expect students to transport clients, and if so, will students have to use their own car?

This depends on the agency. It is important to ask these questions at the time of the interview.

25. If a student is working in a social service agency can those hours count as field time?

No field credit can be given for work hours. However, there may be a possibility for a field placement at the student's place of employment. Students need to talk with their Field Planner and review the place of employment criteria. (See "Place of Employment (POE)" and "Paid Internship criteria" in the Field Education Policy Manual.)

26. If a student has a new job in an agency, can this be counted as a field placement?

Students cannot use their job, new or existing, as their field placement. Please see "Paid Internship criteria" in the Field Educational Manual for more information on paid internship options.

27. Will the placement require students to attend an orientation/training prior to working with clients?

All agencies are asked to provide some type of orientation for their students. This is an important question to ask at the time of the interview. Orientation/training required by the agency is counted as field hours.

28. Do MSW Field Instructors need to be paid for field instruction time?

Under no circumstances does a student ever pay for field instruction time.

29. How do students ask about safety training?

The School considers safety an important issue to be discussed in the field placement. It is definitely appropriate to ask about safety training at any point during the interview or field placement itself. In the event that a student feels the agency is dismissing the concern, the student needs to notify the Field Planner and/or Seminar Instructor immediately. The School requires each student to complete a safety contract at the beginning of each placement.

30. Can students participate in physically restraining clients?

The School requests that students **DO NOT** participate in the practice of physically restraining clients at their field placements. However, students may participate in agency-sponsored trainings and count the trainings as field hours.

31. Can students use their former therapist as an MSW Field Instructor?

Under no circumstances will the School of Social Work approve a Field Instructor who has a personal, familial, or prior therapeutic relationship with a student.

32. Can students begin their field placement without having completed all of the required courses?

The short answer is no. Students must complete all of their required courses for their foundation/generalist year before beginning their foundation/generalist year placement. Students must complete all of their advanced/specialization year courses before beginning their advanced/specialization year placement. The pedagogical rationale is that the coursework is designed to inform and support the student in the field. Students are expected to put into practice that which they have learned about in the classroom.

33. When is the Field Planner contacted? When is the Field Seminar Instructor contacted?

If the student is currently field planning, the student should contact their Field Planner. If the student is in a field placement, the Field Seminar Instructor is the initial point of contact. If there are questions about field during a time where the student is not actively field planning or in field placement, the Field Faculty should be contacted to assist with any questions.

34. Does UNE's School of Social Work keep a list of previously used agencies?

Yes, the Field Planner has a current list of agencies used by previous students.

35. What if a student can't find an agency on his/her own?

All students work closely with a Field Planner and receive support and direction every step of the way.

36. Can a student do both placements at a Place of Employment (POE)?

In order for students to have an educationally sound placement, students are strongly discouraged from having both placements at the same organization. Students work closely with their Field Planner in order to find the best fit.

37. Can field hours be completed on nights and weekends at agencies that are open 24 hours?

Yes; although this can occur, students will need to review the list of activities with their field planner to be sure it meets objectives for either a foundation/generalist or advanced/specialization year placement. Students do need to plan on being at their placement for a minimum of at least 8 hours during regular business hours. Students also need to plan on attending the agency's staff meetings. Final approval of any field placement proposal needs to be done by the Field Planner.

38. Can the field placement be done during the summer?

There are three times students enter field placement during the academic year: January, May, and September. Placements typically run for 32 weeks over the course of two semesters. The other option is for students to complete a block placement which is 16 weeks over the course of one semester. Not all students are eligible to complete a block placement: this option must be specifically reviewed and approved by the Field Planner.

39. What is the field planning process like? What are the requirements?

Field Planners are responsible for helping students secure a field placement. They work closely with the students to ensure that the placement site offers an educationally sound foundation/generalist or advanced/specialization year experience. Students will be required to complete assignments in the orientation course, be in communication weekly with their field planner, and contact five to seven organizations a week to secure a practicum site.

40. Can students get paid for their field placement hours?

Yes, students can get paid for field placement; however, employment hours can never be counted towards the required amount of internship hours.

41. What is the number one reason a student cannot find an agency?

Students who live in close proximity to other large schools of social work sometimes have difficulty securing a placement due to the local universities having exclusive agreements with the agencies. It is strongly

recommended that when students do reside in an area with other local schools, they work even more closely with the Field Planner. Also, students must contact the recommended five to seven organizations a week to locate a placement.

42. Does the amount of hours in field placement meet licensure requirements?

In the orientation course, students will complete an assignment specific to hours regulated by their state for internship. These hours do not count towards licensure. Licensure hours accrue post-graduation.

43. Can placements be done overseas?

International placements are only available to students living abroad and military students stationed abroad.

44. Can placements be done on military bases?

Yes; however, no matter where the placement is located, it must meet all objectives.

45. How will field benefit students in their specific interests within social work?

The goal during field placement is to integrate and apply what has been learned in academic courses. It is about honing skills and solidifying knowledge, both of which are applicable to any population the student chooses.

46. How many agencies should I anticipate contacting before finding a placement?

We recommend contacting five to seven agencies per week as it make take these many attempts to secure two potential interviews.