

Fall 2021 Admissions FAQs from Virtual Information Sessions

Admissions Advising Questions

How do I get in touch with an admissions advisor? Can I make an appointment for individual advising?

To request an individual admission advising appointment, please send an email to swadm@berkeley.edu. Please be aware that the current remote work situation is creating longer than usual delays in our ability to respond; rest assured we are working to respond to requests as quickly as we can. We are also working to create additional opportunities including Virtual Office Hours, and Virtual Application Q&A Workshops. Details for accessing these advising opportunities will be posted here as they become available: [Admissions Advising and Recruiting](#).

Is there a student ambassador program to get in touch with current students?

Because of the increased demand on students presented by the current remote learning environment, our student outreach efforts are currently inactive. We are exploring alternatives for connecting with students, and if they become available we will post details on our [Admissions Advising and Recruiting](#) website.

Admissions Eligibility Questions

Is the GRE required?

The GRE is not required for admission to the MSW program.

Regarding the statistics course [requirement], if I'm taking an online course that ends on December 18 and the application deadline is December 1st, do I need to prove that I am enrolled in the course or do I send in the credits once they are obtained?

You don't need to submit proof of enrollment. There is a question on the "Social Welfare Program" page of the online application where you can indicate how you are satisfying the statistics course eligibility requirement.

Can the intro course in statistics be taken upon acceptance and prior to matriculation, or is it required to apply?

You must have completed the statistics course requirement by the time you begin your first semester of graduate study if you are admitted.

If there's no statute of limitations on the stats class, should you retake the stats class if you got below a C in the class?

If you received credit for the class, there is no need to repeat it regardless of your grade.

Do research methods courses still count for the statistics requirement?

Only if the course content focused primarily (i.e., >50%) on statistics and statistical

methods.

How recent do your undergraduate credits have to be? Within last 5 years, 10 years, etc.

There is no time limit or expiration window for your undergraduate degree conferral to be considered eligible for admission to graduate study. The only exception is if you are eligible to apply for the [FlexMSW Advanced Standing](#) program, which requires a professional baccalaureate (BSW) degree within the past five years.

- **I have recently graduated and want to take some psych classes at a community college. Will taking classes at a community college effect my GPA?**
- **For the GPA, does post courses at Community College count after we've graduated with a BA?**
- **In order to increase the GPA, would it be possible to add the score of GPA received by Post-Baccalaureate Program at UC Berkeley Extension when I apply?**

While post-baccalaureate coursework (including community college and extension programs) may be an indicator of your potential for academic success, it is not included in the advanced GPA calculation for admission eligibility.

The first two years of undergraduate are not counted in the GPA?

Correct. The GPA used for determining admission eligibility is calculated on all coursework taken AFTER the first two years of undergraduate study.

How do you calculate the last two years GPA?

We require that you include all grades for coursework undertaken after the first two years of study, not just grades for subjects taken in the major or grades which seem relevant to your proposed program of graduate study. The Graduate School of Education provides a [GPA Calculator Worksheet](#) you can use to calculate your advanced GPA. Please note **you do NOT have to include the worksheet in your online application** to Social Welfare.

How would you count the classes that you took as pass/no pass (during your last 2 years of undergrad), and ended up passing? Would those count towards GPA at all?

Typically, that will depend on how your degree-granting institution treated pass/no pass credits in their GPA calculation. For this reason it is especially important that you be sure to include the transcript legend (the back page in most cases) for each transcript you upload to your admissions application.

I have a Bachelor (2014) in civil engineer from Greece and an Associate Degree (2020) in Psychology from a community college in the US. Does my GPA count only from Bachelor's Degree?

Yes, that is correct.

Can we still submit our GRE scores? And are there average scores of those who are admitted?

GRE scores are not required for Fall 2021 admission. The application system will still allow you to submit test scores, but they will not be reviewed or considered as part of the application review process.

Can you apply for the flex programs without a BSW?

You can only apply to the [FlexMSW Extended Program](#) option if you don't have a professional BSW degree from an accredited program. You must have an accredited BSW to apply to the [FlexMSW Advanced Standing](#) program.

As a working professional without a BSW, can you apply for a part time program, where you can have evening and weekend classes with field placement at your place of employment?

Yes, you can apply to the [FlexMSW Extended Program](#) option.

I have a BSW and have been working in the field, but received this degree 6 years ago (by the time of admissions). Would I still be eligible for the FlexMSW Advanced Standing program?

