



*School of*  
**Social Work**  
**Field Education Program**



**Field Education**  
**Handbook**

Revised August 2019

This handbook was prepared to provide information and does not constitute a contract or personal academic plan. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this University of Alabama School of Social Work Field Education Handbook, those who use the Handbook should note that policies and procedures change from time to time and that certain changes may not yet be reflected in this document. Given the complexities of our program, it is impossible to address all information

pertinent to students. More current or complete information may be obtained from your advisor, the field education coordinator(s), or other representatives of the School of Social Work Field Education Program.

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**ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK AND ITS PROGRAMS**



**Field Education Advisory Committee**  
**2019-2020**

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School of  
Social Work  
Field Education Program

## **ABOUT THE FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAM**

### Mission Statement

*The Field Education Program facilitates the integration of the learning experience into practice and prepares practitioners committed to promoting justice, improving the well-being of individuals and systems, and alleviating adverse social conditions.*

## Overall Purpose

Since the beginning of the social work profession in the late 1800s social work education has included both academic class work and actual practice experience in social service agencies. The attempt to forge a strong link between theory and practice remains a cornerstone of social work professional education. Through the field education placement, students are provided with significant integrative experiences in preparation for their professional careers. The supervised practice experience or practicum is referred to in many different ways including “field instruction,” “supervision,” “placement,” or “internship.” The Field Education Handbook outlines the structure of student practicum experiences. This manual includes all instructions, information, policies, and applications that students need to progress through this phase of the social work program. Please read the material carefully.

### BSW Field Education Placement

#### SW 490 – Field Education (Fall Semester)

Students should expect to participate in field placement for 32 hours each week during the fall semester.

**Total Required BSW Field Education Placement Hours = 450 hours**

### MSW Field Education Placement 60 Hour Plan (1st year, 2nd year)

#### First Year Field:

SW 590 (Fall Semester), 10 Weeks @ 20 hours per week = 200 hours SW

591 (Spring Semester), 15 Weeks @ 20 hours per week = 300 hours

**Total = 500 hours**

#### Second Year Field:

SW 595 (Fall Semester), 10 Weeks @ 20 hours per week = 200 hours SW

596 (Spring Semester), 15 Weeks @ 20 hours per week = 300 hours

**Total = 500 hours**

### MSW Advanced Standing

SW 595/596 (Spring Semester), 15 weeks @ 32-40 hours per week = 500 hours

If a student has requested a variable placement, they are required to complete a minimum of 16 hours per week and will complete field during the summer semester. This plan requires the student to complete two 4.5 hour courses in consecutive semesters.

### FIELD EDUCATION ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **Director of Field Education/Field Education Coordinator(s), Field Education Program**

The Field Education Program, and specifically the Director of Field Education, is responsible for the total instruction of the field education program of the School of Social Work. This includes:

1. Evaluation and maintenance of a bank of agency resources to adequately meet student-learning needs; matching of students to specific agencies following appropriate consultation with advisors, liaisons, field instructors, and students.
2. Orientation and training of Field Education instructors, students, and faculty liaisons. Orientation and training for field instructors is offered on campus and on-line. Field meetings occur throughout the year in person and online for orientation purposes. Faculty liaisons are oriented yearly.
3. Maintenance of legal documents necessary for Agency-University affiliations.
4. Provision of information to educational advisors/faculty and students about the variety, quantity, quality, and nature of field offerings.
5. Provision and distribution of necessary field education placement materials (for example, application forms, informational resources, syllabi, evaluation forms, teaching/learning materials, practicum calendars, etc.) to appropriate persons.

6. Development and implementation of professional continuing education activities for field instructors.

7. Provision of consultation to faculty liaisons, educational advisors, students, field instructors, and administrators concerning a variety of issues impacting the School-Agency relationships and the quality of the individual student's learning experience.

8. Interpretation of the School's philosophy of education, the organization and content of the educational curriculum, and field instruction standards to the community agencies and field instructors.

9. Provision of information to the School's administration concerning liaison assignments and matters impacting the field instruction program.

### **Faculty Liaison**

#### **Planning Role**

The faculty liaison carries an active role in the planning and placement processes for the field placement. Planning for the practicum is carried out in the following ways:

1. Initially, the faculty liaison provides information to the Director of Field Education to help develop a database that includes descriptions of agency placement opportunities.

2. At appropriate times, the faculty liaison provides the Director of Field Education with information about the number, nature, and quality of practicum experiences available in her/his assigned agencies.

3. During the advising phase of the placement process, the faculty liaison may be called upon to provide information to students clarifying the kinds of settings that support specific practice interests, etc.

#### **Teaching Role**

1. Throughout the internship, the faculty liaison negotiates learning opportunities and participates in the evaluation of the competencies. It is expected that the faculty liaison will schedule visits according to the student's cohort plan for the purpose of developing an appropriate learning contract between the student, agency, and School; monitoring the progress of the student; providing educational supports to the student and field instructor; troubleshooting any administrative or policy issues that may arise between the agency and School; receiving input from agencies about curriculum and practicum policy and content; identifying agency needs for consultation or training; planning for future field placements, and evaluating the student's learning outcomes related to the competencies.

2. Faculty liaisons are assigned each semester to all agencies in which students are placed. It is recommended that faculty liaisons conduct at visits according to the student's cohort plan. The normal expectation is that faculty liaisons will make their initial visit within the first three weeks of placement. This initial visit is essential to get the student, field instructor, and other agency representatives launched in the field. At midterm it is important to discuss both strengths and limitations of the student, field instructor, and/or agency. This is a time when the faculty liaison can facilitate a renegotiation of the learning contract if necessary. It is acceptable to communicate by e-mail, conference call or Zoom conference for the final contact. Communication between faculty liaison and field instructor via telephone, e-mail, or meetings that occur when field instructors are on campus for field training meetings, is essential to monitor the educational activities. At the beginning of each practicum, faculty liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students and their associated field instructors to facilitate communication with all participants. Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional site visits may be needed to address problems in a timely manner.

3. The faculty liaison is responsible for assigning the academic grade for each field placement according to the specifications of the field placement syllabi. Field instructors will recommend both a mid-term grade and a final semester grade. Sample learning contracts are included in a subsequent section of this handbook. Grading should be discussed with the field instructor and student at the end of each semester. The faculty liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the specific situation being evaluated. The faculty liaison may not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance (assignments and evaluation materials are specified with each practicum syllabus) and without communication with the Field Instructor.

4. On behalf of the School, the faculty liaison carries responsibility for a decision to suspend (refer to Handling Difficulties in Field) a student's field placement and immediately notify the Director of Field Education. The Director of Field Education or field coordinator will officially notify the student and schedule a field staffing to resolve problems.

**Faculty Liaison Guide Block Placement (One Semester)**

Contact	Time Frame	Purpose/Responsibilities
Initial Contact (e-mail or phone)	Within the first full week of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and expectations about how to communicate</li> <li>• Schedule initial visit</li> <li>• Due dates for learning contract and calendar</li> </ul>
Initial Visit (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	Within the first 3 weeks of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting student and field instructor launched</li> <li>• Discussing roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Approving the initial learning contract activities and student calendar</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
Midterm Visit (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortly after the student has completed 250 hours (MSW) or 225 hours (BSW).</li> <li>• For students who are in extended placements this will vary.</li> <li>• For students who are completing their placements within the semester, this will normally occur around midterm for The University of Alabama</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use this time to capture student strengths and student concerns</li> <li>• If a student is below average on any competency, consider referring student for a field staffing</li> <li>• Make sure student and field instructor have completed and signed the learning contract for midterm</li> <li>• The faculty liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application</li> </ul>

		<p>of the grading criteria to the competency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve the midterm learning contract</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm grades are submitted through the on-line database</li> <li>• Schedule final conference</li> </ul>
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Final Contact	<p>Within two weeks of student completing final hours. This contact may be conducted by Zoom, conference call, or email.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading should be discussed with the field instructor and student in the final contact.</li> <li>• The faculty liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the competency.</li> <li>• Do not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance or without discussion/consultation with the field instructor.</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm grades are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
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Other Visits/Contacts	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional visits may be needed.</li><li>• Communication between faculty liaison and field instructor through e-mail, phone, or meetings that occur when field instructors or students are on campus is essential to monitor educational activities.</li></ul>
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Faculty Liaison Guide Elephant Plan (over two semesters)

Contact	Time Frame	Purpose/Responsibilities
Initial Contact (e-mail or phone)	During the first week of placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and expectations about how to communicate</li> <li>• Schedule initial visit</li> <li>• Due dates for learning contract and calendar</li> </ul>
Visit One (Face to Face or Zoom Platform)	During the month of October and month of February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting student and field instructor launched</li> <li>• Discussing roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Approving the initial learning contract activities and student calendar</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures are submitted through the on-line database</li> </ul>
End of Semester Contact	Within two weeks of student completing final hours each semester. This contact may be conducted by Zoom, conference call, or email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading should be discussed with the field instructor and student in the final contact.</li> <li>• The faculty liaison carries responsibility for interpreting the application of the grading criteria to the competency.</li> <li>• Do not assign a grade without reviewing the student's performance or without discussion/consultation with the field instructor.</li> <li>• Making sure all electronic signatures and midterm</li> </ul>

		grades are submitted through the on-line database
Other Visits/Contacts	As needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should problems or concerns arise in a placement, additional visits may be needed.</li> <li>• Communication between faculty liaison and field instructor through e-mail, phone, or meetings that occur when field instructors or students are on campus is essential to monitor educational activities.</li> </ul>

## **Field Instructor**

### **Planning Role**

The Field Instructor carries an important planning function for the student's internship. In some agencies, some or all of these activities are carried out by agency's administrator or a coordinator for social work student placements. These planning functions include:

1. Communicating information to the faculty liaison or Director of Field Education about potential practicum openings and any information that may impact the nature or quality of the placement.
  
2. Following receipt of the student's field application from the Field Education Program, the field instructor confirms that the referral appears to be an appropriate one and responds to the student's request for scheduling the placement confirmation interview.

3. Should the field instructor learn information in the confirmation interview that leads her/him to question the viability of the planned placement, s/he is responsible for discussion of the issues with the Field Education Program and immediate appropriate action.

### **Teaching Role**

Throughout the field education placements, the field instructor's primary role is as the teacher and facilitator of student learning. To this end the field instructor:

1. Provides for the student's orientation to the agency's policies and procedures, ethical standards, and safety precautions.
2. Negotiates and plans student assignments in accordance with the practicum competencies as identified in each Learning Contract.
3. Provides educational supervision/field instruction for each student for at least one hour per week.
4. Serves as an advocate for the student within the agency by facilitating the student's access to productive learning experiences and other learning activities/resources (for example, student participation in activities outside the agency such as professional conferences, relevant library work, or field visits to other programs) during the practicum.
5. Evaluates the student's performance in the agency with regard to the specified practicum competencies formally at mid-term and final, and evaluates samples of the students learning.
6. Serves as the primary educational resource.

### **Task Supervisor**

1. Provides secondary field instruction to student on a specific task, project, or assignment as delegated and monitored by the field instructor.
2. Responsible for the day-to-day on site guidance for specific project, case, or task.

3. Collaborates with field instructor in integrating assignments provided by task supervisor into student's overall learning experience.
4. Keeps field instructor informed of student's progress on projects, cases undertaken with task supervisor.
5. Provides input to the student's evaluation in collaboration with the field instructor and student.
6. Assists in the orientation process for specific cases, projects, assignments, etc. in collaboration with the field instructor.
7. Collaborates with field instructor and provides input regarding student's learning assessments and evaluations.
8. The task supervisor typically has expertise in an area that expands a student's learning opportunities.

### **Student**

Field courses are restricted to students who have met the appropriate prerequisites for the practicum they are applying for and to those who have completed the application process. To plan for field, the student is responsible for completing the following:

- Field application, to be accompanied by a current résumé  
([https://socialwork.ua.edu/admissions/how-to-apply-field-education/.](https://socialwork.ua.edu/admissions/how-to-apply-field-education/))
- Background Check (See Policy and Procedure Section.)
- Field Education Orientation (See Policy and Procedure Section.)
- Appropriate Field Forms (See Forms Section.)

The student is responsible for follow through on utilization of field information sources provided by the School; for example, discussions with field coordinators; contact with former or current students placed in agencies of interest; and information available through the Field Education Program. The student is responsible for conveying sufficient information to the Field Education Program about personal needs, goals, interests, constraints, and/or special circumstances regarding the placement site. Once a student receives an e-mail assigning her/him to a specific

agency, the student is responsible for contacting the agency within 72 hours for a confirmation interview. This will allow the student to participate in a Confirmation Interview with the Field Instructor to assure a goodness of fit between the student and the agency. In the event that the Confirmation Interview raises serious questions in the student's mind about the viability of the placement, s/he is responsible for immediately raising those issues with their designated Field Coordinator. Throughout the practicum, the student is held accountable to all School and agency policies. Most importantly, the student is responsible for her/his own learning.

### **Field Education Advisory Committee**

The Field Education Advisory Committee (FEAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Field Education Program. The FEAC makes recommendations to the Field Education Program regarding field education policies and procedures, and field education as the signature pedagogy. Advice may be given on such matters as field education syllabi, methods of evaluating student performance in their field education classes; professional development for field instructors; and procedures for recommending students for field placements. The Director of Field Education serves as the chair of this committee. The committee meets at least twice during the academic year. The FEAC is composed of members representing agencies, students, and faculty. (Approved by faculty 9/1/10).

