

Are you an MSW student, planning to do your field placement in the winter term of 2021?

All students in the 2-year MSW program will do Practicum I in the winter term 2021.

Dear MSW Placement Student,

Thank you for your patience and confidence as the School's field team continues to monitor and plan for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the upcoming winter practicum course (SOWK 5606). We understand that this pandemic has created significant upheaval and uncertainty, including in how you anticipated completing your social work degree! We have been working diligently to respond to these challenges and to implement new placement options to meet the needs of our students and our placement partners, who have also been dramatically affected by this pandemic.

This message provides you with detailed information about your winter practicum course and the placement options available to you, so please read carefully. These placement options and procedures are designed to address your educational needs during the Covid pandemic and its affects on conditions of the field of social work. They offer unique opportunities for field placements during the COVID-19 pandemic that are not likely to continue when conditions improve.

Please note that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our placement agencies are unable to work at their full capacity. Many agencies have needed to put an indefinite hold on student placements, or significantly reduce placement positions, due to current staffing, funding, and service realities. Given these factors, some agencies and areas of practice may not be available this academic year and beyond. We understand this is distressing for students. However, please rest assured the field team's strongest commitment continues to be finding ways to respond to these factors, given that we do not control them.

VERY Important Information and Action Items

Please read this entire document. It will smooth your way!

Placement Hours:

MSW field hours in 2020-2021 will consist of 338 hours.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS), our accrediting body, has reduced placement hours to 75% for any MSW placement affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that placements occurring this winter term will be shorter than usual, and will consist of a total of 338 hours (rather than 450).

Depending on agency availability, students may have staggered start dates ranging from January 04th to February 01st. Students will have up until April 09th, 2021 to complete their field hours. Practicum hours will range from 21-32 hours per week.

Practicum Seminars:

You must be available for virtual practicum seminars (held in real time).

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) for all students who are in Eastern Time Zone.

We are working on plans to accommodate students in other time zones if possible. You will be asked to indicate where you will be residing during the winter term on your Practicum Application Form/Winter 2021.

Action Item:

You are responsible for reading the **MSW Practicum Manual** in advance of the placement process.

Please pay specific attention to the following sections of the manual to prepare yourself for the process.

- Student Responsibilities (Section 2.3)
- Practicum Courses (Section 3.0)
- Field Placement Process and Protocols (Section. 4.0)
- Practicum Course Components (Section 5.0)

The MSW Practicum Manual is available on the **Practicum Hub** section of the School of Social Website: <http://carleton.ca/socialwork/practicum-hub/msw/>
The MSW Practicum Manual is also attached here.

Placement Options to Consider:

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.

Many settings are fully remote at present, 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 can elect to be considered for fully remote opportunities only. Students must be able to fully participate in remote work (i.e. ability to work from home, reliable access to a computer and

Wi-Fi, good self-management, organization and written communication skills, and availability for 21-32 hours each week).

As settings begin to reopen more fully, some in-agency placements are becoming available. These placements include face-to-face activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in face-to-face activities is optional and voluntary, and contingent on public health and university policies. 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 full 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 as of January to April 2021, in-agency placements may be affected. The School would notify students of any changes as they arise.

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, please select an alternative placement option below, in which you must identify a practicum opportunity and submit a proposal as per the guidelines.

5 Placement Options and Timelines:

- **There are 4 other placement options, in addition to the School providing a match for you.**
- **Some of these require you to find your own opportunity (#2, 3, and 4).**
- **Please rank your level of interest in these options in the attached MSW Practicum Application Form, due by September 10th.**

Please keep in mind that 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-ACFTS guidelines enable the temporary reduction in field hours and establishment of remote and alternative learning plans. It is not possible to guarantee the availability of these options in future terms. Please read the details of each carefully below and respect the stated deadlines.

The five 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').

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.

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.

Interviews with placement agencies are likely to occur between late September and December. In most cases, students will start their practicum between January 04th and February 01st. Placements will consist of 338 field hours.

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 tailored to the specific learning opportunity.

2. Place of Employment:

Find and secure a placement within your current place of employment. To have your paid employment count towards your field hours, OR to establish a separate, unpaid opportunity within your 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 21-32 hours per week, to take place between January 04th and April 09th, 2021, for a minimum total of 338 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 by someone who has either supervised you before or is a new supervisor. This person should have a BSW or MSW degree. If this is not possible, other supervisors may also be acceptable depending on the nature of the work. Please discuss with the Practicum Coordinator the supervisory criteria.
- 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 Allison Everett no later than **October 19th**: Allison.everett@carleton.ca
- Clearly indicate whether your placement position will be paid or unpaid. The 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. Find and Secure New Employment in the Field of Social Work:

Find and secure new employment in the field of social work and have the first 338 hours of it approved as your practicum. To proceed with this option, the following criteria must be met:

- a. The paid position must clearly enable you to develop **new** skills and knowledge in social work at an MSW level.
- b. Your proposed activities must consist of 21-32 hours per week, to take place between January 04th and April 09th, 2021, for a minimum total of 338 field hours. Given health/safety/insurance realities, students must be paid employees for the entirety of the placement hours.
- c. Your supervisor should have a BSW or MSW degree and be new to you. If it is not possible to be linked with a supervisor that holds a BSW or MSW degree, other supervisors may also be acceptable depending on the nature of the work. Please discuss with the Practicum Coordinator the supervisory criteria.
- 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.

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option as soon as possible via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due September 10th.

