

SOWK 5606 (Practicum I) - WINTER 2022 Term

Dear MSW Practicum Winter 2022 Students,

Welcome to the School of Social Work!

The purpose of this message is to provide you with detailed information about your upcoming practicum course, **SOWK 5606**, and the placement process and options available to you, so please read carefully. The placement process for the winter term begins as of September 10th, and the field team looks forward to working with you in the upcoming weeks.

Please be advised that the following information is **specific to the winter 2022 practicum term**. The procedures and options outlined below have been designed to broaden opportunities for field placements during the COVID-19 pandemic, and are in place until April 2022. Practicum procedures and options are subject to change for future terms.

We would also like to take this opportunity to direct you to the online **Practicum Hub**, which is a key resource for students preparing for and involved in practicum courses. This site contains term-specific information and application forms, the MSW Practicum Manual, information about practicum opportunities, and additional resources: <https://carleton.ca/socialwork/practicum-hub-2/>

An **online Field Orientation** will be held on **Wednesday, September 15th, 2021 from 9:30 – 11:00 am** (Zoom link will be sent out in advance via email), to provide you with further information about the placement process.

Practicum Course Components:

Practicum I includes the following compulsory components:

- 1) Field Placement (between 338-450 field hours) *Record of Hours required
- 2) Practicum Seminars (x5)
- 3) Faculty Liaison consultations
- 4) The Written Requirements:
 - i. Learning Contract
 - ii. Theory to Practice Assignment
 - iii. Mid-Point Evaluation
 - iv. End-Point Evaluation
 - v. CuPortfolio Assignment

For full information on each of these course components, please read Section 5.0 of the MSW Practicum Manual: <https://carleton.ca/socialwork/wp-content/uploads/MSW-Manual-August-2020.pdf>

Winter Term Placement Hours:

MSW field placements in the winter 2022 term will consist of a minimum of 338 hours, up to 450 hours.

The accrediting body for social work education, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS), has permitted the reduction of placement hours to 75% for any field placement affected by the COVID-19 pandemic until April 2022. This means that placements occurring this winter term must consist of a minimum of 338 field hours (75% of normally required hours), up to 450 hours (100% of normally required hours). **Wherever possible, students are encouraged to complete the full 450 hours.**

SOWK 5606 field placements normally consist of four days per week, or 28-32 field hours per week (not including meal breaks). Winter 2022 field placements are to run from January 10th to April 12th, 2022. All practicum course components, including field hours, must be completed by April 12th.

Practicum Seminars:

You must be available for 5 practicum seminars (held in real time) during the winter term.

Participation in integrative practicum seminars is a mandatory component of practicum courses. Five practicum seminars will be held during the winter term, which involve synchronous learning (they are held in real time). Students must be available to attend and participate in all five seminars, which will be held on Friday mornings (9-11:30 am).

Matching Process:

To proceed with a winter practicum, you must submit an MSW Practicum Application/Winter 2022 Form (attached), along with an updated social work resume, no later than September 10th, 2021.

Please submit these two documents via email to the Practicum Administrator, Megan Stansel, at: SSW.Practicum.Admin@cunet.carleton.ca

In the MSW Practicum Application Form, there is a heading titled, "Placement Options." **In this section you will rank the various placement options (outlined below) to reflect your level of interest in each.**

The matching process for the winter 2022 term will occur electronically. There will be no in-person meetings with Practicum Coordinators.

Your social work resume should outline your educational, training, work and volunteer history with an emphasis on your skills and experience applicable to social work. Please indicate you are current student in the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University (foundational year). See the attached '**Preparing for Field Placement**' document for resume guidelines. **Your resume should include only your Carleton email address**, which must be used for all purposes related to practicum courses.