### **Field Education Program Committee**

The Field Education Program Committee (FEPC) is composed of five to six faculty members who frequently teach classes in the respective program and are appointed by the Dean. In addition, the FEPC will include student representatives; one BSW and one MSW on the Field Program Committee. Student members have voting responsibilities regarding the curriculum and related matters. Students may be excluded from discussion of such topics as admissions, personnel, and scholarships. Each committee is chaired by the respective program chair, who votes only when there is a tie. Each program committee has responsibilities in the areas of (a) student recruitment, admissions, and retention and (b) curriculum planning and review.

#### **Procedures, Guidelines and Criteria for Approval of Field Education Agencies**

Quite regularly, the School of Social Work receives requests from agency staff and faculty to consider new agencies as potential field education sites. The School of Social Work has a commitment to provide relevant and appropriate practicum experiences for our students, which means staying abreast of new methods and areas of practice in our field. The process of approving new agencies, training field education instructors, and monitoring is quite time

consuming for faculty. Therefore, the following procedures for responding to these inquiries have evolved from administrative and faculty decisions over the years.

1. All initial requests will go to and be acknowledged by the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinators.
2. The first criterion considered is whether the agency is in a geographic location currently used by the School.
3. Next, the decision will be made regarding whether the learning experiences provided by that agency are appropriate, meet CSWE competencies, and are needed. A decision also is reached on whether agency assignments are more appropriate for BSW, MSW first year, MSW concentration, or some combination of these levels.
4. If the agency and potential field instructor(s) meet the School criteria, as judged from the information received, the Director of Field Education or a designated faculty member will make a site visit/Zoom conference or conduct a conference call to evaluate the agency and complete an “Evaluation of Field Practicum Site.”
5. If the agency and potential field instructor(s) are evaluated positively and approval is recommended, the Agency Agreement will be processed through the agency and the University. A signed copy is returned to the agency.
6. If the decision is made to discontinue the approval process at any of the above steps, the agency will be notified by the Director of Field Education or field coordinators.
7. Information concerning the new agency will be passed on to faculty and students (final approval may hinge on whether there is any student interest in the agency). During the evaluation process, agencies are requested to provide some type of student stipend if possible.

### **Guidelines for Agencies**

1. The services provided are recognized in the community as having a credible social services function and the agency is legally established with financial support. Licensing by the state, where indicated, is completed, and membership in a national standard-setting body appropriate to its function is desirable.

2. The administration and staff should be qualified by education and experience, and have an understanding of professional social work education and its goals. The Agency Agreement between the University and agency must be completed so that the commitment and responsibilities of the various persons associated with field instruction are understood. The agency's governing body should be aware of and approve staff involvement with students and social work education.

3. The social service program should have employed staff to assure program continuity without total reliance upon students.

4. The program should provide sufficient activities for a sufficient number of clients to serve the learning needs of the students to be assigned. Opportunities for learning and agency practice should include a range of client population groups extending across gender, age, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, social problems, etc.; and social work functions must be appropriate for student learning.

5. The program and its administration must operate in accord with the philosophy and goals of the social work profession and The University of Alabama.

6. In partnership with the School of Social Work, the agency administration identifies staff members who may qualify to be field instructors and jointly participates with the School in their selection. Field instructors must provide sufficient time for teaching students. This includes participating in conferences with students (for at least one clock hour per week) and faculty, monitoring the activities of the student, and occasional meetings necessary for the continued development of the field education program.

The agency makes a commitment to release the agency employee who serves as the field instructor from his/her normal duties for the amount of time necessary to plan the student's learning experiences, supervise the student's progress, and attend Field Instructor Workshops and other meetings and seminars related to field education.

The School of Social Work continues to offer field training and on-line contact hours free of charge.

7. The agency should provide students with suitable desks, telephone access, supplies, support services such as secretarial time, and miscellaneous expenses incurred in providing agency services. Specifically, transportation costs associated with agency business should be reimbursed.

8. In a few situations the social services program may have the quantity and quality of learning experiences available but may not have a staff member available to be or qualified to be a field

education instructor. If this agency service is not available to students elsewhere and there are faculty resources available to fulfill the field instruction function, temporary approval for a practicum site assignment for specifically qualified students may be requested. The Director of Field Education may provide that temporary approval. In such cases, the agency administration will assign a staff member as a task supervisor to insure that monitoring of the student's work is in accord with the agency program policies. Faculty assigned to the field instruction role in an agency program must be provided appropriate space and resources for the successful completion of the instructional responsibility.

Students are assigned to a field education site only with the authorization of agency staff and the Field Education Program.

### **Criteria for Selecting Field Instructors**

The selection of social workers as field instructors is generally based on the nomination of a staff member by the agency administrator or by the volunteering of a qualified individual with the approval of his/her supervisor or administrator. These individuals must have earned an MSW from an accredited social work program and should have at least two years of post-Master's degree experience. It is preferred that these individuals are certified by the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), maintain a current Social Work license (LMSW or LICSW), or have other regional or national recognition of their qualifications for practice in reference to their area of specialty.

It is preferred that MSW placements are supervised by an individual who has both a MSW degree as well as practice experience. However, some areas in Alabama and surrounding states have an under-supply of qualified social workers. Each circumstance will be considered on its own merits. If the Director of Field Education and the agency can locate an MSW (e.g., another agency staff member, member of the board of directors, or an agency consultant—individuals who are familiar with the caseload and organization of the agency), this individual's appointment as field instructor will be considered. In such cases, an experienced staff member will be asked to serve as a Task Supervisor to monitor the student's performance of agency policies and daily responsibilities. In rare instances, faculty members may be asked to serve as field instructors to ensure educational monitoring of a placement. If a student is requesting a work-site placement the agency is responsible for providing MSW supervision for students (see work-site policy). In all cases, the issue of appropriate placement monitoring is a predominant concern of the Director of Field Education.

Field Instructors should plan time involvement that includes the following:

1. A field education placement confirmation interview with the student(s) assigned;



2. Verification to the School of Social Work that the student(s) are accepted;
3. An orientation of the student(s) accepted to the agency that familiarizes the student with agency working practices, policies, safety issues, and procedures; review of the School's evaluation criteria with the student at the beginning of placement;
4. A minimum of one hour for regular (weekly) field education supervision sessions with the student (s);
5. Preparation of the mid-term and final evaluation of students;
6. Conferences with the faculty liaison and the student to plan student learning experiences and to evaluate student progress;

Attendance at workshops and other field instruction meetings as planned by the School of Social Work; Additional meetings that might arise in the course of a student's practicum experience.

### **International Field Placement Policy & Procedures**

1. Decide whether an international placement could meet your learning and life goals.
2. Decide whether you are willing to tolerate potential health and safety risks associated with international travel and can afford the opportunity (limited financial assistance available).
3. Determine if you meet the following preferred qualifications:
  - For undergraduate students: Honors, Honors eligible, good academic standing, at least 19 years of age
  - For graduate students: concentration year
  - Adaptable, patient, responsible, dependable, self-directed, flexible, possessing initiative, comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty (with references who can provide evidence of these characteristics)
4. Articulate your rationale for seeking an international placement.
5. Meet with Coordinator of International Programs to begin the exploration process at least two semesters in advance of the semester in which the placement will take place.
6. Complete the International Placement Screening Process to include:
  - Completion of International Field Placement Coversheet

- Completion of the Screening Essay describing rationale for seeking international placement, potential learning goals for the placement, and how this relates to your future professional plans
  - Submission of two references, one or both can be from instructors/professors, and one can be from some other person familiar with your character and/or abilities.
  - Have a U.S. Passport with at least one year remaining on those Passports.
  - Assure that they can meet academic requirements for degree completion within the constraints presented by an international placement.
7. Indicate via the SWIS field application an interest in an international placement.
  8. Complete Capstone International Center study-abroad application and any additional requirements set forth by that office.
  9. Review School of Social Work Student Financial Award Policy to ascertain eligibility for financial support from the School. Students are responsible for all costs associated with their international placements (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.).
  10. All requirements necessary for field placements in the U.S. are also expected for those seeking international placements including orientations and information sessions, as well as, background clearance, use of the IPT system, and so on.
  11. Formal, written agreements are used with all international field placement organizations to delineate the roles and responsibilities of the School, the field organization, and the student. The agreement indicates the expectations and policies/procedures to which the UA/SSW, the organization, and the student are expected to abide. These agreements are kept on file with the Field Education Program. This process should be completed prior to a student beginning their placement (if it is not, the student will need to pursue an alternate placement).
  12. Students who experience difficulties during international experience
    - Notify, via the most expedient manner (voice, email, etc.) the Coordinator of International Programs and/or their faculty liaison.
    - See the Handling Difficulties in Field policy for additional policy information.
    - If the U.S. State Department issues an official Travel Warning for the country in which the student is placed, the University requires removal of the student from placement.

**[InternationalSocialWork@ua.edu](mailto:InternationalSocialWork@ua.edu) OR [ISW@ua.edu](mailto:ISW@ua.edu)**



School of  
Social Work  
**Field Education Program**

International Field Placement Application

Full Name (as printed on passport): \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CWID: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Which Semester/Year do you plan on doing an International Placement: \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Citizen: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If No, country issuing passport: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date on Passport: \_\_\_\_\_ Passport Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all the countries to which you have previously traveled:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please identify the country in which you have interest in doing an international field placement:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Screening Essay***

Directions: Attach to this application a one-to-three-page essay describing your rationale for seeking international placement, your potential learning goals for the placement, and how this relates to your future professional plans.

### ***References***

Attach two reference letters to this application. One must be or both can be from instructors/professors, and one can be from some other person familiar with your character and/or abilities. The references should address your character, your dependability, your level of adaptability, patience, responsibility, self-directedness, flexibility, initiative and self-starting abilities, along with your comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty. Both references must include contact information, in case additional information is needed.

## **Field Education Policies**

### **Preparing for Field Education**

#### **Field Education Placement Service Area**

The primary service area of The University of Alabama School of Social Work is the state of Alabama. The School commits itself to providing education for students located throughout the state as nationally and internationally to developing and utilizing qualified field agencies as field educational sites. Both main campus and distance learning students can explore international placements. In addition, the School has developed a special program that provides field education opportunities with faculty liaison and supervision in the Washington, DC, area for students in the second year of the MSW program and BSW honors eligible students. However, to be eligible for national placements the student must be an MSW distance learner living in the state where they are seeking placement. It is expected that main campus students will be placed in the Tuscaloosa/Birmingham area. BSW distance learners will complete placement within the geographic location of their identified skills lab in the State of Alabama.

All placements are initiated by the Field Education Program. Students within the state of Alabama should not contact agencies to inquire about placement opportunities. Students who reside out of state will be responsible for helping secure potential field placement locations. The Field Program will contact out of state students at the appropriate time to begin the process and will provide more information about the Placement Exploration Tool (PET) form at that time.

The Field Education Program cannot guarantee a practicum placement in the town in which you are living. We will make every effort to place you close to home; however, the Field Education Program's priority is making an educationally sound placement. Students need to be prepared to drive at least 60 miles away from their primary geographic location to accommodate placement. It is important to note that your field application cannot be modified once submitted, including your geographic location preferences. Job changes and relocations are not exceptions to this policy. If you or your spouse are experiencing a location change due to military obligations, please contact your field coordinator.

#### **Grade of Incomplete**

Students will not be allowed to carry a grade of Incomplete or "I" for social work courses into their field education placement. Thus, any "I" must be completed by the beginning of the semester in which the student is scheduled to enter practicum. Failure to complete full responsibilities for coursework will delay a student's entry into Field.

#### **Students Working Full Time**

Students working full-time should expect to significantly reduce or discontinue their work commitments to accommodate the demands of field education placement. The competing demands of field education, other classes, and full-time employment tend to detract from the overall learning experience of all educational activities. Students are expected to be in field for a minimum of 16 to 20 hours per week based on their field term during what are considered

traditional business hours and are required to earn 500 hours in each field placement. Students are required to be in field a minimum of 16 hours per week.

### **Background Checks**

ALL students MUST have a background check on file in the Field Education Program prior to entering field education. You will upload your background check through SWIS platform. Failure to submit your background check to the Field Education Program will delay your entry into field.

Background check information and instructions are given to BSW students during their SW 444 course prior to entering field education in the fall. The background information and instructions are provided to the MSW first-year and advanced-standing students during their acceptance or orientation to the MSW program.

All BSW, first-year, and concentration MSW students completing field education in Alabama preparing to enter field placement are expected to submit ABI/FBI background report prior to entering field education. If a student, residing in the state of Alabama, has had a background check completed and cleared within two years of the completion of their field placement another ABI/FBI background check is not necessary.

- In state Students
  - ONLY background checks completed through the ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES are accepted for field.
  - If you believe you already have an acceptable background check from previous semesters, copies must be provided to the Field Education Program for verification.
  - The fingerprint scans must be completed by the appropriate agencies and accompanying materials submitted. The student is responsible for submitting materials necessary for an ABI/FBI background check. The student's fingerprints need to be digitally scanned and the accompanying materials submitted to the appropriate agencies.
  - Each student must confirm that they have scanned their prints by completing the Certification for Mailing Background Check form. A record will be kept indicating submission dates and documentations of clearance will go to both student and the School.
  