In general, we measure the five-year window from the time you received your degree to the time of application to our program (not by the time you would be starting the program if you are admitted. If you are within that five-year window, or just slightly beyond it, then you would be eligible to apply for the FlexMSW Advanced Standing Program.

Regarding TOEFL, I'm Japanese living in the US as a resident (graduated from Japanese college). Currently I'm taking Post-Baccalaureate Program at UC Berkeley Extension. Should I still have to submit TOEFL score?

It depends on the nature and duration of your post-baccalaureate program. You will need to submit evidence of English language proficiency if you have not completed at least **one year of full-time academic course work with a grade B or better** at a regionally accredited institution within the United States. For more information about this requirement, please see [Evidence of English Language Proficiency](#). If you have questions, please address them to the Graduate Admissions Office at gradadm@berkeley.edu.

Application-related Questions

How soon would you know if you have been accepted? What is the timeline for hearing about an admissions decision?

All applicants will be notified of decisions by March 1. Timing of notifications may vary between degree programs and specialization areas.

Are admissions [on a] rolling basis?

No, we do not conduct rolling admissions. All applications submitted by the deadline

are reviewed on the same review process timeline (December-February).

Is it beneficial to apply early or are applications reviewed only after the application deadline?

We only begin reviewing applications after the submission deadline. We do recommend starting your application early so you have plenty of time to double-check everything before you click “Submit” and pay the application fee.

Is it possible to apply for an application fee waiver?

The application fee is paid directly to Berkeley Graduate Admissions. For information from Berkeley Graduate Admissions regarding eligibility for an application fee waiver, please see [Requesting an Application Fee Waiver](#).

Do you take only official transcripts?

Unofficial copies are acceptable for the graduate admissions application, if they meet all the requirements outlined in the “Transcripts” tab on our [MSW Admissions Application Instructions](#) web page. Official copies of transcripts will be requested by the Graduate Division for all applicants who are admitted to and matriculate at Berkeley.

Are interviews part of the application process?

No. Eligible applicants who include a supplemental application for the [Child Welfare Scholars \(CWS\)](#) stipend-based training program in their online admissions application are invited to a panel interview with Berkeley MSW Program faculty and county child welfare agency representatives as part of the selection process for the CWS stipend program, but this is a separate process from admission.

Should you name your specialization in your statement of purpose, other than in your application? Should you use in text citation/works cited in your SOP?

You should refer to your chosen specialization in the context of your desired professional career goals when crafting your Statement of Purpose. If you choose to cite any references in your written statements, you should follow general APA guidelines for however you wish to include citations.

Can you apply to the MPH program first and then apply for the MSW program in the first year of study?

Yes, you could apply to the [Concurrent MSW/MPH Degree Program](#) in your first fall semester of graduate study.

If you apply to the MSW/MPP concurrent degree program, are you also considered for just a full-time MSW? Or can you only apply to one?

Although you can only apply to one degree program option at a time, there is a question on the Program Page of the online application that will allow you to indicate if you wish to be considered for EITHER the MSW or MPP if you are not admitted to the Concurrent Degree Program.

COVID-related Questions

What is Berkeley's plan for the MSW program if social distancing regulations continue as strict as now?

We will continue to follow guidance from our campus leadership, and state and local health authorities. As of now, we continue to prioritize a hybrid model for field internships, which include various combinations of both in-person and remote field opportunities for MSW students. We encourage all applicants to keep up with Berkeley's planning and decision-making by monitoring the campus [Coronavirus Information Hub](#).

Due to COVID, do you accept defer requests? If not, is it possible to take the beginning of the program virtually until the field placements begin/until COVID is over?

We do not accept requests for deferred admission; offers of admission are valid only for the year they are made. Successful applicants who accept an offer of admission and then must later decline or withdraw must reapply in a future admissions cycle. For current information regarding instruction in the COVID-19 environment, please see the campus [Coronavirus Information Hub](#). For details on how field education is currently working, you can also read the [Guide to Field Education for MSW Students > Field Educational Principles and Policies Related to Safety and COVID-19](#).