Please note that, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many of our placement agencies remain unable to work at their full capacity. Some agencies have needed to significantly reduce placement positions, while others have needed to put a hold on all student placements until further notice. Given these factors, **some agencies and areas of practice may not be available at this time**. In spite of these challenges, the field team has continued to work with new and existing community partners every term to develop creative opportunities for social work field education, and practicum courses have continued throughout the pandemic.

The field team will aim to match you according to your areas and/or agencies of interest, based on the settings available at the MSW level. However, **no placement can be guaranteed available**. Students who are flexible and open to a wide variety of practicum opportunities, and who provide a range of different areas of interest on their application forms, are best positioned to be successful in being matched for the winter term.

Receiving a Placement Match

You will be advised of a potential match via email between September and December.

If you elect to be matched, please ensure that you are checking your Carleton email regularly for news of a placement match from September onwards. Once a placement opportunity is emailed to you, **you will be given three days to confirm your interest** in being prioritized for the opportunity before it will then be made available to another student. You will also be given a deadline to prepare a cover letter that is tailored to the specific position to which you are applying. Placement applications are time-sensitive, and many agencies invite applications from multiple schools. This process ensures that students have the best chance at being matched successfully with an open placement position.

See the attached 'Preparing for Field Placement' document and 'Field Placement Cover Letter' for cover letter guidelines and sample cover letters for field placement positions.

Fully Remote Placements / In-person Placements:

Both fully remote and in-person options may be available. Please indicate your preference for these options in the attached MSW Practicum Application Form.

Some settings are offering fully remote placements at the present time, which means that all placement activities are occurring from home (telephone and teleconferencing activities, web-based work, research and special projects, etc.). These placements do not involve in-agency activities or face-to-face contact. Students may elect to be considered for fully remote

opportunities only. However, **remote placements are limited and, again, cannot be guaranteed to be available.** Most settings that are offering remote placements at the present time do plan to reopen to in-person activities at some point. When available, priority for remote placements will be given to students with demonstrated need. In selecting this option, students must be able to participate in remote work (i.e. ability to work from home, reliable access to a computer and wifi, good self-management, organization and written communication skills, and availability for approximately 28-32 field hours per week during agency work hours).

Many settings are offering in-person placements. These placements include face-to-face activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students who elect to participate in agency-based placements must sign COVID-19 waivers/releases and attestations indicating their awareness of the risks related to COVID-19, and assumption of the risks and liabilities associated with in-person activities, prior to beginning any field placement hours. Should there be additional closures or a reactivation of strict social distancing directives related to public health during the winter term, in-agency placements may be affected. The School would notify students of any changes as they arise, and work with students, wherever it can be arranged, to transition to remote and online activities to continue their field hours.

Please note that most settings are offering a combination of remote and in-person activities. **More options will be available to you if you are open to both remote and in-person options. Students are asked to indicate their interest in remote and in-person options on the MSW Practicum Application Form by checking the applicable boxes.**

Please note that the School matches students with settings in Ottawa and immediate surrounding regions only. The School does not match students with placements in other cities or provinces. Should you wish to pursue a placement in another region **in which you are residing due to the pandemic**, please select an alternative option below.

Practicum students will need to abide by Carleton University and agency policies related to COVID-19, including vaccination policies.

3 Placement Options and Timelines:

- **In addition to the School providing a match for you, there are 2 other placement options available to you for the winter term.**
- **These additional options require you to find your own opportunity (#2 and 3).**
- **Please rank your level of interest in these options on the attached MSW Practicum Application Form, due by September 10th.**

These options are being made available as a result of the significant impact of COVID-19 on social work field education. During the pandemic, CASWE guidelines enable the temporary reduction in field hours and establishment of remote and alternative learning plans. Again, it is not possible to guarantee the availability of these options beyond April 2022. Please read the details of each carefully below, and respect the stated deadlines.

The three placement options are:

1. Matched by the School (the usual process):

The Practicum Coordinator will email you with a placement option when one becomes available between September and December, as per the process noted above ('Receiving a Placement Match'). You must respond within three days to maintain priority, and submit your tailored cover letter and resume by the stated deadline.