- Out of State Students
  - Out of state background checks are done entirely online, via CastleBranch.com.
  - If you did not receive the out of state background check information at orientation, you will need to contact the Field Education Program for the instruction guide, as the instructions will vary by state.
  - Each student must confirm that they have applied for their background checks by completing the Certification for Mailing Background Check form. A record will be kept indicating submission dates and documentations of clearance will go to both student and the School. The resulting materials must be submitted to the appropriate agencies.

Failure to follow through with the required background check will impede entry into field placement. Students will NOT be allowed to begin their field placement until background checks have been completed and cleared. All field students are required to present a copy of their completed background check to their agency within the first week of field. Agency instructors are expected to send students to the School of Social Work Field Office if a copy is not provided at these times. The Field Education Program does not place students without background clearance.

## **Legal Charge or Conviction**

Some state licensure boards for social workers (including Alabama's) inquire about whether the applicant has been charged with or convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony prior to allowing the applicant to sit for the licensure examination. The School strongly recommends that any applicant/student in this situation consult with field coordinator to discuss how best to address this issue. Students with felony convictions need to be aware that many agencies will not be open to them. The Field Education Program will work to secure a placement but cannot guarantee a placement can be secured in a timely manner. Students are responsible for disclosing to the agency the nature of the charges and reason for unsuitable background check. The student must request the agency send to the Field Education Program a statement acknowledging review of the background check results and confirming acceptance of placement.

## **Professional Liability and Health Insurance**

The University of Alabama provides professional liability insurance for students. However, if a student would like to purchase professional liability insurance above and beyond the University's coverage, NASW provides a reasonably priced policy for student members; application forms for NASW membership and Professional Liability Insurance through NASW are available online at <http://www.naswinsurancetrust.org/>.

**Work-Site Students Only:** Please note that if you are requesting or have been approved to be placed in a work-site practicum you must provide proof of liability coverage from your employing agency.

Students who are in field placements are advised to be sure their health coverage will provide for any injuries, accidents, or illness which may be incurred in the field placement.

The UA-SW Agency Agreement specifies that health and liability insurance coverage rests with the student, not with the agency. In addition to obtaining health coverage, students are urged to discuss any concerns about their potential health or safety hazards in the practicum site with their advisor and/or liaison.

## **Accommodations for Disabilities**

Any student who because of a disability may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of a course must present documentation of the disability to the Office for Disability Services (ODS), located at 1000 Houser Hall, Phone 205-348-4285 (Voice) or 205-348-3081 (TTY) [ods.ua.edu](http://ods.ua.edu). ODS will prepare letters addressed to the Director of Field Education or field coordinator that indicate the reasonable accommodation to which the student is entitled. It is the student's responsibility to present the accommodation letter to the Director of Field Education or field coordinator. This should be done prior to or during the time period in



which the field coordinator is selecting a field placement for the student so that accommodations can be arranged. Please note that your accommodations cannot be activated unless they are filed with the Field Education Program. If the field education coordinator has questions or concerns about the special arrangements or accommodations, he/she will consult with the Office for Disability Services and/or the Office of the Assistant Dean in the School of Social Work. No student will be denied accommodations noted in the letter from ODS.

### **Title IX and Pregnancy**

Pregnant students may contact the [Title IX Office](#) 2418 Capital Hall, (205) 348-5496) to request assistance with accommodations. Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to, rescheduling tests or exams, excusing absences, submitting work after a deadline, providing alternatives to make up missed work, or retaking a semester. The Title IX Office may facilitate communications with the student's professors or assist with other University resources. Visit here: <https://www.ua.edu/campuslife/uact/information/pregnancy> for frequently asked questions and their answers about the University's compliance with this aspect of Title IX. In addition, the Field Program will connect students who identify as pregnant with the Title IX Office.

### **Academic Credit for Life Experience**

Academic credit for life experience and previous work experience will not be given in whole or in part in lieu of the field education course or any other course in the BSW or MSW program.

### **Concentrations**

Two concentrations are available during the second year (concentration year) of the MSW Program:

1. Social Work with Children, Adolescents and their Families (CAF)
2. Social Work with Adults and their Families (AF)

Upon applying to the School of Social Work, students are required to declare a concentration on their graduate school application. The concentration submitted at this time will be the student's concentration throughout their coursework. While students will have to continue in their chosen concentration, students will have the option to fulfill the six hours of Social Work electives with the alternate concentration courses.

## **Procedures for Evaluation of Work-Site for Field Placement**

Under special circumstances, and after careful evaluation, the School of Social Work grants approval for a student to complete practicum requirements as an employee of an organization:

1. Interested students should review the work-site policies and procedures.
2. Once the policies have been read carefully and the student feels that all parties could comply, then the student needs to complete the Work Site Application.
3. Because of the time required for evaluation of the application for a work-site field placement, your interest in completing a work-site placement must be indicated on your field application in SWIS and you must submit the work-site application with appropriate signatures by the specified deadline.
4. The Field Education Program will review this application and contact your employer (identified as direct supervisor on the Work-Site Application) to initiate exploration of the requested field education placement. Subsequently, a faculty work-site visit/Zoom conference with designated administrators will be conducted, and a decision will be made by the Director of Field Education or field coordinator concerning your application.
5. If your employer is supportive of this approved application and practicum proposal, the employer will then be asked to sign a contract which commits the organization to provision of specified learning experiences for the practicum, including professional social work supervision/field instruction.

### **Work-Site Placement Policies**

Use of a student's employment as a field education site is an exception rather than a standard placement option. This option can only be completed one time, either for your BSW field placement, first year MSW field placement, or second year / Advanced Standing field placement. ***Students also must be employed with the agency for at least one year to be eligible for a work-site placement.***

Whenever possible, placement at non-employment agencies is preferable. Work-site placements, however, have enabled many students to complete their education while still remaining employed in their home communities. The role of the Field Education Program is to make a determination of whether a student's specific agency of employment meets the standards set by the Council on Social Work Education and the School of Social Work for a field education site.

If a site is approved, the field office is responsible for managing this site through a contractual agreement between the school and the agency. A faculty liaison will be assigned to the agency to ensure that the student's educational objectives are met.

When such placements are carried out successfully, students are able to acquire new knowledge and skills. Without careful supervision and monitoring, however, students may not acquire the additional skills and meet the objectives outlined in the curriculum. Therefore, the approval process and the development of appropriate work-site placements are crucial. Such placement development requires the involvement of the student/employee, job supervisor and agency administrator, potential field instructor, potential faculty liaison, and the Director of Field Education or field coordinator. This extra level of group involvement is essential to the development of a sound work-site placement, particularly when the agency has had no previous involvement as a training agency with the school. In such situations, the agency may not be aware of the School's mission, objectives, curriculum, and expectations.

Whenever possible, the planning for the placement should occur in a group. A closer type of placement monitoring is necessary to ensure that student learning objectives are being met and that the student as a learner is clearly differentiated from the student as an employee. Therefore, it is expected that faculty liaison involvement in work-site placements will be more intensive than in non-work-site placements in order to ensure that student's learning objectives are supported and carried out throughout the semester. This intensive level of involvement may be reflected by an increased number of telephone calls or agency visits. The liaison must ensure that each practicum is structured so as to meet the fundamentally different learning objectives represented in the field education syllabi.

If placement at a work site is to be considered, the following series of conditions must be met:

*1. The student-employee's assignments must enable the student to meet the learning competencies which are defined in the learning contracts.*

The curriculum of the School of Social Work specifies educational objectives to be met for each field education course. Depending on which year of field education placement the student is entering, the work-site agencies must provide opportunities for the employee-student to meet either BSW, MSW first- year, or MSW concentration-level competencies. When considering an application for a work-site placement, the student and the employer must review all relevant course competencies and must determine if they can be met within the agency. If there is agreement between the student, supervisor, and agency administrator, the student may fill out the work-site application for field placement and send the application to the Field Education Program.

2. The School of Social Work must be assured that the student's educational experience is valued by the agency and that the agency is willing to make programmatic accommodations to the student's learning needs.

An appropriate learning environment must be created within the agency. The student's educational program will demand time on the part of both student and the agency. The student must be released from agency responsibilities in order to fulfill educational requirements. Structural arrangements must be made so that the student will be able to differentiate times during which the student is fulfilling the role of learner from times in which the student is fulfilling the role of employee. Students must be willing to assist staff colleagues in understanding the transition they must make between the staff and student roles. Some students find that work-site placements require work weeks that are substantially longer than 40 hours in order to complete both work tasks and to meet educational objectives. Likewise, students may find it necessary to extend the length of their work-site placements in order for educational requirements to be met.

3. The student must be assigned a qualified, MSW Field Instructor who meets the requirements of the School as specified in the manual.

Clear separation of the student's learner and employee roles is best accomplished if the field instructor and the supervisor are two different individuals. It is the policy of the school that these two roles be separated in work-site placements. The field instructor needs to be housed in proximity to the student. It is the responsibility of the agency to provide MSW supervision by a MSW from a CSWE accredited program with two years of post-graduate experience who does not also supervise the student for duties related to employment.

4. The field education placement must be educationally driven and must afford students the opportunity to fully meet all competencies specified in the field education syllabi. Thus, work-site placements must be educationally sound for the student.

The scope of the agency services must be sufficiently broad so as to meet all of the student's educational competencies. Program competencies should be reviewed by the student and the student's employer prior to making a request for a work-site placement. These competencies will also be reviewed by the evaluator at the time of the agency visit. The Director of Field Education makes the final determination regarding the educational soundness of the work-site placement.

5. All work-site placement requests must be submitted at the time of the field application in SWIS. The work-site application and appropriate signatures should be submitted by the specified date to the Field Program in order to be considered. The work-site request will be evaluated and approved by the Director of Field Education and designated field coordinator.

6. The work-site application specifying how the placement is to be structured is to be submitted by the student to the Field Office before the work-site placement visit has occurred.

The application must be signed by the field instructor, student, student's direct supervisor, and student's agency administrator.

7. Once a work-site application has been turned in, a work-site conference will be held to determine approval and educational soundness.

The field instructor, student, student's direct supervisor, and student's agency administrator should be present at the initial visit.

8. Students will be responsible for demonstrating that the competencies and time requirements have been met through the learning contract.

### **Independent Employment Intern vs. Field Placement Intern**

It is important that social work students correctly represent the nature of their legal or professional status in their employment settings. If you are a University of Alabama Social Work student who is employed at a Social Work Program approved work-site practicum governed by The University of Alabama Field Affiliation Agreement and under contract with the Social Work Program, then you are practicing as a social work student intern under the licensure and supervision of the School of Social Work Program faculty and staff as well as appropriately licensed agency staff.

If you are hired by an agency as a “social work intern” but that agency is not under contract with the University of Alabama School of Social Work Program, then you are not practicing under the auspices of the UA Social Work Program. This means that although some agencies hire students in an “intern” position, neither the agency nor you may assert, suggest, or imply that you are employed under a UA SSW Program contract that includes the supervision and oversight provided by the UA SSW program. In order to comply with federal, state, and contractual mandates, agencies not under contract with the UA SSW Program that employ social work students in “intern” or other social work practice positions need to provide supervision and oversight by social work professionals with licensure and professional insurance coverage appropriate to the level of work the social work student is asked to perform. Social work students

hired by such agencies should inquire about the agency's provision to provide licensed supervision and professional liability coverage.

## **Social Media Guidelines**

### **Purpose of the Policy**

The use of social media by social work students may impact present and future relationships with peers, co-workers, faculty, clients, field instructors/agencies, and employers. The Social Work Program has developed these guidelines to help students reduce risk as they enter the Social Work Program, and to learn how to use social media in professional ways. This policy incorporates guidance from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the NASW Technology Standards for Practice, and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS competencies provide guidance on the use of social media.

### **Best Practices with Social Media in Social Work Education/Practice**

The Internet, digital technologies and mobile devices have created the ability for students and social workers to communicate and share information quickly and to reach millions of people easily. Participating in social networking and other similar Internet opportunities can support a student's personal expression, enable individual social workers to have a professional presence online, foster collegiality and camaraderie within the profession, and provide the opportunity to widely advocate for social policies and other communication. Social networks, blogs, and other forms of communication online also create new challenges to the social worker-client relationship. Students should weigh a number of considerations when maintaining a presence online:

1. Students should be cognizant of standards of client privacy and confidentiality which must be maintained in all environments, including online and digital, and must refrain from posting any and all identifiable client information online.
2. When using the internet for social networking, students should use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible, but should realize that privacy settings are not absolute and that once on the internet, content is likely there permanently. Additionally, students should routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is accurate and appropriate.
3. When using the internet for professional networking, students should work to build professional online communities that support the values of the social work profession by

developing authentic, ethical digital profiles and contributing content that is appropriate, respectful, and credible.

4. If they interact with clients on the internet, students must maintain appropriate boundaries of the social worker-client relationship in accordance with NASW Code of Ethics, just as they would in any other context.
  - a) To maintain appropriate professional boundaries students should consider separating personal and professional content online.
  - b) When students see content posted by colleagues that appear unprofessional they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the student should report the matter to appropriate authorities.
  - c) Students must recognize that actions online and content posted may negatively affect their reputations among clients and colleagues, may have consequences for their social work careers, and can undermine public trust in the social work profession.

Examples of good and ethical practice tasks include:

1. Develop and maintain a [LinkedIn](#) account, a social networking site designed for professional networking.
2. Create your own professional social media policy. See [Dr. Keely Kolmes' policy](#) for a good example.
3. Download a copy of the [University of Buffalo, School of Social Work's Social Worker's Guide to Social Media](#) and post near your desk as a helpful reminder when using social media.
4. Review this [curated list of resources](#) (articles, blog posts and podcasts) from the University of Buffalo's School of Social Work about social media and other digital technologies in social work practice.
5. Review the [Netiquette Home Page](#) to learn about do's and don'ts of online communication.

