



Berkeley Social Welfare

MSW Student Guide to Field Education

School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley

Berkeley Social Welfare

2021-22 MSW Student Guide to Field Education

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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome to Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Field Education!

Field education is often one of the most challenging, and simultaneously rewarding, parts of graduate social work education. Each year Berkeley MSW students contribute over 130,000 hours of vital support to over 150 public and nonprofit social service agencies and their vulnerable clients, while engaging in opportunities to gain and demonstrate social work practice competencies in real-world settings. Throughout the course of your field education experience, you will be trained and equipped with the knowledge of professional practices, policies, and programs required to address a wide range of contemporary societal problems. Upon graduation you will be prepared for professional practice as a master's-level social worker within your chosen specialization area(s).

About this Guide

This Guide is your primary resource and reference guide to Berkeley MSW field education requirements, policies and procedures. The Guide also sets forth the obligations that you have, not only to the School, but to the faculty and to your fellow students in terms of academic and professional conduct and ethical standards expected of all learners in field education. Everyone involved in field education - students, faculty, staff, and agency-based field instructors and field education partners, is accountable to the policies and procedures outlined in this Guide.

Your student guide to field education is meant to be viewed online, along with the [MSW Student Handbook](#) and the [Graduate Division Guide to Graduate Policy](#), so you can readily access the active links to the resources and other campus units supporting graduate professional education at Berkeley included in this guide.

You are viewing the current 2021-22 edition of this guide. You can download or print a PDF copy from the [MSW Student Guide to Field Education Contents page](#).

Section 2: Berkeley MSW Field Program Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

Overall management of the field program is provided by the Director of Field Education and supported by the Administrative Analyst for Field Education. Field Faculty members are actively involved in establishing and implementing policies and procedures. Additional input on program issues and changes is also sought periodically from participating agencies and students. The field program curriculum and administration is overseen by the Social Welfare Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Dean and by the Social Welfare faculty through the MSW Curriculum Committee.

Berkeley MSW Student Roles and Responsibilities

Social work students are adult learners, capable of being--and expected to be--active participants in the field instruction process. Students are expected to assess their baseline practice competencies, to clarify their professional learning needs and objectives, and to play an active role in determining the appropriate setting for both of their field placements.

Because social work students are assigned duties in public agencies that serve vulnerable populations and will, upon graduation, be eligible to perform the full range of entry-level social work services, students in field placement are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times. Students are guided by the [Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers](#), by agency codes of conduct, by the [UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct](#), and by the [Academic and Professional Standards for Master of Social Welfare Students](#) articulated in the [MSW Student Handbook](#).

Throughout the placement period, the student should play an active role in defining the agenda for field instruction meetings, including identifying issues that should be discussed. While Field Instructors are encouraged to provide proactive instruction when possible, students are also expected to learn how to identify and resolve dilemmas independently by using critical thinking and applying professional judgment. Finally, students are also expected to demonstrate engaged and receptive approaches to learning which include initiating activities and responding to feedback and direction.

Students must introduce themselves as students or interns to clients and colleagues, and should not convey the impression that they are regular agency staff or already possess their MSW degree.

Field Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

The Berkeley Social Welfare MSW field program faculty includes the Chair of Field Education and a group of Field Consultants who have primary responsibility for MSW field education. These specialists develop, match and monitor field placements; facilitate student acquisition of

identified practice competencies; support Field Instructors; and determine and assign grades for field education courses. Field Consultants also often teach practice courses in the Social Welfare MSW Program, and help to link the curriculum with current practice trends and concerns.

Field Consultants are the direct liaisons between field placement agencies and Berkeley Social Welfare. They support all parties involved in each field placement, ensuring that the student's educational needs are met, that the placement experience is mutually beneficial to both agency and student, and that student competencies develop maximally in all identified areas. Their deep, ongoing involvement in public agencies helps to keep the School current on policy, program development, and practice issues.

Social Welfare MSW Program field faculty responsibilities include:

1. Maintaining knowledge of changes in policy, practice, and institutions in their assigned field of practice in order to enhance the relevancy of school curricula.
2. Recruiting, screening, and orienting desirable new placement settings.
3. Maintaining and improving existing placement settings.
4. Guiding the placement process of assigned students by conducting assessments, determining student eligibility for field education, considering all available placements, and facilitating or recommending matches whenever possible.
5. Orienting, training, supporting, and evaluating agency Field Instructors and other involved agency personnel.
6. Leading field integration seminars.
7. Assisting with the development of competency-based Learning Agreements and reviewing competency-based evaluations.
8. Maintaining regular contacts with Field Instructors and students to support the field instructional process and to solve any problems that might arise regarding a placement or student's performance.
9. Participating in the evaluation of students, Field Instructors, and agency settings.
10. Offering individual educational or professional advising, mentoring, and/or coaching to students and Field Instructors.
11. Determining and submitting student grades in field education courses.