Once your tailored cover letter and resume are received, they will be submitted by the Practicum Coordinator to the agency. All decisions to extend an interview and/or placement offer then rest with the placement agency.

To be successful at a placement interview: Students must fully prepare to engage in a professional interview process (e.g. complete research on the setting and the specific position to which you are applying; be prepared to fully speak about your interest and relevant work, volunteer, and educational experience; and, be prepared to provide professional references upon request). Please see the 'Preparing for Field Placement' handout for common interview questions.

Once a placement offer is extended to you and you accept it, please inform the Practicum Coordinator, who will direct you on the required documents/steps to finalize your field placement with the School.

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due by September 10th.
- Monitor your email closely from September to December for news of a match. Respond to the Practicum Coordinator in regards to placement matches within three days. Be prepared to promptly follow up with a cover letter that is tailored to the specific learning opportunity.
- Fully prepare to engage in a professional interview as part of the placement process.

2. Place of Employment:

Find and secure a placement within a current or former place of employment. To have your paid employment count towards your field hours, OR to establish a separate, unpaid opportunity within a current or former workplace, several criteria must be met:

- a. You will need to demonstrate that you will be engaged in **new** work activities that allow you to develop **new** learning at an MSW level. This new learning may occur within your current position and/or within a new area within your organization.
- b. Your proposed activities must consist of approximately 28-32 field hours per week (not including meal breaks), to take place between January 10th and April 12th, 2022, for a minimum total of 338 field hours, and up to 450 field hours.
- c. Given health/safety/insurance realities, students must be paid employees for the entirety of the placement hours, OR establish a separate, unpaid placement opportunity for the entirety of the placement hours.

- d. You will need to negotiate placement supervision. Wherever possible, your field placement should be completed under the supervision of someone who has not previously supervised your work in the agency. This person should have a BSW or MSW degree. If this is not possible, other supervisors (including current or former supervisors, and/or individuals with other educational qualifications) may also be acceptable depending on the nature of the agency and work. Please discuss the supervisory criteria with the Practicum Coordinator.
- d. The placement supervisor and agency will need to agree to the usual responsibilities of field sites: weekly supervision, approval of the student's learning contract, completion of mid-point and end-point evaluations, and two consultation visits with the student and Faculty Liaison (to be held by telephone). They will be asked to sign a letter of agreement attesting to this in order to finalize the field placement.

***If you have recently started employment and your organization is willing to meet the requirements of a field site, please put forward a workplace placement proposal (document attached here)**

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option as soon as possible via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due by September 10th.
- If this option is of interest to you, please have the needed discussions with your employment setting as soon as possible.
- Proceed to complete the attached "Workplace Placement Proposal" in full and submit to Vanessa Bascelli at the earliest opportunity, and no later than **October 18th**:
Vanessa.Bascelli@carleton.ca
- Clearly indicate whether your placement position will be paid or unpaid. The placement position cannot consist of both paid/unpaid hours.
- Once your proposal is reviewed, you will be notified by the Practicum Coordinator regarding next steps.

3. Distance Placement:

If you are residing in another city or province **due to the COVID-19 pandemic**, you may be permitted to find and secure a placement within your current region. Several criteria must be met:

- a. You must have good academic standing, have successfully completed all prerequisite course work, and have demonstrate your ability to consistently meet course deadlines and attendance requirements during your involvement in the MSW program (fall term).
- b. The placement opportunity must allow you to engage in relevant field learning activities at the MSW level.
- c. Your proposed activities must consist of approximately 28-32 field hours per week (not including meal breaks), to take place between January 10th and April 12th, 2022, for a minimum total of 338 field hours, and up to 450 field hours.