Experience Requirement-related Questions

- **In terms of work experience, if there is something that's not clearly defined by either the 'list of relevant work experience' or 'list of work experience not considered relevant' is it up to us to make a case for it, or could we ask an admissions advisor what they think of our work experience before applying?**
- **Does being a caregiver count as experience?**
- **Teacher is listed on the website list, would a Sunday school type teacher or a volunteer for a teacher/classroom count?**
- **Would a tutor count if the position was based around helping underserved, low-income high school students with their graduation goals?**
- **Is experience done prior to graduating from college less desirable?**
- **I saw that "working only with other college students in a peer capacity" doesn't count as work experience. Does that mean working as a peer mentor in a support program that serves vulnerable communities not count?**
- **Does being a Client Services Coordinator at a mental health practice (mostly admin and front desk work) count towards experience?**

In the interest of maintaining an equitable review process amid a very high volume of applicants, we are unable to provide subjective feedback to individual applicants regarding the experience requirement. **For all the above questions**, the primary point is that you should aim to provide as much information about the quality of all the experience you choose to include on your resume you submit with your application. We are looking for:

- Experience completed AFTER you have received your bachelor's degree, and by the time of application to our program (typically considered the December 1 application deadline).
- Experience that includes direct interactions with vulnerable or underserved clients and communities.

Can internships count?

Yes, although keep in mind as noted in the previous answer that we are looking for experience that has been acquired post-baccalaureate degree.

- **How new/recent should our volunteer experience be?**
- **For the required direct service experience hours, does it matter how recent those hours are? I will have some hours from this year, but most of them will be from a few years ago.**

No, it doesn't matter how recently you have satisfied this requirement.

Is there a time limit for 2100 hours? Like, not earlier than 2017?

No. The only time parameters for the experience requirements are 1) completed after the bachelor's degree; and 2) completed by the time of application to our program.

Is it okay to have a few spontaneous one-time volunteer opportunities or should we instead focus on long-term experience?

It is certainly okay to have several spontaneous/one-time experience opportunities that contribute towards the minimum total hours requirement. Since successful experience in the human services field provides a good test of commitment and aptitude, experience that is sustained over time may also make an application more competitive.

Must [the] 2100 hours be completed in a year?

No, you can include experience completed at anytime post-baccalaureate degree in the 2,100 total.

How do you provide evidence or proof of your full-time/volunteer hour requirement?

How would one show proof of hours?

You indicate how you have satisfied the experience requirement by submitting your resume with a complete listing of your experience, including the total hours earned for each experience. For more information and sample resumes, please see [Experience and Résumé Guidelines for MSW Applicants](#).

If your volunteer hours were changing per week (4 hours per week up to 16 hours per week), how would you describe that? Can you estimate the total hours?

Yes, you can estimate total hours. For examples, please see the resume templates posted here: [Experience and Résumé Guidelines for MSW Applicants](#).

Where is the list of examples of experience that is likely to count?

Visit [Experience and Résumé Guidelines for MSW Applicants](#).

- **I don't have the [required experience] hours since I will be finishing up my undergrad in Spring 2021 and never had a full-time job. Does it mean I won't be able to apply?**
- **What if you plan to acquire this during this application year, but do not have it at the time of application?**
- **What if you plan to get a lot of experience during this year (so in the months post the application in December - going into the program)?**

Not having the required experience hours will not make you ineligible to apply. However, keep in mind that Berkeley is a highly competitive program, and it is true that, in general, the most competitive applicants are typically those who most fully meet each [admission eligibility requirement](#) by the time of application to the program.

If you have significantly less than 2,100 hours with a vulnerable community should you still apply?

See above answer.

Is the 2100-hour requirement based on when you apply to the program or by the time you would be attending the program?

The expectation is that you will have satisfied the experience requirement by the December 1 application deadline.

For the 2,100 hours, can experiences from years ago count (i.e. high school volunteer experiences that were regular commitments that informed one's decision to pursue social work)?

You can certainly include such experience; however, to satisfy the experience requirement for admission eligibility, the experience must have been completed after receiving your bachelor's degree.

Is the total hour requirement for the SOC specialization 4200 hours?

Yes (equivalent of two years paid and/or volunteer experience).

If you start volunteer work during the months of October/November and plan on continuing it during the year can you include it on the resume?

Yes; however, only the hours completed by the application deadline will be considered when determining satisfaction of the experience requirement for admission eligibility purposes.

Field Placement Questions

- **How are field/internship placements determined?**
- **Does the school have to select/approve the field placement or do/can we find our own?**

- **What is the process of matching students with organizations for field placements?**
- **Where are students typically completing internship hours and do you partner with any organizations to help with the internship placement process?**
- **Does field work need to match with your specialization?**

First-year field placements are determined through an interactive process between the student and their assigned field instructor. Students are individually guided to the best available placements following an extensive individualized assessment. For **second-year field placements**, students select from a set of agencies preapproved for their specialization area. After completing a round of interviews, students are finalized at the agency they rank the highest where they have been accepted. For more information please see [Field Education Overview](#) and the [Guide to Field Education for MSW Students](#).