Adapted from:

American Medical Association. (2011). Opinion 9.124 - Professionalism in the Use of Social Media. Retrieved from: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion9124.page?>

References:

Shea, V. (n.d.). *Netiquette*. Retrieved from: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>.

University of Buffalo's School of Social Work. (n.d.) *Additional Resources on Social Media and Social Work*. Retrieved from: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide/resources.html>

University of Buffalo's School of Social Work & 12 Grain Studio. (n.d.) *Social Workers Guide to Social Media*. Retrieved from: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide.html>

### **Professional Expectations: Virtual Meeting Attendance**

**Introduction:** As a distance learner, you will attend a variety of school functions via Zoom, UA's designated video communications platform, and others like it. These will include trainings, orientations, meetings, and liaison appointments. At these and all other virtual events, your active, focused participation is essential to your success. With that in mind, you are expected to conduct yourself as professionally in these virtual settings as you would in person.

These expectations embody the School's commitment to the ethical and professional standards set by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Students must engage with one another, the Field Office, course instructors, agency partners, and client systems in accordance with those standards, and virtual conduct is no exception.

The first of the nine competencies defined by CSWE serves as the foundation for each virtual policy, and as a student and professional-in-training, you are tasked with demonstrating this competency by:

- *Using reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;*



- *Demonstrating professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;*
- *Using technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and*
- *Using supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior*

The policies outlined below, unless formally waived by a meeting host or prior accommodation, will apply to every virtual event, and failure to follow them may result in a professional preparedness intervention. With that in mind, please study this code carefully before attending your first online event and abide by its terms.

### **Code of Conduct:**

- I.** Connect using a laptop or desktop computer from a safe, private space. Under no circumstances are students to connect while driving or using public transit, while participating in another class, or while attending any other event. Students who connect from work may only do so with their supervisor's approval and must use a workspace removed from interactions with coworkers and clients.
- II.** Communicate respectfully with your classmates, School representatives, agency partners, and clients in writing and over microphone. Do not interrupt another speaker, do not send private messages at inappropriate times during presentations, and be careful to avoid unprofessional language in your written messages.
- III.** Connect on-time and remain until dismissed. Attendance will be taken shortly after the beginning of the event and verified consistently throughout. Late arrivals and early departures will be marked as absent.
- IV.** Focus actively on the material presented or the conversation at hand. Minimize environmental or social distractions, leave your webcam connected and oriented towards you at all times, remain at your computer for the duration of the session, and do not use your device for anything other than participating in the event.

*Note:* Should the meeting host determine that you are inattentive, you will receive a written warning, and if the identified behavior or any related behavior continues, you will be disconnected from the event and cited for a professional development intervention.

- V.** Dress and conduct yourself professionally as you would during a classroom presentation. Wear business casual attire and do not connect from bed or from any other inappropriate location in your home.
- VI.** Plan meals around sessions unless invited to eat during an event. Although you may always snack or drink water as necessary during any meeting, please do not allow either activity to become a distraction as described in III.

## **Technical Requirements:**

**Purpose:** As an understanding of emerging technology is required to participate fully and successfully in School programming, each student is also expected to meet the following technical requirements:

- I. Ensure that you have a reliable laptop computer with a functional web camera and microphone available for personal use.
- II. Test your equipment to ensure that it functions as intended at least 24 hours prior to any meeting.
- III. Verify that you understand how to navigate any relevant video software, (e.g., Zoom, FlipGrid, etc.), and contact the meeting host in advance if you require special assistance or accommodation with regard to its operation or that of any other program.
- IV. Mute your microphone whenever it is not in use to prevent audio feedback and ensure that others are not distracted by the noise.
- V. Report any unforeseen malfunction that occurs during a session to the meeting host promptly and through an appropriate channel of communication. Make every effort to reconnect to the meeting as soon as you're able or, when appropriate, make use of an alternative device.

## **Policies Affecting the Student During Placement**

### **Professional Ethics**

It is understood that students will adhere to the expected standards for professional, ethical conduct and to the agency's policies and procedures as long as these are not in conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics can be accessed at <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>. These materials delineate the expected standards for professional conduct. A salient issue for students during the practicum is that of confidentiality of case records and recordings. The only individuals outside the agency with whom the student may share confidential client materials are through the seminar course or faculty liaison.

***A student's failure to adhere to the expected standards for professional, ethical conduct will be considered grounds for initiating a professional preparedness review.***

## **Confidentiality**

The agency agrees to provide University students who are involved in the agency's clinical training experiences with training/orientation on agency's policies and procedures and applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including HIPAA Privacy Standards, related to confidentiality of individually identifiable health information of clients and FERPA standards related to confidentiality of educational records. The University agrees to require its students placed in the agency's clinical training sites to comply with the agency's policies and procedures related to confidentiality of health information. The University agrees to not require its students to use or disclose any individually identifiable health information about any agency's patients in any reports, essays, class discussions, etc., and agrees to report to the agency any unauthorized use or disclosure or protected health information obtained from access to patients or records of the agency.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Policies regarding academic honesty and plagiarism extend to student field education placement representations of interaction with clients, field instructors, and agency staff. Students who fabricate interactions or required attendance will be referred for Academic Misconduct Review. Please refer to policies specified in the *Undergraduate* and *Graduate Catalogs*, and the *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*.

## **Safety**

The safety of students in field is of prime importance to the School of Social Work and to field agencies. (See Appendix A, Authorization for Release of Records and Information and Acknowledgement of Risk in the Field Placement.) It is imperative that students feel safe in order to carry out their responsibilities in the field. If safety concerns arise for a student, it is important that the student discuss these safety concerns with their field instructor. If, after gathering information to realistically assess the situation and to learn how to provide appropriate protection, the student still does not feel safe in order to carry out assignments, s/he is encouraged to renegotiate those assignments with the help of the field instructor. When appropriate, s/he should also consult the faculty liaison for assistance. Students will be required to complete a safety orientation from the field program before beginning field placement. The Field Education Program strongly encourages students and agencies notify the faculty liaison when there are safety incidents that impact students in field.

## **Student Use of Automobiles**

Social work practice often requires transport to facilities outside the location of the agency. Some agencies provide reimbursement for student use of their own cars and insurance coverage for that activity in carrying out an agency assignment. Some agencies have their own fleet of automobiles for which the student may qualify as a driver if they are to have assignments requiring home visits or some other trip requiring the use of an automobile. Many other agencies do not have these resources available. These issues should be clarified in the confirmation interview with the agency prior to the beginning of the practicum. In any event, students cannot be required to transport clients in their automobiles; if they choose to do so, they should be sure that their insurance carrier will cover them or that the agency has provided for their insurance coverage in case of an automobile accident. Otherwise, students do so at their own risk.

## **Schedule**

Students may not set their own field education schedule. The field education calendar is provided to students and designates both start and end dates for field. Students who need to begin practicum late or significantly alter their weekly schedule must get approval from their field coordinator, assigned faculty liaison, and field instructor. Otherwise the weekly schedule for each practicum is established on an individual basis with the agency in which the student is placed. Schedules are to take into account the needs of the agency, the School of Social Work, and the individual student. Students will, from time to time, extend their clock-hours beyond the hours allocated to the field education placement in order to meet professional responsibilities or obtain access to special activities. When students have been engaged more than the needed weekly clock hours, they may take “compensatory” time off from their field placement. To assure that the time off will not disrupt the student’s field placement responsibilities this should be arranged with the approval of the field instructor. All students will remain in their field placement sites throughout the entire semester; i.e., “compensatory” time may not be used to shorten the length of the practicum. Students may not complete any practicum experience prior to the beginning of a semester. It is also important to note that completing over 40 hours per week in field placement is not recommended.

The majority of available agencies provide client services during the typical work week of Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Of utmost importance is the need for students to be in agencies when there are maximum opportunities for interaction with other professional staff to facilitate student participation in professional decision making and collaborative work.

Students must learn about the agency's expectations for their field placement hours at the time of the initial interview with the agency.

In addition to working out schedules with field instructors, students must keep those who may need to contact them during the placement (e.g. agency personnel and appropriate faculty) informed of their whereabouts.

### **Vacations, Holidays, Semester Breaks, and Other Absences from the Practicum**

Most agencies do not operate according to the University academic calendar and client needs continue, and often escalate, at holiday times. Any student plans for leave from the agency during the semester must be approved by the field instructor, as coverage for caseloads must be arranged. If the break would be more conveniently taken at a time other than University holidays during the semester, an alternative time can be negotiated with the agency field instructor; the faculty liaison should be notified of this change. Students may not, however, shorten their field.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, spring break, fall break, and Christmas are observed by The University of Alabama and students are expected to be absent from the practicum on those days. In addition, students may take any holidays observed by the agency without penalty as long as the student has verified that the clock-hour requirements of field are not compromised.

The Field Education Program expects students to negotiate all time away from field during their placement. Students may choose to work during recognized University holidays in consultation with their faculty liaison and field instructor.

It is understood that occasional illness or other emergency may necessitate absence from the field placement. Students are expected to work out these arrangements with the field instructor; this can usually be accomplished by using compensatory time that most students build up by putting in extra hours (e.g., for evening hours or meetings).

If the absence is more than a few days, the faculty liaison should be notified. In no instance will arrangements be approved that result in a field deficiency in the required total clock hours or the specified time-span.

In addition to their regularly scheduled class sessions, students may be absent from the practicum in order to register and to be present at a final examination class session, which is often scheduled (by the University) at a time different from the regularly scheduled class time. Students are expected to inform their field instructors of these dates as soon as possible and to make appropriate plans for their professional responsibilities. Occasionally, a class instructor

will make special plans for an activity that is not on a regularly scheduled class day; in that case, the student and field instructor must assess whether the student can be absent from the field placement at that time, and appropriate plans must be made by the student for professional attention to agency responsibilities.

Student attendance at assigned instructional activities (classroom and field education) is expected, in accordance with University policy. No systematic exception to this general University policy can be made. Therefore, any permission for attendance at a non-assigned activity (i.e., attendance at committee meetings, professional conferences, etc.) must be obtained from the classroom instructor(s) and/or field instructor whose class(es) and/or field work would be missed to attend other activities, as based on their judgment relative to the educational value of both the classroom and the field education activities.

### **Inclement Weather**

While the University makes decisions about the cancellation of classes on campus, such decisions do not impact the business operations of a student's field placement. It is the responsibility of the individual student to monitor weather conditions and to determine whether he or she is able to travel safely to the field placement location or leave the placement site early to return home safely. Students should take necessary precautions to ensure their own personal safety whether the placement site is local or in another geographic location. In any event, all field hours missed due to inclement weather must be made up before the end of the semester. If a student has a concern about completing field hours due to inclement weather, he or she should contact the field office.

To see the University of Alabama's Inclement Weather policies and procedures, please visit: <https://ready.ua.edu/severe-weather-guidelines/>

### **Conferences, Trainings, and Webinars**

Students are expected to attend orientation training if the agency provides this type of activity. Students can request to attend orientation training before the first day of placement. This request needs to be made in writing to the field office, specifying dates in attendance and hours to be completed. The field office will allow up to one week of orientation hours (32) before placement to count toward field hour requirements. Orientation and training hours during field may exceed 32 hours. Students must refrain from client contact prior to the first day of field. Field education placement orientation does not constitute an automatic excused absence from other classes. Students should consult with their instructors if orientations conflict with other classes.

Students may be asked to participate in other trainings, conferences, and webinars. In order for this type of activity to count toward field hours, the student must get prior approval from both his/her field instructor and his/her faculty liaison. The Field Education Program will allow up to

20 hours of conferences and trainings and only 10 of the 20 hours can be webinars, if such activities are approved. Students should maintain documentation of conferences, trainings, and webinars (e.g., completion certificates for webinars) and attach them to student logs. Please note that the educational activities must directly relate to your field placement, as noted in your learning contract.

### **Counting Travel Hours for Field**

Students cannot count travel time from home to agency or from agency to home as field education hours. Students can count travel time that the agency requires (e.g., traveling to and from the agency to complete home visits or attend meetings). Counting travel hours inappropriately is considered academic misconduct and will be reported to the academic misconduct monitor, per University policy.

### **On-Call Hours for Field Placement**

Some agencies will require students to rotate being on-call for the agency. If you are in an agency that requires on-call, you can only count the hours that you are actively working with the client. In addition, you must be supervised while you are on-call.

### **Students on Agency Stipends**

Some of the field placement policies (especially those related to vacation and other leave time) may be altered for students who are receiving a stipend from the agency. Occasionally these stipends require additional time commitments. Please contact your designated field coordinator if you need to alter your field schedule based on stipend requirements.

### **Policy Conflicts**

Should conflicts arise between agency and School of Social Work field placement policies, the field instructor and/or the student should immediately notify the faculty liaison who will endeavor to work out a solution that is satisfactory to both the agency and the School. No alternative policy may be established which conflicts with the Agency Affiliation Agreement established between the University and the agency.

### **Variable Hours Field Education Placements: Spring Bear Bryant and BSW Students Only**

Students in the Spring Bear Bryant MSW cohort may request an extended period of time to complete field education requirements, which would require them to register and complete two

variable credit courses. This request must be made to your assigned Field Education Coordinator and indicated in SWIS. The placement must be consistent with the standards of CSWE, the School of Social Work, and The University of Alabama. BSW students should reach out to their field coordinator regarding extended placement.

