



School of Social Work

To MSW students preparing for the foundation-year practicum course (SOWK 5606) in the Winter 2023 term:

The following message provides detailed information about the foundation-year practicum course (beginning in Winter 2023) and options available. Please read carefully.

Given the changing context related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the field team is necessarily planning term-by-term at this time. The following options and procedures are specific to the Winter 2023 practicum term, however, practicum procedures and options may be subject to change. Students will be notified in advance of any changes.

We would also like to take this time to direct you to the online Practicum Hub, which is the primary resource for students preparing for and involved in practicum courses. This site contains term-specific information and related application forms, as well as the MSW Practicum Manual, information about practicum opportunities, learning contract templates, and more:
<https://carleton.ca/socialwork/practicum-hub-2/>

On the Practicum Hub, and attached here, you will find a ‘**Preparing for Field Placement**’ package. This package includes resume and cover letter guidelines, sample cover letters for field placement opportunities, and common interview questions to help you prepare for the placement process. An online Field Orientation will be held on **Wednesday, September 14th, 2022 from 10:00 – 11:30 am** (Zoom link will be sent out in advance via email), to provide you with further information about the placement process.

General course information/Winter 2023 Term:

Practicum I is a two-credit mandatory practicum course, taken in the foundation-year of the MSW program. You must apply to take this course. The deadline to apply for the Winter 2023 term is **September 12th, 2022**. However, students who wish to pursue a workplace option for the winter term (See Placement Options below) will be required to submit their application by September 12th, 2022.

The format of Practicum I (SOWK 5606) beginning in the Winter 2023 term is as follows:

SOWK 5606 (2.0 credits) – field placement is completed over one term (January-April) on a 4 day per week basis, or the equivalent of 28-32 field hours per week, excluding meal breaks. Includes six concurrent seminars in the winter term, and runs from January 9th 2023 to April 12th, 2023.

Students must meet the following prerequisites to be eligible for Practicum I:

- Good academic standing in the MSW program
- For the winter term, must formally apply no later than **September 12th, 2022** (See Application Process below).
- Successful completion of the following courses:
 - SOWK 5000 (Theoretical Foundations of Social Work: A Critical Perspective)
 - SOWK 5001 (Interpersonal Practice in Social Work: Ethics, Knowledge and Skills)
 - SOWK 5003 (Policy Context of Social Work)
 - SOWK 5608 (Community Practice)
- Completion of or concurrent registration in SOWK 5004 (Group Work)

Practicum I consist of the following mandatory components:

- Field placement (minimum of 450 field hours)
- Attendance and participation in six concurrent Practicum Seminars
- Faculty Liaison consultations
- Completion of all written requirements (learning contract, theory-to-practice assignments, CuPortfolio assignment, mid- and end-point evaluations, record of hours)

Winter Term Placement Hours:

MSW field placements will consist of a minimum of 450 hours.

Some of you may have had the option of reduced field placement hours (338 hours) for practicums that took place prior to August 2022. This was a temporary option designed to increase field capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was permitted by the accrediting body for social work education (CASWE-ACFTS) until August 2022 only. At this time, this guideline has not been extended by CASWE-ACFTS. Thus, all MSW field placements that begin after this date will be required to complete the normally required **450 field hours**.

Practicum Seminars:

Attendance at 6 practicum seminars (held in real time) during the Winter term is a mandatory course component of SOWK 5606.

Six 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 six seminars (in person), which will be held on Friday mornings (9:00 am - 11:30 am) on the following dates: **January 20th, February 03rd, February 17th, March 03rd, March 17th, March 31st.**

In addition, as per the Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) accreditation changes: Beginning in Winter 2023, seminar hours will now count towards your total field hours. It is the student's responsibility to incorporate these hours into their Record of Hours Log.

As Carleton University is planning for a gradual and safe return to campus over the 2022-2023 academic year, the mandatory practicum seminars will be delivered in-person, on-campus in the Winter term (online seminars are reserved for students in distance placements, which is only available for SOWK 5607 Practicum II).

Application Process:

To proceed with a winter practicum, you must submit the Winter 2023 MSW Practicum Application (attached), along with an updated social work resume, no later than September 12th, 2022.

Please submit these two documents via email to the Practicum Administrator at:

SSW.Practicum.Admin@cunet.carleton.ca

In the MSW Practicum Application Form, there is a heading titled, "Placement Options." **In this section, please select the placement option (See Placement Options below) that is of primary interest to you.** (Students who select a workplace option as their primary selection, and who are not successful in establishing a placement, may change this selection to 'matched by the School' up until October 24th only.)

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. See the '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.

Placement Options

There are 2 placement options available to you.