Field Instructor Roles and Responsibilities

The Field Instructor is the student's teacher in the agency, providing administrative and educational supervision to the student. The relationship between students and their Field Instructors is central to students' learning and preparation for social work practice. Field Instructors serve as teachers, supervisors, mentors, and gatekeepers for the profession. Satisfactory student progress in field instruction depends on agency support, student readiness

for placement, school-based preparation, and the skill of the Field Instructor in managing the field instruction process.

Field Instructors must have sufficient training and experience in the required practice modalities to supervise student's work. These practice domains include but are not limited to case management, counseling, group work, advocacy, referral, resource development, family work, needs assessment, evaluation, policy and program development and implementation, personnel and fiscal management, development, and/or other clinical or administrative services. All Field Instructors are required to complete a workshop orienting them to the role of field instructor, and are offered annual opportunities to update and advance their field instruction skills.

Agency Manager Roles and Responsibilities

Effective field education requires a significant commitment on the part of agency management. The development of an agency field education program, even if for only one student per year, requires careful planning. Therefore, responsible agency manager(s) should be involved in the initial development of the placement plan and in periodically reviewing, with Field Consultants and agency staff or Field Instructors, the effectiveness of the field placement program within the agency.

Agency Training Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

Many agencies hosting social work field placements designate a particular staff member as Training Coordinator. Training Coordinators play a key role in the design of agency placement arrangements and often manage the placement process, including selection of participating program units and Field Instructors. They provide orientation, facilitation, and additional support services for both Field Instructors and students. When an agency Training Coordinator is designated, the Field Consultant establishes a close working relationship with that person to facilitate mutual planning and effective response to any problems that might arise.

2.1 Selection and Approval of Field Agencies

The San Francisco Bay Area is richly endowed with public and private social service and community agencies, collectively reflecting a spectrum of health and welfare service organizations and diverse communities. This diversity makes it possible for the School to select field education settings that provide learning experiences consistent with the mission of social work, the mission of Berkeley Social Welfare, related accreditation guidelines, and in addition, to meet the learning goals and needs of our MSW students.

Criteria for Selecting and Approving Field Placement Settings

The following criteria are used to evaluate and approve agencies as field placement settings for the Social Welfare MSW Program:

1. The agency must be committed to offering ongoing, educationally sound training which fits well with the profession and related values and ethics of social work.
2. A substantial part of the agency's clientele and the majority of the students' client systems must represent vulnerable, at risk, and/or diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or communities.
3. The services offered must be relevant to, effective with, and responsive to these various client or constituent systems.
4. The funding auspices of the agency should be largely public; if the agency is a private non-profit, it should receive substantial funding from public funds or have referral relationships with government agencies.
5. A Field Instructor meeting the School's requirements must be provided.
6. The field instructor must have sufficient time to provide a comprehensive orientation to agency practice, a minimum of one hour per week of formal on-site field instruction is expected, and thorough evaluation of the student's competency progression; in addition, the agency must grant field instructors release time to work with students and to attend training activities offered by the School.
7. The agency must have appropriate safety and risk reduction policies in place, and must orient students to these policies and uphold them.
8. The agency must be willing and able to provide a range of learning opportunities across the intervention cycle (engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation) and across all of the levels of social ecology (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities) commensurate with graduate student learning so that students may practice and meet generalist and/or specialist competencies.
9. The agency must provide a safe workspace and other necessary supports (such as clerical assistance, access to a desk, computer, phone, and reimbursement for

placement-related expenses) and schedule field placement in accordance with the school's academic and field calendar.

10. The agency must be willing to work with a diverse range of students and to work with the university and school to offer reasonable accommodations to eligible students.
11. The agency must be able to provide the student with formative and summative bases related to identified competencies based upon observation and/or review of deliverable products (i.e. student self-report is an insufficient basis for evaluation).
12. The agency must be willing to collaborate extensively with assigned Field Faculty, to communicate needs and concerns, and to respond to communication and feedback in a timely, professional manner.
13. The agency must ensure that required forms are completed and returned in accordance with school guidelines and deadlines including but not limited to competency-based learning agreements and evaluations of students.

The Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Program seeks to develop and maintain ongoing relationships with the highest quality agencies and field instructors in our region. To that end, we initiate communication with agencies of interest, respond to requests, clearly post information and application materials on the school's website, hold webinars to discuss school requirements and expectations, and review external applications twice annually.

Agencies where students are placed are also reviewed annually to determine if they have been able to or appear able to continue to meet the school's criteria. Available data reviewed include the student's formal and informal feedback, review of the key documents submitted (learning agreement, first semester progress review, and final evaluation), and field faculty observations during in-person site visits and phone consultations with the agency and/or field instructor.

Students are required to submit to the School an end-of-year placement evaluation where they provide feedback on their agency experience which is used for purposes of quality assurance and improvement. We provide field agencies and instructors with both affirmation of their assets and with recommendations for continued improvement.

Agencies of Interest Not Formally Approved as Field Placements

In some instances where an agency or program is not approved as a field placement site but is highly desirable to a student and appears to meet the School's criteria, proactive efforts may be made to recruit, screen, and approve the site. It should be noted, however, that this can take up to three months to occur and is not always possible.

Students may make their interest known verbally during individual field advising meetings or in writing and may supply the Field Consultant with whatever information they have that leads them to believe the agency would be interested in serving and qualified to serve as a field instruction site.

Students may also refer potential field instructors, training coordinators, or agency managers to the Berkeley Social Welfare [field education website](#) where they may download information, participate in informational webinars, and submit an online application to become an approved agency. If agencies do not return our phone or email contact or fail to complete and submit forms by stated deadlines, we are unable to consider them.

Once applications are submitted by the agency, we will arrange for virtual and/or in-person visits and will make our determination as to whether they are an approved field placement agency based on the previously described criteria. The opening Field Consultant makes a recommendation to the Chair of Field Education who makes the final decision about approval. Any newly opened placements may be less predictable in quality than placements that have previously established a strong track record.

2.2 Selection and Approval of Field Instructors

The following selection criteria are used to evaluate and approve agency-based Field Instructors for the Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Program:

1. A Master's degree from an accredited school of social work.
2. A minimum of two years of postgraduate work experience in the area in which they are instructing.
3. An ongoing commitment to competency-based, professional social work education.
4. Knowledge of the agency, its policies and procedures, and its relation to the community. In general, this includes secure employment by the agency for a period of 12 months and success at their assigned tasks.
5. A commitment to participate in annual training and related professional development activities and to work with the Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Program field faculty throughout the field education process.
6. A commitment to abide by the [*NASW Code of Ethics*](#), especially as it pertains to field education roles.
7. A commitment to fulfill time commitments relating to orienting, instructing, and evaluating assigned students following school policies and using the school's competency-based tools.

To establish their eligibility, prospective agency-based field instructors submit an online application and attach a copy of their professional resume. In addition, we typically interview new field instructors during an initial virtual consultation or visit to confirm they meet the full criteria and that they understand the responsibilities they are undertaking and our key policies and procedures.

In some situations, an approved field agency does not have a member of their staff who meets the above criteria (particularly, holding an MSW from a CSWE-accredited program) but is otherwise believed to be able to offer an excellent learning experience for MSW students. In this instance, we first consider whether a comparable agency-based placement who can assign a qualified field instructor is available for the intended student. When this is not the case, we then consider whether the agency is able to hire a qualified consultant or enlist a qualified volunteer who meets the above criteria, and when possible, we help them identify and engage qualified persons. In this scenario, we designate an on-site field instructor who orientates the student, assigns tasks, reviews task completion, and provides feedback to the student and an off-site field instructor who provides additional consultation, reinforcing the social work perspective on all learning assignments and experiences. Typically, in this arrangement, the off-site field instructor provides no less than individual consultation for one hour or group consultation for two hours at a frequency of every two weeks. Both the on-site and off-site field

instructors collaboratively complete field documents and participate in training, site visits, and monitoring conducted by the Field Faculty.

On a limited basis, our faculty or affiliates may serve as off-site field instructors for select students where no other qualified individual can be enlisted and we believe the placement otherwise substantially meets the student's career goals.

Section 3: Berkeley MSW Field Education Requirements and Curriculum

As the signature pedagogy for social work, the intent of field education is to “integrate the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting.”¹ Berkeley’s concurrent model of MSW field education requires students to engage simultaneously in academic classroom learning and agency-based experiential learning in approved field placements.