Variable hour placements require the same total number of clock hours as any regular placement (450 BSW and 500 MSW). Students must be committed to completing field over two semesters. Field education hours must be accomplished during what are considered traditional working days and hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). This does not imply that students can fulfill the hour requirements by engaging in non-social work activities at night or on weekends. If hours are completed at night or on the weekend, the activities must be such as to meet course objectives and under the supervision of a professional staff member.

A minimum of 16 hours per week is required for **all** students in field education, regardless of cohort. Students are required to be in the field for two eight-hour days per week to meet this requirement. If students are in their field placement fewer than 16 hours in any week, they are not officially considered in field and must not count those hours. Students cannot count any hours fewer than 16 in any given week except the first week of their field placement.

### **Alternative Hours**

A waiver to propose alternative hours is available for limited circumstances dependent upon agreement of the field agency and their ability to meet learning objectives. Of primary importance is the ability of the agency to meet the learning objectives during the proposed alternative hours. Waiver applications are only available once a student has interviewed with an agency and discussed alternative hours. The Field Education Program does not match students with agencies on the variable of alternative hours. Waiver applications must include information on how the learning objectives will be met, the proposed work-week schedule, supervision, and agency signatures indicating agency approval of alternative hours.

**For BSW Students Only:** Students who have been approved for an extended placement will receive a grade of Incomplete until they have completed the required hours for field. For complete information regarding Incomplete Grades please refer to the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalog. It is expected that BSW students will complete their field requirements the following semester. Please note that the incomplete impacts a student's GPA until it is removed. Grades of "I" must be removed within 12 months of the end of the term in which they were awarded but prior to the student's graduation or the "I" will be changed to "F". In addition, the incomplete is calculated as an "F" which can impact students who are receiving scholarships. Having an Incomplete can also impact a student's financial aid. Students need to anticipate these issues and plan accordingly.



## **For MSW Students Only:**

### *Spring Placements*

Students who commit to the variable hour placement option will register for SW 590 or SW 595, 4.5 credit hours. This term runs from the first day of spring semester until summer I begins. Students are required to complete 300 - 350 field placement hours during this time frame. Any additional hours over 350 will not count. Students will register for SW 591 or SW 596, 4.5 credit hours for the summer semester. Students are required to complete 150-200 hours during the summer semester. The hours completed must total 500 within the parameters stated above. It is important to note that students will receive a grade of Incomplete at the conclusion of the spring semester until the summer semester begins. See below for information regarding Incompletes.

### **Summer Placements**

Students who commit to the extended field placement option will register for SW 590 or SW 595, 4.5 credit hours to start during the Interim term and conclude at the end of the summer term. Students are required to complete 200 – 250 hours during this time frame. Any additional hours over 250 will not count. Students will register for SW 591 or SW 596, 4.5 credit hours for the fall semester. Students are required to complete 250 – 300 hours during the fall semester. The hours completed must total 500 within the parameters stated above.

It is important to note that students will receive a grade of Incomplete at the conclusion of the Interim term to be changed upon completion of hours prior to the fall semester beginning.

During the spring semester, variable hour placement students will receive both of the required liaison visits prior to the last day of the semester. Both the learning contract and the mid-term evaluation are completed by the field instructor and reviewed by the liaison.

If a variable hour placement is granted, the student must follow the same procedures as all other students going into field.

### **Consecutive Semester Field Policy**

Students are required to complete their field placement in the same agency over two consecutive semesters depending on their program of study (i.e. Fall/Spring placement or Spring/Summer placement.). The Field Program is committed to collaborating with students to secure an initial

educationally sound placement. If you are unable to complete the second consecutive course of your field placement in the following semester as described above, know this will delay your program of study and graduation date.

You will need to follow the steps as outlined:

1. Contact your field coordinator as soon as possible to discuss next steps.
2. Next, contact your student services coordinator / advisor regarding your program of study. Remember that you are responsible for ensuring your registration is accurate.
3. With guidance from your Field Coordinator, you will need to let your agency know that you are unable to complete the placement the next term. If your agency is able to accommodate the break in placement, you will need to discuss a plan with them regarding how to restart your placement during the next semester. Please then share the outcome of this conversation with your field coordinator in writing, if they were not included in the meeting.
4. You will need to terminate appropriately with your agency once you have made arrangements for next steps.
5. You will be responsible for securing a placement to complete your second variable field education course / remaining field hours if you cannot remain in your current placement. Please contact your field coordinator to initiate this step.
6. Failure to follow the steps outlined in this policy will result in a field staffing.

### **“I” and “N” grades**

All “I” and “N” grades must be removed within the first four weeks of the next term of enrollment if the overall GPA drops below a 3.0 as a result of the “I” or “N” grade(s).

Conditionally admitted students who fail to bring their overall GPA up to a 3.0 or better by removing the "I" or "N" within the four weeks will earn Academic Suspension (dismissal) from the Graduate School.

Graduate Students with good academic standing who fail to bring their overall GPA back up to 3.0 or better by removing the "I" and "N" grade(s) within the four weeks will earn Academic Warning.

### **Student Continuation in the Agency and/or with Clients of the Agency after the End of the Placement**

Occasionally, agencies seek to employ a student with whom they have worked in the field placement. Should that situation arise while the student is still in field placement, the student and the field instructor must bring it to the attention of the School of Social Work by discussing the arrangements with the faculty liaison. In such instances, the faculty liaison will assure that the necessary safeguards are in place to protect the integrity of the learning experience of the student. Should the point of employment be after the termination of the practicum, no special arrangements are needed.

Following the end of a student's field placement, it is strongly recommended that the student **not** continue to provide service in the agency as a volunteer. Only in response to a request by the agency, and only in rare circumstances even then, should a student ever plan to continue to render professional services to a client to whom he/she was assigned as part of the field.

Continuation of service to clients of the agency after the completion of the practicum, unless specifically requested to do so by the agency, will be considered a breach of professional social work ethics.

## **Evaluation and Corrective Action**

### **Field Placement Performance Evaluation**

Students enrolled in all field education courses will be given both a midterm grade and a final grade. Grades will be recommended by the field instructor and will be issued by the faculty liaison. For the midterm evaluation, field instructors, students, and faculty liaisons will make contact to evaluate the student's practicum performance. If the student is performing in a satisfactory way, the field instructor will complete the midterm grade on the learning contract and will provide feedback to the faculty liaison. If the student is performing in a marginal or unsatisfactory way, a field staffing and corrective action plan should be initiated (refer to Handling Difficulties in Field policy).

## **Field Education Grade**

All learning competencies will be graded on a Pass/Fail system. Whenever there is a rating of 0 or 1 at midterm, the student, field instructor, and faculty liaison should modify the learning contract to promote student improvement; whenever there is an “NO” (No Opportunity, formerly a 9) at midterm, plans should be made to ensure there will be an opportunity for the student to exhibit the behavior before the conclusion of the field education placement. There must be no “NOs” at the final. A student who receives a 0 or 1 at final for any competency supported activity does not pass this field education class.

## **Student-Initiated Review Process**

Students who experience academic difficulty may request a review of their academic situation. This review will be held with the student, the faculty advisor, and the program chair. Students may also invite another faculty member or student to be present if they wish to do so. The purpose of the review is to explore alternatives that the student may have to resolve the difficulty. If an exception to the School of Social Work or University policy is requested, the review will provide information needed by the program chair in making a recommendation to the Dean. It is expected that such a review will be initiated only after the student has attempted to work through the difficulty in consultation with the academic advisor.

## **Handling Learning Difficulties in the Field**

At the earliest indication of difficulties in field, the field instructor and student are expected to discuss the matter. The difficulties may be identified by the student, the field instructor, or both. If the difficulties are unable to be resolved in a timely fashion, the field instructor or the student may consult the faculty liaison. If the faculty liaison's involvement still does not resolve the difficulties, the field coordinator is contacted, and a field staffing will be called pursuant to the procedures set forth herein. In some cases, the Director of Field Education is contacted. The faculty liaison, field instructor, director of field education, and field coordinator each has the authority to temporarily suspend the practicum until a field staffing is convened and an outcome determined. The Director of Field Education Program or field coordinator will officially notify the student of the suspension as soon as practical, and provide the date of the field staffing. The maximum time the placement will be suspended is two weeks unless the student voluntarily asks for further time out of practicum.

Field Staffing Initiated by Field Coordinator. Some difficulties in the field may necessitate a field staffing. The field staffing is designed to resolve problems and reach appropriate outcomes in the best interest of all involved parties. Below are some reasons which may prompt consideration of a field staffing.

**Student does not meet field expectations**

**Student is not adequately prepared for the field placement.** It is assumed that the student has acquired the competencies expected for participation in the work-world (e.g., arriving on time, managing one's schedule and communicating it to others as appropriate, presenting and conducting one's self in a professional manner—including dress and other aspects of self-presentation as well as engaging in appropriate interpersonal interactions). In addition, for the second-year MSW field placement, it is expected that the student has acquired the necessary knowledge for "entry level" professional practice (reflected in objectives for BSW curriculum and first-year curriculum of MSW program) prior to the beginning of the second-year field placement. A field staffing may be called for if there is reason to believe that the student is not adequately prepared for the practicum.

**Student fails to meet the expected standards for ethical professional practice.** Students are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical conduct, and to adhere to the field agency's policies and procedures, as long as said policies and procedures are not in conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW Code of Ethics can be accessed at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp>, and delineates the expected standards for professional and ethical conduct. A salient issue for students during the practicum is that of confidentiality of case records and recordings.

**Student health condition or impairment.** In the event the student experiences a health condition or other impairment which affects his or her ability to participate in the field placement, a field staffing may be prompted.

Agency is unable to provide an appropriate educational opportunity. For a variety of reasons, the student, field instructor, faculty liaison, field coordinator, director of field may question whether the agency is able to provide the expected learning experiences and/or appropriate supervision, or to meet any of the expectations identified in the Affiliation Agreement between the agency and the University. A field staffing may be called in the event of any such concerns.

Agency requests termination of placement. The agency maintains the right to terminate the field placement pursuant to the terms of the affiliation agreement. Upon notification of termination by the agency, the Director of Field Education or field coordinator will convene a field staffing

Field Staffing Initiated by Student. The student may initiate a field staffing based on major changes in life circumstances. However, field placement is an academic course, and acceptance of an internship constitutes a commitment to the agency. Requests for field placement termination or substantive changes that relate to job offers or job changes are not sufficient reasons for change of an academic practicum.

Students may not terminate a field placement without initiating a field staffing and following the field staffing procedures as set forth herein. Since all field placements are conducted under the auspices of an Agency Affiliation Agreement between a field agency and the University,

termination of an agreed-upon field placement involves dissolving an existing agreement between the agency and University personnel.

**Field Staffing Procedure.** A typical field staffing will include one or more meetings between the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator, field instructor, faculty liaison, and student. The field staffing is designed to solve problems and determine appropriate outcomes. The Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator will convene the field staffing and facilitate open and constructive communication among all parties. Following the field staffing, the director of field education and/or field coordinator will consider the information presented by all parties during the field staffing and make a determination, in his or her sole discretion, as to the appropriate resolution. Paragraphs 1 – 6 below include some potential outcomes, although the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator may impose an outcome not set forth herein if he or she determines such outcome is in the best interest of the parties. The Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator will develop a written summary of the issues presented during the field staffing and the decisions reached. Copies of the summary may be requested by participants of the field staffing. The Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator will oversee implementation of decisions made at the field staffing.

### **Possible Outcomes**

**No change.** In some cases, a field staffing results in no change to the field placement, and the student will be expected to return to his or her position as of the date of reinstatement as determined by the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator.

**Voluntary Student Suspension of Placement.** A student may decide that it is in his or her best interest to suspend the placement. This outcome will require a timeline from student including date of reinstatement that must be approved by the Field Education Program.

**Corrective Action Plan.** A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is created by the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator when a field staffing concludes that the student is not satisfactorily meeting competencies in the field. The CAP will be used to (a) highlight the specific competencies not being performed; (b) identify specific tasks that will need to be completed in order to adequately improve the competency(s); (c) provide a target date for reevaluation; (d) outline the responsibilities of the student, field instructor, and faculty liaison; and (e) provide other information that may be deemed necessary to a student in successfully completing the field placement. A student's inability to satisfactorily complete the CAP requirements, as determined in the discretion of the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator, will result in an "F" for practicum.

**Termination of current field placement and change of field placement.** In some cases, a field staffing may reveal that the student's continued participation in the internship would not be in the best interest of the parties, or a field agency may decide to terminate a student's participation in the internship. If an initial internship is terminated prior to completion, the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator will, in most cases, work to assign the

student to a second field placement. Assignment to a second internship may be contingent on disclosure of the reasons for the termination of the initial placement and the sharing of the last field evaluation form to the new potential field instructor/agency. Assignment to a second placement is contingent on the availability of placements. Students should be aware that there could be a potential delay in finding a suitable placement. In addition, students who are placed outside of the Tuscaloosa, AL, area (including the Washington DC program and International Placements) may have to complete their placement in Tuscaloosa, AL.

If a student's initial internship is terminated based on unsatisfactory performance related to educational competencies, professional behavior, misconduct, or other behavior that does not coincide with the standards, values, and expectations of the field agency, the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator will not work to assign the student to a second placement setting, and the student will receive an "F" for field.