Is the field placement paid or unpaid?

Most field placements are unpaid internships, although some agencies may offer a small stipend, or participate in the federal [Work-Study Program](#).

Is it possible to be placed at a current workplace? I work at a school and have been working closely with the school social worker.

Students are permitted to be placed in an agency where they are or have been employed under certain circumstances usually related to the agency being able to provide substantial new learning related to identified competencies. For more information please see [Guide to Field Education for MSW Students > Field Placement in an Employing Agency](#).

Financial Assistance Questions

- **Are there any funding opportunities?**
- **Are there Berkeley merit/need based scholarships that are given out?**

Yes! Please check out the [Departmental Fellowships](#) section in our online guide to [Financing Your Graduate Degree](#). The guide also has links to Graduate Division fellowship programs, as well as external fellowship awards.

Is there a separate application for merit scholarships/fellowships? Or is it automatic consideration upon initial application?

All applicants to graduate study at Berkeley Social Welfare are automatically considered for all available fellowship awards during the admissions review process; an additional fellowship application is not required. To ensure consideration for all possible awards, all applicants to graduate study should complete the "Economic Background" section of the online Graduate and Professional Application for Admission.

You had mentioned AmeriCorps money, if you have completed an AmeriCorps program where can you apply for that money?

You should be able to access information and instructions through your [My](#)

[AmeriCorps](#) portal.

Letters of Recommendation Questions

- For the Letters, is there a preference for professional or academic writers?
- Would having only one professional and two academic letters of recommendation be okay or do you need the two professional?
- For the academic reference, does it have to be a professor or can it be an academic counselor/advisor that can speak on one's character?
- In terms of letters of recommendation- I believe it said we need 2 professional and 1 academic- is it possible to submit 2 professional and 2 academic?
- I've been a public school teacher for 11 years. Would a fellow teacher/the union chapter leader at my school be a good reference despite not being my employer?
- During undergrad, I was a volunteer at a student led society which is all about social work. The president of the society was also a peer undergrad student. Will a reference from her work?

The **most important thing regarding recommenders** is that you choose those who can speak to your promise as a professional social worker, and attest to your potential to succeed in a rigorous graduate professional degree program. We ask for two professional references, and one academic reference. However, not having this specific mix will not make you ineligible to apply. If you don't have an academic reference, then additional professional references are absolutely acceptable.

If I was an academic intern and didn't have a professor, but instead an academic doctor who led the academic internship, would they count as the academic letter of rec?

Yes.

Can volunteer managers write letters of rec (if we don't have paid work)?

Yes.

What is the maximum of number of letters of rec?

Although there is no maximum limit, we prefer no more than five (5) Letters of Recommendation.

Program-related Questions

- **If something somehow changes in one's interests, can a student switch specializations once admitted?**
- **Is it possible to switch specializations once you are admitted to the program?**
- **Is it possible to apply for the clinical track and once we begin our studies switch to the SOC track?**

Because Berkeley Social Welfare admits students to an MSW degree program by specialization area, changing specializations is generally not allowed. In extenuating

circumstances, first-year students may petition for a change of specialization area upon consultation with their faculty adviser or field consultant; however, the ability to grant a change is not guaranteed.

Can I do an MSW "A-WELL" specialization and Public Policy Concurrent/Dual degree? It appears that there is no such option.

No, for the [Concurrent MSW/MPP Degree Program](#), you may only choose the specialization in Strengthening Organizations and Communities.

To apply for the JD concurrent program, do I have to choose a specific track of social work to apply for it?

Yes, you would choose a specialization area for the MSW Program just as you would for an MSW-only degree program application.

Where could I find more information about the MSW/JD program?

Please see [Concurrent Degree in Law \(MSW/JD\)](#) (Berkeley Social Welfare) and [Concurrent Degree Programs](#) (Berkeley Law).

Are minors available to do with MSW?

No, minors are only available to undergraduate students at Berkeley. Graduate students may pursue [special program options](#) such as certificate and credential preparation programs.

May I specialize in A-WELL but also apply [for the] child welfare stipend?