Berkeley Social Welfare’s MSW Program aims to educate and train graduates for professional, multilevel social work in specific areas of practice. **The MSW field education program supports and contributes to this mission by:**

1. Providing students with opportunities to strengthen their ability to integrate values, knowledge, and skills while simultaneously engaging in graduate course work and sequenced real-life practicum experiences;
2. Helping students achieve mastery of professional competencies through progressively immersing them into the role of professional social worker while being provided with formative and summative evaluation from agency field instructors; and,
3. Facilitating the development of strong lifelong practice learning competencies in students, including using consultation, being self-reflective, considering multiple, often conflicting sources of knowledge, applying critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills, and demonstrating effective response to common agency-based dilemmas.

We achieve these objectives for **competency-based field education** by selecting, arranging, and monitoring field placements; leading field integration seminars; and working collaboratively with students, practice professionals, and academic faculty members to **develop and advance multilevel social work practice** knowledge, skills and abilities.

¹ Council on Social Work Education, [2015 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards](#)

3.1 Social Welfare MSW Field Education Requirements

Required Units of Field Education

All Berkeley Social Welfare MSW students must complete a prescribed sequence of **required, concurrent field practicum and integrative seminar courses, totaling 25 units of field education**, to be eligible for degree conferral:

Semester	Course	Units
1 (Fall)	SOC WEL 290A: Foundation Field Integration Seminar	2
	SOC WEL 410A: Foundation Field Practicum	4
2 (Spring)	SOC WEL 290B: Foundation Field Integration Seminar II	1
	SOC WEL 410B: Foundation Field Practicum	4
3 (Fall)	SOC WEL 292A: Advanced Field Integration Seminar	1
	SOC WEL 412A: Advanced Field Practicum	6
4 (Spring)	SOC WEL 292B: Advanced Field Integration Seminar II	1
	SOC WEL 412B: Advanced Field Practicum	6
Total Units Earned in Field Education		25

Required Hours of Field Practicum

As shown below, all Social Welfare MSW students must successfully complete a total of 1,120 hours of agency-based field practicum in two distinct, academic year-long field placements, under the supervision of an approved, qualified field instructor:

Generalist Field Practicum Completed in First Year

Field Practicum Course	Usual Schedule	Total Hours
SOC WEL 410A (Fall Term, 4 units)	16 hours/week for 12 weeks	192
SOC WEL 410B (Spring Term, 4 units)	16 hours/week for 13 weeks	208
TOTAL GENERALIST FIELD PLACEMENT HOURS		400

Specialized Field Practicum Completed in Second Year

Field Practicum Course	Usual Schedule	Total Hours
SOC WEL 412A (Fall Term, 6 units)	24 hours/week for 15 weeks	360
SOC WEL 412B (Spring Term, 6 units)	24 hours/week for 15 weeks	360
TOTAL SPECIALIZED FIELD PLACEMENT HOURS		720

Students pursuing the MSW degree with **advanced standing** status at Berkeley must have completed 400 hours of field education at the baccalaureate level. Advanced standing students are required to complete 720 hours of specialized field placement practicum in the Berkeley MSW Program to be eligible for degree conferral.

3.2 Practice Competencies for Field Education

The Social Welfare MSW Program has established a set of 9 practice competencies based upon the [Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards](#) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and interpreted for our program mission and context. These competencies guide field placement task assignment, instruction, and evaluation. Because of their importance, these competencies should be periodically reviewed during field practicum and field seminar.

- 1. Engagement with Individual, Families, Groups, Organizations, and/or Communities**
Establishes contact, builds rapport, forms working relationships, and invites a diverse array of clients and/or constituents to participate in clinical services and/or administrative projects.
- 2. Consultation, Coordination, and Collaboration**
Obtains information from a variety of collaterals, stakeholders, and/or other formal or informal sources; integrates collateral information into an effective and coordinated service and/or project plan.
- 3. Assessment of Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and/or Communities**
Collects, analyzes, and applies relevant information and develops relevant, well-formed goals to guide the effective delivery of clinical services and/or the effective execution of administrative and planning projects.
- 4. Intervention Planning and Implementation**
Selects intervention methods to support goal acquisition based upon assessment, the best available evidence and/or knowledge, and client or constituent preferences. Evaluates and modifies implementation so as to maximize the likelihood of reaching the intended outcome(s).
- 5. Systemic Intervention**
Demonstrates interest, understanding, and/or effective participation in the organizational, institutional, policy, and/or community contexts for the purpose of improving the delivery of social work services to vulnerable populations.
- 6. Professional Communication**
Communicates verbally and in writing in an organized, complete, and timely manner. Delivers communication in an effective manner given its purpose and context.
- 7. Professional Ethics**
Considers and applies the professional code of ethics for social workers so as to recognize ethical conflicts and arrive at principled decisions.
- 8. Professional Conduct**
Demonstrates professional behavior, appearance, and communication in accordance with standards identified by the school, agency, community, and profession.

