

Student Hours

Field is a year-long course and therefore the student “time in the course” typically looks and feels differently than a traditionally structured course taken in a classroom. When students start in the fall, they remain in the same placement until the end of the spring semester. This means that there is no “course ending” in December or “course beginning” in January.

To manage the required hours and course length, students and field instructors are expected to work together to set both a weekly (micro) schedule and a broader full academic year schedule. The weekly schedule reflects which days of the week and what hours the student is expected to be in the placement, the day and time of supervisory meetings, and the days and times of any regularly scheduled agency meetings students are expected to attend (i.e., staff meetings or treatment team meetings). The full academic year schedule reflects which weeks the student will begin, end, and have time away from the work. Because each agency has unique needs, provides unique services, and has unique hours of service delivery, these scheduling agreements will differ from student to student. Above all, the most important scheduling decisions consider the professional manner in which students begin, take time away from, and put closure to their field experiences. In other words, the relationship and services to ‘clients’ must always be a priority. So, practically speaking, what this means is that a student should not assume that they have no field responsibilities during school breaks (especially the longer winter break) unless this agreement has been explicitly made during the scheduling process.

Additionally, graduate students will participate in monthly field seminars with their faculty field liaisons. These will be scheduled at the beginning of the semester within each liaison/student group. The seminars are 1 ½ hours each and can be counted as a part of your total field hours.

More specific guidance:

1. Undergraduate students, foundation year MSW students, and concentration year MSW students complete a minimum of 450 hours in the field between September and May. Advanced standing students complete a minimum of 600 hours. Approximately half of these hours are completed by mid-December.
2. Some field sites may require more hours than the field program’s minimum. In these cases, students must be made aware of this prior to accepting the placement.
3. Students schedule consistent blocks of time in their agency each week so as to complete their hours within 2-3 days.
4. Student hours reflect the schedules of staff and supervisors within the organization. Evening and weekend hours are an exception to the rule and need to be approved

by the faculty liaison and field education coordinator. The rationale for this expectation is that the student's experience as "member of the agency community" is significant to social work practice skill development. And therefore, it follows that if the student is not consistently interacting with other agency personnel within the agency culture, integral learning opportunities are missed.

5. Students either develop their own way to document their hours on a weekly basis or use an agency process to do so.
6. Students make up any regularly scheduled time that they miss. In other words, there is no built-in allowance for sick time or vacation time – students must complete the required hours regardless of the reason for missing. In case of illness or unavoidable absence, the student informs the agency as soon as possible. The student and field instructor immediately notify their faculty field liaison of absences of more than three consecutive 'field days.' Students make up time they have missed within the semester, unless otherwise approved by the Field Education Coordinator. If considerable lengths of time are missed, arrangements can be made to make up time before the beginning of the next semester, but only as a result of a meeting that leads to a written plan and approval of the faculty field liaison, field instructor, and student.
7. There may be occasions when it is necessary for students to perform overtime work. When these situations do arise, students will plan for and take compensatory time off in a balanced and professional manner.
8. Any on-call or crisis duty must be pre-approved by the faculty field liaison and the field education coordinator. No student is to be on call during class time.
9. While occasionally there will be important field opportunities scheduled during a student's regularly scheduled class, students may not be required to miss class in order to attend a field meeting or event.
10. Students complete their hours no later than the Friday after the last day of classes in May. At the same time, students are expected to be working in the agency at least until the last day of classes (also in May). If a student finds that they "have enough hours" and would like to end early, a formal request must be made and approved by the field instructor and the faculty field liaison. In other words, students may not "work ahead" of their approved schedule just so they can finish the field course weeks ahead of time. Having said this, students should not be discouraged from working additional hours for the purposes of planning for unexpected absences; students should only be aware that they may not need to use these hours for successful completion of field. For example, some students choose to carry a balance of 15 - 20 hours with them throughout the year as a back up. They do this knowing (and accepting) the fact that they may not ever need to use these hours.