If the student is assigned to a new internship following a field staffing, the student will normally be required to complete the full number of hours required for the course during his or her time in the new internship. In exceptional circumstances the field coordinator may negotiate with the student to determine "hours credited" from the first internship. In either case, the student will not need to re-register for the course. If the student is terminated from a second internship, the student will receive an "F" for practicum, and the field office will not offer a third field placement for any single field education course.

If the student disagrees with the field staffing outcomes reached pursuant to outcomes above, the student may make use of the Student-initiated Review Process or the University-wide Academic Grievance Policy.

**Request for Professional Preparedness Review to Program Chair.** If, following the completion of the field staffing, the Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator has reasonable belief that the student has engaged in possible ethical violations and/or impairment serious enough to interfere with the student's practice effectiveness, the field coordinator will refer the student to the chair of the student's degree program for a professional preparedness review. In this case, decisions about the student's continuation in the field education course will be made through the professional preparedness review process.

The Director of Field Education and/or field coordinator may also refer the student for a professional preparedness review if the student does not adhere to terms of a CAP developed as the result of a field staffing, or if the student does not meet field expectations in the second field placement, as determined by a field staffing in the second field placement. The field office will not offer a third field placement for any single field education course.

### **Professional Preparedness**

Members of the School of Social Work community have an obligation to the social work profession to make reasonable efforts to ensure that graduates of its professional programs are emotionally and ethically prepared for the demands of ethical practice. This duty is consistent with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (2.09, 2.10, and 2.11) and with the academic objectives of the BSW and MSW programs that require students to “understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles and practice accordingly.”

Therefore, the appropriate program chair will consult with any student in his/her respective program who (a) exhibits “impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties” that is deemed by that program chair likely to interfere with social work practice effectiveness or (b) engages in other behavior proscribed by the National Association of Social Workers. The program chair will (if appropriate) make reasonable efforts to assist the student in resolving behavioral concerns regarding the student’s ability to practice effectively and responsibly in the social work profession.

The results of this student/program chair consultation may include:

- (a) a determination that the alleged behavior does not constitute an ethical violation or impairment serious enough to interfere with practice effectiveness;
- (b) the development of a plan for remediation of the behavior while the student continues in the social work program;
- (c) the student’s temporary withdrawal from the social work program; or
- (d) the student’s indefinite withdrawal from the social work program.

#### Procedures

1. Members of the School of Social Work community having credible knowledge of a student's possible ethical violations and/or impairment serious enough to interfere with the student’s practice effectiveness are expected to act on that knowledge. Any member of the School of Social Work who believes that a student has possibly violated the NASW Code of Ethics or has engaged in any activity that is likely to interfere with social work practice effectiveness is encouraged to first directly interact with the student at issue concerning the conduct in question.

2. Upon completion of the direct interaction with the student regarding the potential violation, that member is to present pertinent information to the program chair in a signed, written statement. This statement should present a thorough description of the violation being alleged,



including specification of the behavior, sources of information and if applicable the relevant standard(s) in the NASW Code of Ethics that is in question.

3. Within two academic work weeks of receiving the statement, the program chair will notify the student and his/her academic advisor, in writing, of the allegations. When the outcome of a field staffing results in the field coordinator requesting a professional preparedness review, the field coordinator or field designee will participate in the professional preparedness review meeting, evaluation of the allegations, and resolutions of concerns. The program chair will provide the student and his/her advisor with a summary of the concerns, the NASW Code of Ethics standard in question, as well as the name of the source of information.

4. The program chair will convene a meeting with the student and his/her advisor to discuss and evaluate the allegation(s) and, if necessary, agree on a resolution of the concern(s). If the agreed-upon resolution specifies a need for remediation, a written plan of remediation will be prepared and (if the student agrees) will be signed and dated by the student, the advisor, and the program chair. The remediation plan will be explicit with stated criteria and deadlines for assessing its success or failure. The program chair will monitor compliance with the plan.

5. If the resolution specifies a temporary or indefinite withdrawal from the social work program, the written plan will include the period of time that must elapse before the student may apply for reinstatement (in keeping with the readmission policy, a minimum of 12 months will be required) as well as the criteria that will be used in making a determination about reinstatement.

6. All files and documents related to evaluations of students' professional preparedness will be confidentially maintained in the office of the registrar in the School of Social Work and will be available only to those individuals with a legitimate need to know, including but not limited to the program chair, the student, and his/her academic advisor.

7. If the student does not agree that there is a problem or does not agree with the written remediation plan, the student may request that the program chair convene a Hearing Panel to consider the issues raised and recommend a resolution. The student's request must be submitted within 10 working days of the date the written remediation plan was discussed and shared with the student.

8. The Hearing Panel will consist of three full-time faculty members: one faculty member (excluding the student's academic advisor) to be selected by the student, one selected by the program chair, and the third to be selected by the first two faculty members.

9. The Hearing Panel will conduct a hearing that addresses factual matters concerning the student's alleged behavior and/or inappropriate conduct. The student may invite one advisor of his or her choice to the hearing. The student is responsible for presenting his or her own case, and, therefore, the adviser is not permitted to speak or participate directly in the hearing.

The panel may make one of four determinations. The student will be encouraged to continue in the program.

- a. The panel will affirm the original remediation plan.
- b. The panel will develop its own remediation plan.
- c. The student will be required to withdraw, either temporarily or indefinitely, from the program for reasons stated in writing. The written plan will include the period of time that must elapse before the student may apply for reinstatement (in keeping with the readmission, a minimum of 12 months will be required) as well as the criteria that will be used in making a determination about reinstatement.

The determination will be written and signed and dated by all Hearing Panel members. There is no right to an appeal from or further review of the determination of the Hearing Panel. The program chair will implement the decision of the Hearing Panel.



*School of*  
**Social Work**  
**Field Education Program**

**BSW Field Guide**

LINK FOR FORMS, LEARNING CONTRACTS, AND SYLLABI THAT CORRESPOND WITH THIS SECTION

## Field Education FAQs

**All Field Information will be communicated via email using the [crimson.ua.edu](mailto:crimson.ua.edu) address. In addition, the Field Office uses database systems for the application process (SWIS) and interactive field forms (IPT). You are responsible for all field information sent to these locations.**

### **What is Field Placement?**

Field Placement provides students the opportunity to integrate the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the classroom setting with the practical experiences that are provided at the agency. Field Placement is one name we use for the required course SW 490 Field Education. It is important for students to understand that Field Placement, also called Practicum, is a class and should be treated as such.

In addition, students need to prepare for the incidental cost(s) of this course. Possible costs outside of tuition include travel (gas and mileage); fingerprinting and background checks; and drug screens, as well as vaccinations and health screenings.

### **How do I Complete Field Placement?**

BSW students complete Field in the fall semester after they are accepted into the professional program and pass the SW 444 Field Preparation course earning a grade of C- or higher. A student will complete a total of 450 hours for placement.

### **What is the Field Placement Process?**

BSW students are required to submit an application for field placement to start the field placement process. More information about this will be provided to you during Field Information Sessions and the Field Preparatory course SW 444. You will be able review important application information in Blackboard.

The Field Education Team will meet spring semester to make placement decisions. Student applications and resumes are reviewed. The team will match students with field agencies based on prior work and internship experience, geographic location, field of practice preference, field placement availability, and in some cases, faculty recommendations.

Many students ask the question: Can I ensure that I get my first placement choice? Field placement slot availability changes rapidly. Slots open and close throughout any given week due to changes in agencies. BSW students are assigned by field education faculty to agencies that provide generalist practice. The goal is to achieve "a goodness of fit" with the match.

Once the student is slotted for an agency, the agency is sent the student's application and resume and the student is also sent an e-mail requesting a confirmation interview. **It is the student's responsibility to contact the agency to schedule the confirmation interview within 72 hours of receiving notice.** The confirmation interview does not guarantee a student a field placement slot. The student must interview and be accepted by the agency. Students should treat this

process like a job interview. The student has up to two opportunities to secure an agency. If a student denies one agency or if one agency denies a student based on comportment issues, a field staffing will be held to assess student field readiness.

### **Can I complete field placement at my current place of employment?**

Students who are currently employed at a human service agency can request a work-site field placement. This request needs to be submitted well in advance and requires the approval of the Director of Field Education and the designated Field Education Coordinator. If approved, this option can be used for ONLY one academic year. The requirements for an Employment-Based Field Placement are: the agency and MSW Field Instructor must be approved by the Field Education Office; the agency must have an MSW who has two years post degree experience to supervise; the BSW Field Instructor cannot be the student's direct supervisor; the field learning experiences for the student must be drawn from a unit of the agency different from the area where the student functions as an employee; and the student's employment hours must be clearly defined and separate from the field learning placement hours.

There is an Alternative Hours Waiver application option that students may request once a placement has been confirmed. Please see our Extended Field Education Placements policy for more information.

### **Can my placement be arranged for evening and/or weekend hours?**

The Field Education Program cannot guarantee field placements on either weekend or evening hours as most agencies do not have available MSW supervision after 5:00 p.m. Students need to plan to be available for field placement during normal fieldwork site business hours. If you are working full time you should begin planning well in advance to balance your work, class, and personal commitments.

In addition, students need to be in placement during normal agency business hours for a minimum of 16 hours per week during times when their field instructor is also on duty and available to the student. These conditions do not usually allow students to do the entire placement during evenings or weekends.

### **Can my field placement be located where I am living?**

The Field Office places main campus BSW students in Tuscaloosa or surrounding counties within a 60-mile radius. BSW distance learners will be placed in the designated skills lab area or within a 60-mile radius. All BSW field placements are in the state of Alabama. Resources are often dependent upon the available agencies within the designated communities.

### **Can students set up their own field placement?**

No. Students should not contact any agency to set up or inquire about practicum placements with the exception of work site placements. The Field Education Program maintains and develops partnerships with CSWE approved agencies throughout the state of Alabama.

**I need to work while enrolled in School. How much time should I reserve for field work each term?**

The field placement is 450 hours completed during the fall semester. Students must be prepared to meet these requirements. The field office will attempt to work with students to complement their work requirements, but, in no way will the educational objectives of the practicum experience be compromised. Students can apply for an extended placement which allows the student to extend the practicum through the spring. However, some agencies do not allow extended placements which may limit placement options.

**Can I be placed in two different agencies?**

BSW students will be placed in one agency for the duration of the field placement course. Please refer to the section Handling Difficulties in Field to view the process in the event of placement disruptions.

**What agencies offer stipends to students?**

While the Field Education Program strongly encourages agencies to offer stipend opportunities, the agencies that do so vary and the decision is entirely up to the agency. Stipend amounts also vary, but are usually quite small and limited to the Jefferson and Tuscaloosa County areas. Sometimes agencies offer stipends depending upon the amount of time the student can give to the agency, or to make the placement more competitive. Agencies may receive grants that allow the agency to give the student a small amount of funds. There are some specialized grants such as the IV-E child welfare grant and the juvenile justice grant that have specific stipulations. The DC and International field programs assess for financial need in the application process and standardly offer assistance to participants when assistance is available. Students can discuss stipend availability at their placement interviews or with the Field Education Program.

**Do students need to have a car?**

Students are responsible for securing transportation to their field placements regardless of location. As there is limited public transportation in many areas students must have access to transportation to reach their field placements. It is to the student's advantage to have a personal vehicle. Many of our local communities are small and have few resources for field placements;

therefore, not having a personal vehicle will severely limit the field placement options. Students can indicate transportation needs on the field application.

Many field placements offer services that are community-based and the majority of fieldwork sites require the use of a vehicle for field work. This means that many field placements require students to have a car to perform field-related tasks such as transporting clients, community outreach, home visits, community work, attending meetings, etc. When using a personal vehicle for required educational training that is authorized by the University, the student's personal automobile liability insurance is considered primary. Agencies are expected to reimburse students for mileage incurred when conducting agency business (not travel between the agency and the student's residence). However, students should inquire about this policy during the interview.

### **Do students need insurance?**

The University of Alabama maintains program(s) of self-insurance that provide liability coverage to students while they are acting in the line and scope of their approved field placements. Coverage is limited to the terms, conditions and limits of the program(s) of self-insurance. It is recommended that students also carry an automobile insurance policy if they will be using their vehicle to carry out agency assignments (see above).

### **Can I take other courses with field placement?**

The field practicum course is a 9-hour credit course and field seminar is a 3 hour course. The two courses together offer a full course schedule. In order to fully participate in field practicum, students are encouraged to limit registration of other courses to a maximum of 15 hours if possible. Students often take SW 420 Research as a co-curricular course. Students seeking to take above 15 hours, should consult with their advisor and field coordinator.