- If this option is of interest to you, please identify and apply to positions immediately. Contact Allison Everett should you have any questions about the suitability of a particular position for a social work field placement.
- Once a workplace opportunity is identified, proceed to complete the attached “Workplace Placement Proposal” in full and submit to Allison Everett as soon as possible and no later than **October 19th**: Allison.everett@carleton.ca
- Once your proposal is reviewed, you will be notified by the Practicum Coordinator regarding next steps.

4. **Mixed Delivery Practicum:**

Find and secure a relevant social work volunteer position that would enable the completion of a minimum of 230 field hours during the winter term through remote activities (i.e. online or from home). Students must find and secure a volunteer position directly. Your volunteer hours will count toward your required practicum hours, and supervision and integration activities will be provided by the School.

Some helpful links to locate remote volunteer opportunities include (but are not limited to):

- Volunteer options through CUSA’s Service Centres on-campus: <https://www.cusaonline.ca/services/servicecentres/>
- Virtual volunteer options available via Volunteer Ottawa: https://www.volunteerottawa.ca/Search_Volunteer_Opportunities.html
- Certified Listeners Society: <https://certifiedlisteners.org>

With this Mixed Delivery Practicum option, the school provides the supervision and evaluation externally (through the Faculty Liaison). Attached is a handout that describes this option, as well as what you need to do if you wish to pursue it.

In summary, the Mixed Delivery Practicum is made up of 4 specific and required components:

1. Direct social work practice experience (230-250 hours)
2. A tailor-made training agenda (10-30 hours)
3. Weekly field practice supervision (14-21 hours)
4. Engagement with the Practicum Learning Portal (up to 70+ hours)

Student instructions:

- Please confirm your interest in this option via the attached MSW Practicum Application Form due September 10th. (Please read the MDP handout in full).
- If this option is of interest to you, please identify and apply to volunteer positions directly. Ensure any volunteer opportunity to which you apply could enable a completion of a minimum of 18 hours to 20+ hours per week from January 04th to April 09th, 2021.
- Once you have secured a volunteer position, please let the Practicum Coordinator know as soon as possible, and no later than **October 19th**.

- Once your placement component has been approved, you will be notified by the Practicum Coordinator regarding next steps.

For Options #2, 3, and 4:

If you are interested in options #2, 3 or 4, (workplace placement in either a current or a new setting, or the Mixed Delivery Practicum) **start looking for the placement opportunity/practice component immediately.**

If you are unable to find this opportunity before **October 19th**, please advise the MSW Practicum Coordinator Allison Everett at allison.everett@carleton.ca so that you can be included in the matching process at the School.

October 19th is the deadline to inform Allison Everett if you wish to be matched by the School.

5. 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 term. SOWK 5606 practicum offerings beginning in 2021 are as follows:

- a. Summer 2021: Full-time placement

*Students are not encouraged to defer their practicum as practicum availability is not guaranteed in subsequent terms and or is limited.

Placement Reminders:

Prerequisites:

Students must meet the following prerequisites to be eligible to proceed with the SOWK 5606 course (Practicum I):

- Good academic standing in the MSW program
- 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

Matching Policy:

In order to ensure equity and fairness for all students and to retain our valued field partnerships, students are permitted to apply to one setting at time only when being matched by the School. If a student elects to apply to a 'matched' agency, the student will not be permitted to simultaneously pursue other opportunities, or to withdraw from a confirmed placement for another option at a later time.

For all other practicum policies and course components, please see the MSW Practicum Manual: <http://carleton.ca/socialwork/practicum-hub/msw/>

Matching Process:

Action Item:

To proceed with a winter practicum, you must submit an MSW Practicum Application/Winter 2021 Form (attached), along with an updated social work resume, no later than September 10th, 2020.

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 term will occur electronically. The School of Social Work is currently operating remotely, so there will be no meetings with Practicum Coordinators.

Action Item: Placement Process Tips

The placement process can be competitive. Students with resumes that highlight their relevant education, skills and experience for a career in social work will have the greatest chance of being selected for a placement interview upon application. Students will also be required to write a professional, targeted cover letter for each placement setting to which they will be applying (determined in collaboration with the Field Coordinator).

Career Services at Carleton University offers a wide range of resources for students to support you to develop and work towards your placement and career goals, including cover letter and resume guides and templates, and tools to help you prepare for an interview. Career coaching is also available.

Students can access Career Services Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 3:30pm.

Career Services' resources are also all found on mySuccess, a user-friendly online portal for all current students and alumni. Log into Carleton Central, select mySuccess, then "Career Services". You will be asked to accept the transfer of information statement, and thereafter be logged into your Career Services account. For more information about Career Services, see: <http://carleton.ca/cc/>

As mentioned, to be successful in the matching process, prepare a resume that showcases your social work education and related training, skills and experience. Your resume should include only your Carleton email address, which must be used for all purposes related to practicum courses.

The field team will aim to match you according to your areas and/or agencies of interest, however, **no placement is guaranteed available**. Students who are flexible and open to a wide variety of practicum opportunities 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.

ACTION Item: If you elect to be matched, please ensure that you are checking your Carleton email regularly for news of a placement match between September and December. 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.

To Conclude:

We appreciate your understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic means inevitable uncertainties about placement availability. Much remains unknown and the situation is evolving. 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 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 train and supervise social work students during the current times.

We want to place as many of you as possible, and to provide support through your placement process 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 together to explore your options for the 2021-2022 academic year.

At this time, we look forward to receiving your MSW Practicum Application/Winter 2021 Form and social work resume by September 10th, and to working with you this fall term.

Kindest regards,

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