- d. You will need to be supervised by someone who has a BSW or MSW degree. If this is not possible, other supervisors may also be acceptable depending on the nature of the agency and work. Please discuss the supervisory criteria with the Practicum Coordinator.
- e. The placement supervisor and agency will need to agree to the usual responsibilities of field sites: weekly supervision, approval of the student's learning contract, completion of mid-point and end-point evaluations, and two consultation visits with the student and Faculty Liaison (to be held by telephone). They will be asked to sign applicable documents attesting to this in order to finalize the field placement.

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option as soon as possible via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due by September 10th.
- If this option is of interest to you, please identify and apply to positions immediately. Contact Vanessa Bascelli should you have any questions about your eligibility for a distance placement, and/or the suitability of a particular position for a social work field placement.
- Once you have a placement offer, proceed to complete the attached "Distance Placement Proposal" in full and submit to Vanessa Bascelli as soon as possible and no later than **October 18th**: Vanessa.Bascelli@carleton.ca
- Once your proposal is reviewed, you will be notified by the Practicum Coordinator regarding next steps.

For Options #2 and #3:

If you are interested in options #2 or 3 (workplace placement or distance placement) **start looking for the placement opportunity/practice component immediately.**

If you are unable to find this opportunity before **October 18th**, please advise the MSW Practicum Coordinator Vanessa Bascelli at Vanessa.Bascelli@carleton.ca so that you can be included in the matching process at the School. **October 18th is the final deadline to inform the Field Coordinator if you wish to be matched by the School.** Please note that matches as of October 18th onwards will occur based on placement availability only.

Deferral of Your Practicum to a Subsequent Term

Please advise the field team as soon as possible if you intend to defer your practicum to a subsequent year. Students will also be required to notify the Graduate Administrator, Stephanie Mulville on their decision to defer their practicum. Stephanie's email address is: stephanie.mulville@carleton.ca

Placement Policies:

Matching Policy:

In order to ensure an equitable and fair process for all students, and to ensure we retain our valued field partnerships, students are permitted to apply to one setting at a time only. Once you elect to apply to a setting, you will not be offered alternative options. You are expected to **review the placement information and website fully in preparing your tailored cover letter**. In submitting your application, you are demonstrating your full commitment to proceeding with the setting. Please note that all decisions to extend an interview and placement offer rest with the setting. If you are offered and accept a field placement position following an interview, you would not be permitted by the School to withdraw from that position for another opportunity at a later date, as, at that point, you are making a professional commitment to the setting in accepting the student placement position.

Pre-placement Requirements:

Students are responsible for meeting any pre-placement requirements of their particular field site in advance of the winter term to proceed with their field placement. Pre-placement requirements normally include a criminal record check for work with the vulnerable sector. Some field sites may have immunization and/or other requirements. Students are responsible for any costs associated with pre-placement requirements. For information related to the Vulnerable Sector Check:

<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/about-us/level-3---vulnerable-sector-check.aspx>

For all other practicum policies, please see the MSW Practicum Manual:

<https://carleton.ca/socialwork/wp-content/uploads/MSW-Manual-August-2020.pdf>

To Conclude:

We appreciate your ongoing understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic means inevitable uncertainties about placement availability. Much remains unknown and evolving about this situation. However, the field team is committed to maintaining the integrity and consistency of social work field education and to developing high-quality field learning opportunities for social work students during the pandemic. This includes establishing the above remote/alternate practicum options and related policies and guidelines, as well as building and sustaining supportive relationships with community partners to enhance their capacity to onboard and supervise social work students during the current times.

We are keenly motivated to place as many of you as possible, and to provide solid support both up until such time as your plan is clear, and over the course of your placement.

It may not be possible for all students to secure field placements for the winter term in spite of all efforts made to identify options. If this turns out to be the case for you, we will continue to work with you to establish alternative course sequencing options should a practicum deferral be required.

At this time, we look forward to receiving your MSW Practicum Application/W2022 Form and current social work resume by **September 10th**, and to working with you this fall.

Kindest regards,

Vanessa Bascelli, MSW

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