No, the [Child Welfare Scholars Program](#) must be completed within the specialization in [Strengthening Children, Youth and Families \(SCYF\)](#).

If I was interested in doing NICU social work, could I choose to do the strengthening children, youth, and families track? I did not see medical social worker listed on the page for that track.

Yes. The potential career opportunities listed on the specialization web pages are just a sample listing. Medical social worker opportunities do exist within settings that serve children, youth and families. For more information you may wish to review the Bureau of Labor Statistics [Occupational Outlook Handbook: Social Workers](#).

- **Is it possible to take electives from Haas while at the school of social work?**
- **Is it possible if I could take data science courses as electives?**
- **Which are the electives available to us from other schools?**
- **Can you skip some of social [welfare] electives to choose electives from other schools?**

It is possible to take elective courses outside the School of Social Welfare; however, you also still must satisfy the elective requirements for the MSW degree. Some departments may also have enrollment restrictions that could affect course availability for students from other departments. For details on the elective degree requirement, including lists of approved courses in other departments, please see the [MSW Student Handbook > MSW Degree Requirements](#).

You mentioned that MSW students spend about 50% of time in the field and 50% in class. What might an example weekly schedule look like for an MSW student?

Berkeley MSW students are typically in class three days a week, and field placement two days a week, in the first year. In the second year, students are usually in field placement three days a week, and in classes two days a week. Full-time students are expected to be available for both class and field placement Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. You can see sample plans of study on the specialization and program pages of our [Master's Degrees and Certificates](#) website, and get a feel for the class schedule by visiting the [Berkeley Academic Guide](#) (select "Class Schedule" in the green menu bar).

Are the adult lifespan and the children [specializations] both equally clinically/direct practice focused or is one more so than the other?

To get a feel for the balance of content in and between the specialization areas, review the sample plans of study on each specialization web page:

[Advancing Health and Well-being across the Adult Lifespan](#)
[Strengthening Children, Youth and Families](#)

In classes, are you usually only with others in the same specialization?

It's generally a mix of students in the first year of study, which is considered the "generalist" year. As you move into the "specialization year," you are more likely to be with more students from your specialization, particularly in the required direct practice courses. Elective courses can be a mix of students as well.

What percent of students are in each of the three specializations?

The average distribution year to year is about 50% [SCYE](#); 30% [A-WELL](#); and 20% [SOC](#).

Can you do a certification program that does not match your specialization?

Yes, except for the [School Social Work Credentials \(aka "PPSC"\) Program](#), which must be completed in the [Strengthening Children, Youth and Families \(SCYF\)](#) specialization.

I'm currently in my last year in the BSW program. I am interested in the MSW Flex Program Advanced standing. I would want to know when placements are scheduled. Is it in the summer or students go for placement in the day and attend classes in the night?

The general academic plan of study is posted on the [FlexMSW Advanced Program](#) web page. Typically, Flex Advanced Standing Students are in field placement three days a week from September to May, and in class on the evenings and some Saturdays.

What exactly is the Latino Center of Excellence?

Established in July 2017, Berkeley Social Welfare's Latinx Center of Excellence (LCOE) aims to address the shortage of Latinx students in graduate-level social work education. The LCOE's goal is to promote success among Latinx and other underrepresented social work students through enhanced training and educational opportunities in behavioral health. For more information about LCOE services and support, please visit the [Latinx Center of Excellence](#).

What is the faculty to student ratio?

The average ratio of student to faculty support is 30:1 for Instructors; 15:1 for Field Consultants; and 8:1 for Faculty Advisors.

Residency Questions

If I just moved to CA, what kind of proof is needed to be considered in-state for my first year?

For complete information about what is required to establish California residency, please visit the Registrar's [Residency for Tuition Purposes](#) website.

Social Work Career Questions

What is the rate of students who get jobs post-graduation?

Over 90% of MSW students are employed by the time they graduate or within six months of graduating.

Do MSW students get access to Handshake?

Yes! For more information check out the campus Career Center's [Handshake](#) website.

What kind of support does the program offer to graduates regarding employment opportunities/alumni relations?

All Berkeley graduate students have access to the campus [Career Center's Graduate Student and PhD Services](#). A dedicated advisor from the Career Center is also assigned to work specifically with Social Welfare students. For additional information and resources, also check out our [Social Work Careers](#) web page. The Field Education Program also maintains a Virtual Career Center that becomes available to students once they have matriculated. Berkeley Social Welfare has also recently launched a new Dean's Alumni Advisory Board.