### **Applying for BSW Field Placement**

- Students applying for practicum must have completed the prerequisites for the practicum in which they are applying. Students enrolled in SW 444 will receive field application information during the course.
- BSW students must complete a background check during SW 444, before they enter their field placement in the fall. Students must have a letter of suitability on file to begin field.
- BSW students must complete a SWIS field application during SW 444. Applications are available during designated time frames at the following link (to SWIS):  
[https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX\\_PROD/f?p=221](https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX_PROD/f?p=221)





## **Summary of Field Instructor Responsibilities**

1. Students will be assigned to BSW Practicum agencies. You will be sent a copy of the student's educational goals and a resume by the Field Education Program. The student will be instructed to contact you regarding a confirmation interview to determine the appropriateness of the placement.
2. Depending on the outcome of the interview, you may accept or not accept the student for placement. It is appropriate to let the student know of the outcome at the time of the interview, or if you prefer, contact the field coordinator who will convey your decision to the student. At the time of the interview it is helpful to discuss hour expectations, times at which the student must be in practicum, etc., in order to assess the feasibility of the placement. It is also helpful to determine the exact start-up date for the student to begin field.
3. The field coordinator and faculty liaisons will work with each of you to construct possible learning tasks related to the curriculum that are appropriate for BSW students prior to the actual placement. Frequently during the confirmation interview, other areas of student interest emerge, and additional assignments are discussed. A formal learning contract should be constructed and signed off on by the field instructor, student, and faculty liaison by the third week of the semester. A copy of a learning contract is included at the end of each course outline, which reflects the competencies for field.
4. The BSW field placement is guided by the SW 490 course syllabus outline and the learning contract. The mid-term evaluation and final evaluation are included in the learning contract. Orientation and advanced workshops are offered to field instructors both online and face to face. You will receive ongoing information about how to access workshops. Each student will be assigned to a Field Seminar Instructor as well as a seminar group. The students will remain with that Instructor/group for the entire BSW practicum.
5. You will be asked to complete evaluations of the student using the learning contract. Based on your overall evaluation, you will be asked to complete a mid-term grade and a final grade recommending the student's overall performance. You will recommend the grade and the faculty liaison will assist you in the process and ultimately grade the student. You, the student, and the faculty liaison will sign off on the learning contract.
6. Please call the field coordinator or your faculty liaison with any questions or concerns about the placement.

7. Also, at end of the semester, the field instructor and the student will be asked to complete a series of BSW Evaluation Forms which ask for an evaluation of the practicum. These forms are included in Appendix A.

8. Faculty liaisons will be asked to conduct at least two visits to the placement agency during the semester. For all sites, regular contact by telephone and e-mail are essential for educational monitoring. At the beginning of each placement, faculty liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students enrolled in their practicum and their Field Instructors in order to communicate regularly with practicum participants.

To further ensure educational monitoring, field instructors should attend field education training meetings. Additionally, as field instructors generally are on campus for these events, meetings can be arranged among the field instructors, faculty liaisons, and students should problems or concerns arise in a particular placement.



*School of*  
**Social Work**  
**Field Education Program**

**MSW Field Guide**

LINK FOR FORMS, LEARNING CONTRACTS, AND SYLLABI THAT CORRESPOND WITH THIS SECTION

## Field Education FAQs

**All Field Information will be communicated via email using the [crimson.ua.edu](mailto:crimson.ua.edu) address. In addition, the Field Office uses database systems for the application process (SWIS) and interactive field forms (IPT). You are responsible for all field information sent to these locations.**

What is Field Placement?

Field placement provides students the opportunity to integrate the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the classroom setting with the practical experiences that are provided at the agency. Field placement, also called Practicum, is a required course in the foundation and advanced curriculums.

It is important for students to understand that Field is a class and should be treated as such. In addition to successfully registering for the correct course sequence, students also need to prepare for the incidental cost(s) of this sequence. Possible costs outside of tuition include travel (gas and mileage); fingerprinting and background checks; and drug screens, as well as vaccinations and health screenings.

How do I Complete Field Placement?

Students' curricular plans determine when they will complete field placement(s). Both foundation (1<sup>st</sup>-year) and concentration (2<sup>nd</sup>-year and advanced standing) students complete 500 hours of practicum during each field placement/course.

What is the Field Placement Process?

Students are required to submit an application for field placement to start the field placement process. More information will be provided in the acceptance letter, through orientations, virtual training modules, and email communication from the Field Program Office. It is extremely important that you pay attention to all emails received from the Field Office as this is the primary form of communication used to relay essential Field requirements.

The Field Education Program will meet across semesters to make placement decisions. Student applications and resumes are reviewed. The team will match students with field agencies based on prior work and internship experience, geographic location, field of practice preference, field placement availability, and in some cases, faculty recommendations.

Many students ask the question: Can I ensure that I get my first placement choice? Slot availability changes rapidly. Slots open and close throughout any given week due to changes in agencies. Foundation students are assigned by field faculty to agencies that provide generalist practice with little input from students. For concentration practicum, however, the Field Office makes every effort to place students in their preferred agencies, but cannot make guarantees because of the rapidly changing human service environment. In both cases the goal is to achieve "a goodness of fit" with the match.

Once the student is slotted for an agency, the agency is sent the student's contact information, educational goals, resume, and suitability letter/background check by email. The student is also sent an e-mail instructing them to schedule a placement interview. **It is the student's responsibility to contact the agency to introduce themselves and to schedule the**

**confirmation interview within 72 hours of receiving notice.** The confirmation interview does not guarantee a student a field placement slot. The student must interview with each assigned agency and demonstrate professional comportment in treating this process like a job interview.

Although a student may decline one placement following successful completion of an interview, they may only do so in consultation with the Field Education Program. Should an agency, however, choose to reject a student following an interview based on comportment issues, that student's entry into field may be delayed until the next approved placement period.

**Can I complete field placement at my current place of employment?**

Students who have been employed with a human service agency for at least one year at the time of application may request a work-site field placement. As work-site placements are complex, we ask that you please carefully consult the **work-site placement policy** for additional information.

**Can my placement be arranged for evening and/or weekend hours?**

The Field Education Program cannot place based on the variable of weekend or evening hours as most agencies do not have adequate professional supervision available after traditional business hours. Students must plan to be available for field placement during regular business hours. Students working full time should begin this planning well in advance to balance work, class, and personal commitments.

For additional information regarding placement scheduling, please consult the **Placement Schedule Policy and Variable hour/ Extended Field Education Placements Policy for additional information.**

**Can my field placement be located where I am living?**

The Field Education Program cannot guarantee a practicum placement in the town in which you are living. We will make every effort to place you close to home; however, the Field Office priority is making an educationally sound placement. Students need to be prepared to drive at least 60 miles away from their home to accommodate placement. The Field Education Program also gets requests for placements in bordering states. It is expected that on-campus students will be placed in the Tuscaloosa/Birmingham area.

**Can students set up their own practicum?**

Students within the State of Alabama should not contact any agency to set up or inquire about practicum placements. The Office of Field Instruction has a list of approved agencies that meet CSWE requirements. Each year the field education coordinator makes new site visits and adds new agencies to the existing list. For students located outside the state of Alabama, the Field Education Program will provide further information regarding the completion of the Placement Exploration Tool (PET Forms). This form is designed for students and the Field Education Program to work collaboratively through the placement process to identify potential placement sites.

### **I need to work while enrolled in School. How much time should I reserve for field work each term?**

The foundation and concentration practicum each require 500 hours for each semester. Students must be prepared to meet these requirements. The Field Education Program will attempt to work with students to complement their work requirements, but, in no way will the educational objectives of field experience be compromised. Students can apply for two variable credit courses (4.5 hours each) which allows them to complete their field placement in two semesters by completing fewer field hours each week.

MSW field placements require 500 hours for each placement. The hours spend in field each week will depend on your program of study. Bear Plan cohort students complete a block placement of 32-40 hour per week in field during the spring semester. Students can apply for two variable credit courses (4.5 hours each) which allows them to complete their field placement over the spring and summer semesters by completing fewer field hours each week. Elephant Plan cohort students complete 20 hours per week of field during their placements.

### **Can I be placed in two different agencies?**

Foundation students will be placed in one agency for their first field placement. Students will generally be placed in a different agency for their concentration year placement.

### **What agencies offer stipends to students?**

While the Field Education Program strongly encourages agencies to offer stipends, the agencies that do so vary and the decision is entirely up to the agency. Stipend amounts also vary, but are usually quite small. Sometimes agencies offer stipends depending upon the amount of time the student can give to the agency, or to make the placement more attractive to students. Agencies may receive grants that allow the agency to give the student a small amount of funds. There are some specialized grants such as the child welfare grant and the juvenile justice grant that have specific stipulations. Students can discuss stipend availability at their placement interviews or with the Field Education Program.

Do students need to have a car?

Students are responsible for securing transportation to their field placements regardless of location. As there is limited public transportation in Alabama, students must have access to transportation to reach their field placements. It is to the student's advantage to have a personal

vehicle. Many of our local communities are small and have few resources for field placements; therefore, not having a personal vehicle will severely limit the field placement options.

Many field placements offer services that are community-based and the majority of fieldwork sites require the use of a vehicle for field work. This means that many field placements require students to have a car to perform field related tasks such as transporting clients, community outreach, home visits, community work, attending meetings, etc. When using a personal vehicle for required educational training that is authorized by the University, the student's personal automobile liability insurance is considered primary. Agencies are expected to reimburse students for mileage incurred when conducting agency business (not travel between the agency and the student's residence). However, students should inquire about this policy during the interview.

Do students need insurance?

The University of Alabama carries a blanket professional liability insurance policy for students. Coverage is limited to \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000. It is recommended that students also carry an automobile insurance policy if they will be using their car to carry out agency assignments (see above).

## Applying for MSW Field

1. Specific instructions for applying for placements will be explained during orientation to the MSW program. Students will also receive email communication from the Field Program email account with information about applying for field. Students should pay careful attention to their Crimson email accounts as the Field Education Program utilizes this form of communication often to share information, updates, and reminders. Students applying for practicum must have completed the prerequisites for the practicum in which they are applying. For further information on prerequisites please check the MSW Student Handbook.
2. MSW students must complete a background check before they enter their field placement. Students must have a letter of suitability on file to begin field.
3. MSW students must complete a Practicum Application in SWIS. Applications are available at the following link: [https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX\\_PROD/f?p=221](https://ssb.ua.edu/pls/APEX_PROD/f?p=221) SWIS is only open at certain times throughout the year for the application process. Please watch for emails from the Field Office email account alerting you to these dates.
4. MSW students will be assigned a field placement site before they enter field.
5. The Field Coordinator will initiate placement meetings across semesters using a holistic perspective. Not only do we consider input from students, but we also consult with faculty, advisors, and the Field Committee.
6. Students in the State of Alabama may not engage in direct contact (by telephone or in person) with agencies or field instructors PRIOR to being assigned to a practicum. For students located outside the State of Alabama, the Field Program will provide a Placement Exploration Tool (PET Form) to help establish potential field placement sites.
7. For all students in placement, a “goodness of fit” is extremely important between the student and the agency. In the event that an agency placement interview raises serious questions from either the student’s or agency’s perspective, the student should contact their assigned field coordinator to discuss their concerns and make a plan for next steps.
8. The Field Education Program will provide instructions for contacting the assigned agency. Students must make an initial contact with the agency within 72 hours. Students must attend a confirmation interview with the Field Instructor in the agency. Students are allowed to turn down their initial field placement. If more than one agency turns down a student for field placement the student may not be placed in field without a field staffing that includes both the field coordinator and the MSW Program Chair. Please note that in order to turn down an



agency the student MUST attend the confirmation interview. In addition, the student should contact their assigned Field Coordinator before they decline agency.

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•  
• IMPORTANT: STUDENTS MUST HAVE A LETTER OF SUITABILITY  
• FROM THEIR BACKGROUND CHECK BEFORE ENTERING FIELD.  
• FAILURE TO HAVE THIS ON FILE WILL DELAY A STUDENT'S  
• ENTRY INTO PRACTICUM. THIS IS A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
• POLICY.  
•  
.....

### **Summary of Field Instructor Responsibilities**

1. Students will be assigned to MSW Field agencies. You will be sent a copy of the student's educational goals and a resume by the Field Education Program. The student will be instructed to contact you regarding a Confirmation Interview to determine the appropriateness of the placement.
2. Depending on the outcome of the interview, you may accept or decline the student for placement. It is appropriate to let the student know of the outcome at the time of the interview, or if you prefer, contact the field coordinator who will convey your decision to the student. At the time of the interview it is helpful to discuss hour expectations, times at which the student must be in field, etc., in order to assess the feasibility of the placement. It is also helpful to determine the exact start-up date for the student to begin the practicum. The field coordinator and faculty liaison will work with each of you to construct possible learning tasks related to the curriculum that are appropriate for MSW students prior to the actual placement. Frequently during the confirmation interview, other areas of student interest emerge, and additional assignments are discussed. A formal learning contract should be constructed and signed off on by the field instructor, student, and faculty liaison by the third week of the semester. A copy of a blank learning contract is included at the end of each course outline, which reflects the competencies for field.
3. Meet with student early in the semester to discuss student's learning contract for semester. This contract will define student and agency expectations for the semester and will define actual student tasks and assignments. Learning contracts must be signed by the student, the field instructor, and the faculty liaison. Think through the types of assignments that will facilitate the student's meeting competencies for either SW 590 (1<sup>st</sup> year) or SW 595 (2<sup>nd</sup> year and Advanced Standing), reflecting the appropriate concentration--Children, Adolescents, and Their Families (CAF) or Adults and Their Families (AF)--for SW 595 students. The Faculty Liaison will assist in this process.