- 1. Matched by the School**
- 2. Place of Employment Option***

***Option #2**

Please read the details of each option carefully below and respect the stated deadlines.

Option 1 - Matched by the School:

If you elect to be matched by the School, the Practicum Coordinator will be in touch with a potential match via email between September to December. You must respond within three days to maintain priority and submit your tailored cover letter and resume by the stated deadline.

Options:

The placement options that are identified as potential matches for each student is influenced by a multitude of factors. These include: the availability of placement opportunities offered through the School's field partners during the selected term; the learning needs and interests of *all* students going into the field during the selected term; and each student's level of study, prior education, training and experience, skills (e.g., languages), and other factors (e.g., access to a vehicle) in relation to the eligibility criteria for field placements set by each field setting.

Every effort is made to match each student with a placement opportunity that meets at least one of the student's stated needs or preferences on the Practicum Application Form, (for example, this could include a population group preference, level of practice preference, area of concentration preference, geographical location preference, or something else). However, **this may not be possible for every student.**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many of our placement agencies have been 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. It is not yet known how these factors may influence capacity for the winter 2023 term; however, some agencies and areas of practice may be unavailable. Further, some settings only offer full-time opportunities, and are not available on a part-time basis.

The School's role is to link each student with a match that will provide relevant field learning opportunities at the MSW level to achieve the course learning objectives. 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 area or agency of interest can be guaranteed available to you.** 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.

Matching steps:

If you elect to be matched, the Practicum Coordinator will email you with a placement option when one becomes available between September to early December. Please ensure that you are checking your Carleton email regularly (at least once a day) 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 programs. This process ensures that students have the best chance at being matched successfully with an open placement position.

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).

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.

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.

Given the current realities of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many of our partner agencies will be offering different modes of practicum opportunities based on their capacity. Upon practicum interview, agencies will confirm the mode of delivery (ie. in person, remote, or hybrid). If offered a remote placement, students must be able to participate in remote work (i.e., ability to work from home, reliable access to a computer and wifi, a quiet and confidential space, good self-management, organization and written communication skills, and availability for the required number of field hours per week during agency work hours). Should there be additional closures or a reactivation of strict social distancing directives related to public health during your placement 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.

Some field sites may have immunization and/or other pre-placement requirements. Please refer to the *Pre-placement Requirements* section below for further information.

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.

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due by September 12th, 2022.
- Check your Carleton email account once per day from September to November 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.

Option 2- Place of Employment (Workplace):

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:

1. You will need to demonstrate that you will be engaged in **new** work activities that allow you to develop **new** learning at a MSW level. This new learning may occur within your current position and/or within a new area within your organization.
2. Your proposed activities must meet the field hours requirements and start and end dates of your Practicum I course. This entails 4-days per week (or the equivalent of 28-32 field hours) from January 9th to April 12th, 2023 for students applying for SOWK 5606. Field hours must enable a minimum total of 450 hours.
3. 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. The placement position cannot consist of both paid/unpaid hours.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option as soon as possible via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form. For this option, students may submit their application **by September 12th, 2022**.
- 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 the Practicum Administrator at the earliest opportunity, and no later than **October 24, 2022**: SSW.Practicum.Admin@cunet.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 a Practicum Coordinator regarding next steps.

For Option #2:

If you are interested in option #2 (place of employment), submit your Winter 2023 MSW Practicum Application form to the School by September 12th, 2022. Once you have submitted your MSW Practicum Application, **begin looking for the placement opportunity/practice component immediately.**

If you are unable to find this opportunity before **October 24th**, please advise your Practicum Coordinator, so that you can be included in the matching process at the School. **October 24th is the final deadline to inform a Practicum Coordinator if you wish to be matched by the School.** Please note that matches as of October 24th onwards will occur based on placement availability only.

Placement Policies:

Practicum students will need to abide by Carleton University and agency policies related to COVID- 19, including vaccination 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-Practicum-Manual-1.pdf>

To Conclude:

We appreciate your ongoing understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic means inevitable uncertainties about placement availability and formats. 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 discussed 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.

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. While not every student will be matched with their top choice, all efforts will be made to match students with practicum opportunities that will engage them as a learner and provide a multitude of learning experiences and transferable skills relative to social work practice.

In addition, as the field team continues to be extremely busy and receiving a high volume of applications and emails, we ask that you remain patient, professional, and compassionate in your correspondence with us.

At this time, we look forward to receiving your Winter 2023 MSW Practicum Application and current social work resume no later than September 12th, 2022, and to working with you to prepare for your winter practicum.

Kindest regards,

Allison Everett MSW, RSW

Pronouns: she/her/hers

MSW Practicum Coordinator and Instructor II

School of Social Work

Carleton University

allison.everett@carleton.ca