4. The MSW Field placement is guided by either the SW 590 course outline/learning contract (1<sup>st</sup> year) or SW 595 (2<sup>nd</sup> year and Advanced Standing) reflecting the appropriate concentration (CAF or AF) for SW 595 students. Midterm evaluation and final evaluations are included in the Learning Contract. Orientation and advanced workshops are offered to field instructors both online and face to face. You will receive ongoing information about how to access workshops. Each student in SW 590 and SW 591 will be assigned to a Field Seminar Instructor as well as a seminar group. The students will remain with that Instructor/group for the entire MSW I field placement.
5. You will be asked to evaluate the student using the learning contract. Based on your overall evaluation, you will be asked to complete a mid-term grade and a final grade recommending the student's overall performance. The mid-term grade is particularly important because of the student's need for performance feedback early in the practicum. Any problems, concerns, or marginal performance noted can be identified. You will recommend the grade and the faculty liaison will assist you in the process and ultimately grade the student. You, the student, and the faculty liaison will sign off on the learning contract.
6. Please call the field coordinator or your faculty liaison with any questions or concerns about the placement.
7. Also, at end of the semester the field Instructor and the student will be asked to complete a series of MSW Evaluation Forms which ask for an evaluation of the practicum.
8. Faculty liaisons will be asked to conduct at least two visits to the placement agency during the placement. For sites that are geographically distant, instructors have the option of conducting these visits via telephone conference call or through a virtual platform (Zoom). For all sites, regular contact by telephone and e-mail are essential for educational monitoring. At the beginning of each placement, faculty liaisons will secure the e-mail addresses of students enrolled in their practicum and will construct an e-mail listserv of all foundation students and field instructors in order to communicate regularly with practicum participants.

To further ensure educational monitoring, field instructors should attend field instructional training meetings. Additionally, as field instructors generally are on campus for these events, meetings can be arranged among the field instructors, faculty liaisons and, students, should problems or concerns arise in a particular placement.

## **The University of Alabama Harassment Policy**

### **I. Statement of Policy**

#### **A. Harassment Is Not Tolerated**

The University of Alabama is committed to providing an environment for employees, students, and campus visitors that is free from illegal harassment based on genetic information, race, color, religion, national origin, sex (which includes sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression), age, disability or veteran status in admission or access to, or treatment of employment in, its programs and services. Such illegal harassment violates federal civil rights laws and University nondiscrimination policy and may lead to personal liability for the results of such behavior.

The University of Alabama is committed to providing and promoting an atmosphere in which employees can realize their maximum potential in the workplace and students can engage fully in the learning process. Toward this end, all members of the University community (including faculty, staff and students) must understand that harassment based upon one's protected status as identified above will not be tolerated, and that they are required to abide by the following policy. The University will take appropriate action to prevent, correct, and where warranted, discipline behavior that violates its Harassment Policy.

The University implements its Harassment Policy through preventive education and training and through procedures for investigating and resolving claims of harassment. Employees and students are encouraged to participate in training programs, which are offered by a variety of departments and divisions, including the Department of Human Resources. Individuals who believe they are being harassed are encouraged to report the problem to appropriate administrative officials. Information about appropriate complaint channels and the procedures for resolution of claims of harassment follows and can also be obtained from the Deans' Offices, the Vice Presidents' Offices, the Department of Human Resources, or the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

## **B. Retaliation Is Not Tolerated**

The University encourages students, faculty, and staff to express freely, responsibly, and in an orderly way opinions and feelings about any problem or complaint of harassment. Retaliation against persons who oppose or complain about harassment is strictly prohibited. Retaliation is any action that has the effect of punishing a person for engaging in a legally protected activity, such as alleging harassment, making a harassment complaint, or assisting in a harassment investigation. Examples of retaliatory adverse employment actions include suspension, demotion, or termination. In addition, this policy prohibits retaliation in the form of harassment, intimidation, threats, or coercion, or in the form of any materially adverse harm that would dissuade a reasonable student or employee from filing a harassment complaint or participating in a harassment investigation.

An employee/student is protected against retaliation for his or her opposition to harassment as long as the employee/student has a reasonable and "good faith" belief that the complained of conduct is illegal, even if it turns out that the complainant was mistaken as to the legality of the conduct. It is a violation of the University's policy to retaliate against the complainant(s), respondent(s), witnesses or others involved in the review of such complaints. Any employee who retaliates against an employee or a student in violation of the law and/or the University's Harassment policy is subject to disciplinary action.

This Harassment policy shall not, however, be used to bring frivolous or malicious complaints against students, faculty or other employees. If a complaint has been made in bad faith, as

demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence, disciplinary action may be taken against the person bringing the complaint.

## II. Factors Considered in Determining Existence of Harassment

### A. Definition of Harassment

Harassment is abusive or hostile conduct which is directed toward or inflicted upon another person because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran's status and which, because of its severity or pervasiveness, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates a hostile or abusive work or learning environment for that individual's work, education, or participation in a University activity. Harassment is typically based on stereotyped prejudices and includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, objectionable epithets, or other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct that demeans, insults, or intimidates an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran status.

### B. Sexual Harassment Defined

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of employment or academic advancement; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance as an employee or student or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

### C. Factors Considered in Assessing Whether Harassment Exists

In determining whether conduct constitutes prohibited harassment, the following understandings shall apply:

1. Harassment must be distinguished from behavior which, even though unpleasant or uncomfortable, is appropriate to the carrying out of instructional or supervisory responsibilities (e.g., criticism of work, corrective discipline, performance evaluation; discussion of controversial topics germane to an academic subject);
2. The totality of the circumstances must be evaluated to determine whether a particular act or course of conduct constitutes harassment, including the frequency, severity, and context of the questioned conduct and whether the conduct was physically threatening and humiliating or a mere utterance;
3. The conduct alleged to be harassment will be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable person in a similar situation and not simply the particular sensitivity or reaction of an individual;
4. An isolated incident of hostile behavior, although offensive, usually will not be sufficient to establish a claim of illegal harassment. For example, generally, a single sexual joke,

offensive epithet, or request for a date does not constitute sexual harassment; however, being subjected to such jokes, epithets or requests repeatedly may constitute sexual harassment. However, administrators and supervisors should take corrective action when such isolated incidents occur, in order to ensure that repetition of that or similar conduct does not rise to the level of illegal harassment; and

5. Although repeated incidents of hostile conduct generally create a stronger claim of harassment, a serious incident, even if isolated, may be sufficient.

#### **D. Academic Freedom and Harassment**

In cases of alleged illegal harassment, the protections of the First Amendment must be considered if issues of speech or artistic expression are involved. Free speech rights apply in the classroom and in all other education programs and activities of public institutions, and First Amendment rights apply to the speech of students and teachers. Great care must be taken not to inhibit open discussion, academic debate, and expression of personal opinion, particularly in the classroom. Nonetheless, speech or conduct of a harassing, sexual or hostile nature ;which occurs in the context of educational instruction may exceed the protections of academic freedom and constitute prohibited harassment if it meets the definition of harassment noted above and 1) is reasonably regarded as non-professorial speech (i.e., advances a personal interest of the faculty member as opposed to furthering the learning process or legitimate objectives of the course), or 2) lacks accepted pedagogical purpose or is not germane to the academic subject matter.

### **III. Reporting of Harassment or Related Retaliation Allegations**

#### **A. Prompt Reporting Required**

Persons who believe they have been targets of harassment or related retaliation should report the incident(s) immediately to appropriate administrative officials as set forth below. Delay in reporting to these university officials makes it more difficult to investigate fairly and adequately the incident and may contribute to the repetition of offensive behavior.

#### **B. Confidentiality**

The University will do everything consistent with enforcement of this policy and with the law to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure that the complainant and the accused are treated fairly. Information about individual complaints and their disposition is considered confidential and will be shared only on a “need to know” basis.

#### **C. Reporting Channels**

The following sections identify appropriate harassment resource persons and complaint-receiving officials that students and employees should contact regarding illegal harassment and/or retaliation for complaining or participating in a complaint or investigation.

##### **1. Responsibilities of Supervisory Personnel**

All members of the university community have a general responsibility to contribute in a positive way to a university environment that is free of illegal harassment. Supervisory personnel, however, have additional responsibilities. Supervisory personnel are not only

responsible for educating and sensitizing employees in their units about harassment issues, but they are also directed to take all appropriate steps to prevent and stop harassment in their areas of responsibility, which may include training. Supervisory personnel who are contacted by an individual seeking to file a complaint about harassment in their unit or area of responsibility shall assist the complainant in contacting the appropriate complaint-receiving officials identified below.

## **2. Student Complaints**

Students with complaints of harassment against faculty members, graduate assistants or other student employees, and staff members in departments, schools, or colleges should contact the designated Harassment Resource Person in their department, school or college or in the department, school or college in which the alleged offender is employed. A faculty member to whom a student has come with a complaint of harassment should recommend that the student contact the designated Harassment Resource Person. The name and location of the designated Harassment Resource Person can be obtained online from the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs website or from the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

Students participating in internships, field placements, student teaching, or similar academic experiences in settings off campus should report complaints of harassment arising out of those placements to the University faculty or staff member providing supervision or to the designated Harassment Resource Person in their college or school.

Students with complaints of harassment against other students should be addressed to the Student Affairs designated Harassment Resource Person(s).

Students who believe for any reason that they cannot effectively communicate their concern through any of these channels may consult the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, or if conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer, students may consult with the Office of the Provost.

Students who believe they are targets of sexual assault or sexual harassment may seek advice and referral from both the Women's Resource Center and the Counseling Center. These offices keep all information confidential and neither receive formal complaints nor conduct investigations. The Counseling Center is also available to students for assistance on a wide range of issues.

## **3. Employee Complaints**

Employees should report complaints of harassment to the designated Harassment Resource Person for the college, school, or administrative unit in which they are employed or to the Department of Human Resources. Employees who believe for any reason that they cannot effectively communicate their concerns through any of these channels may consult the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, or if conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer,

employees may consult with the Office of the Provost.

Employees who believe they are targets of sexual assault or sexual harassment may seek advice and referral from the Women's Resource Center. The Women's Resource Center keeps all information confidential and neither receives formal complaints nor conducts investigations.

#### **D. Procedures for Handling Complaints of Harassment**

Individuals who believe they are targets of unlawful harassment in their working or academic environments are encouraged to respond to the alleged harasser directly, by objecting and by requesting that the unwelcome behavior stop. Individuals may also seek assistance or intervention, short of filing a complaint, from their supervisor or University complaint-receiving officials referenced in paragraphs C (2) and (3) above.

An initial discussion between the complainant and the complaint-receiving official will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law, with no formal written record. The complaint-receiving official will explain the options available and will counsel the complainant. If the complainant, after an initial meeting with the complaint-receiving official, decides to proceed, the complainant will be requested to provide a written statement describing the complaint.

Complaints of harassment will receive prompt attention. Complaints may be resolved through the informal or formal procedures described below, and appropriate action will be taken. Informal means are encouraged as the beginning point, but the choice of where to begin normally rests with the complainant. However, if the complaint-receiving official believes that the matter is sufficiently grave because it seems to be part of a persistent pattern, because of the nature of the alleged offense, or because the complainant seeks to have a sanction imposed, then the complaint-receiving official will initiate a formal procedure, or take other appropriate action.

##### **1. Informal Procedures**

- a) The complainant may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the alleged offender and report back to the complaint-receiving official.
- b) The complaint-receiving official may notify the alleged offender of the complaint, paying appropriate attention to the need to maintain confidentiality. The complaint-receiving official may take whatever steps short of disciplinary sanctions that he or she deems appropriate to effect an informal resolution acceptable to both parties.
- c) Where the alleged offender is a student, the complainant and accused may choose to participate in mediation. If a complaint is resolved informally, no record of the complaint will be entered in the alleged offender's personnel file or student records. However, the complaint-receiving official will, in the form of a confidential file memorandum, record the fact of the complaint and the resolution achieved. A copy of this memorandum will be forwarded to the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs where it will be retained in confidential files.

##### **2. Formal Procedures**

In formal resolution procedures, the written and signed complaint will be directed to the following officials:

- a) If the complaint is against a faculty member, other instructional personnel, or staff employed in a college or school, it should be directed to the dean of the college/school.
- b) If the complaint is against a staff member in a unit other than a college or school, it should be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.
- c) If the complaint is against a student, not acting in an instructional or other employment capacity, it should be directed to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- d) If the complaint is against a person outside the University (non-employee, non-student), it should be directed to the dean of the college or school if the behavior is occurring in a college or school, to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs if the behavior is occurring in the work environment outside an academic unit, or to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs if the complainant is a student.
- e) If conflicts or other problems exist with the dean or the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs handling the complaint, the complaint may be filed with the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs. If conflicts exist with the University Compliance Officer, individuals may consult with the Office of the Provost.

The officials listed directly above, or their appointed designees, will conduct a prompt and appropriate investigation, conducting whatever inquiry they deem necessary, and will arrange conferences with the complainant, the alleged offender, and any other appropriate persons. The investigation, subject to the confidentiality provision above, will afford the accused an opportunity to respond to the allegations. Those directing investigations will make a record of the case, including a record of their decision and any sanctions imposed. Those records are to be retained for at least four years after the individual leaves the University employment. The officials conducting the inquiry shall forward to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (i) a copy of the complaint, (ii) the decision made regarding the complaint, and (iii) any resolution achieved, including any sanctions imposed, which will be retained in that office's confidential files. The complainant and the alleged offender will be notified whether the investigation results in a finding of a policy violation; however, that information should be treated by both parties as confidential and private. (Mandating harassment training is not to be considered a "sanction").

A complainant not satisfied with the resolution achieved by the formal procedures may discuss the matter further with the University Compliance Officer in the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs.

### **E. Disciplinary Sanctions**

A conclusion that harassment in violation of University policy or the law has occurred shall subject the offender to appropriate disciplinary action and may result in suspension, discharge, expulsion or dismissal. University disciplinary procedures and possible sanctions are described in the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook, the Staff Handbook and Policy



Manual, and the Faculty Handbook. Sanctions imposed will be determined on the basis of the facts of each case and the extent of harm to the University's interests.