9. Professional Growth and Development

Takes responsibility for learning and demonstrates initiative. Receives, considers, and integrates feedback from instructors. Demonstrates commitment to continual professional development, life-long learning, and leadership development.

3.3 First Year Generalist Field Practicum and Integration Seminar

First Year Field Placement

The structure of the generalist field education curriculum, typically completed in the first year of the MSW Program, is the same for all students regardless of their chosen area of specialization or other special program options. The first year field placement is designed to provide students with a range of generalist practice learning opportunities across the intervention cycle (engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation) and across the levels of social ecology (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities).

Social Welfare MSW students are required to complete a total of **400 hours of generalist field practicum** in the first year (combination of SOC WEL 410A in fall and SOC WEL 410B in spring). Students must successfully complete all generalist field education requirements, including required practicum hours and field integration seminars before progressing to the specialized placement in the second year.

First Year Field Placement Schedule

First-year field practicum days are Wednesdays and Thursdays, beginning in the fourth week of September and continuing until the end of the spring semester. Students and their agency-based Field Instructors work together to finalize the student's schedule. Standard days are eight hours in length and do not include time for lunch or other breaks. Additionally, some field settings require students to begin placement before the semester begins or to continue on after the semester ends. In these instances, the relationship between the student and agency is voluntary and not subject to university requirements, policies, or protections although both parties are encouraged to continue to act ethically. For more information please see [Section 5: Field Placement Time Requirements and Attendance Policies](#).

First Year Field Placement Activities, Tasks and Projects

Field Instructors collaborate with their students to develop and implement a [Competency-Based Learning Agreement](#) specifying the assigned field learning tasks, activities and projects that are intended to help students develop and demonstrate identified generalist social work practice competencies. The learning agreement provides the basis for periodic evaluations of student work. Field Consultants typically visit agencies in the fall or winter to review the learning agreements with students and Field Instructors.

Common modes of practice in these settings involve brief or supportive models of direct practice including clinical interviewing, intake assessment, case management, crisis intervention, and counseling with individuals and groups. Access is also available to a range of macro-practice activities such as meeting management, program planning, coordination, and evaluation, advocacy, policy analysis, or development functions. Field agency-based Training Coordinators and Field Instructors are encouraged to orient students to their agencies with a broad appreciation of the agency's place within the network of services. Practice tasks are

organized, to the extent possible, to provide a wide range of practice experiences and continuity with a sufficient number of assignments for competency acquisition and reliable assessment.

First Year Field Seminar

Concurrent enrollment in field integration seminars is required each semester a student is in field practicum.

Foundation Field Integration Seminars (SOC WEL 290A in fall and SOC WEL 290B in spring), taught by Field Consultant faculty, are designed to prepare, enable, and support students as field learners. These generalist field integration seminars facilitate the development of holistic competence for MSW students as they make meaning from their experiences with agency practice, integrate social work knowledge, values, and skills, and form their professional identities as social workers.

Students in field seminars will participate in a wide array of activities and discussions to prepare to engage in multi-level social work practice with diverse populations. As a central part of the experience, the seminar cohort will establish the conditions necessary for a strong working alliance to enable group members to access support and feedback from peers. As students become oriented to agency-based learning contexts, they will be asked to contemplate common professional dilemmas and to develop integrative, complex problem-solving stances.

First year field integration seminars meet for at least two hours most weeks in the fall, and every other week in the spring. Cohorts and seminar leaders often remain together over the course of graduate study, providing a consistent base for learning and significantly enhancing the integration of academic and real world learning and students' professional development.

3.4 Second Year Specialized Field Practicum and Integration Seminar

Second year field education is differentiated by area of specialization (i.e. Advancing Health and Well-Being across the Adult Life Span; Strengthening Children, Youth, and Families; and Strengthening Organizations and Communities). The second year placement is designed to introduce students to advanced or specialized practice settings that focus on specific methods (direct practice or management and planning practice) and age-based populations (children and families or adults/older adults) that correspond to the specialization areas offered in the Social Welfare MSW Program. Access to a wider range of more complex practice opportunities is typically made available to in the specialized field practicum.

Social Welfare MSW students are required to complete a total of 720 hours of specialized field practicum in the second year (combination of SOC WEL 412A in fall and SOC WEL 412B in spring). In order to progress to second-year specialized field education, students must have successfully completed all first year field education requirements, all required generalist practice curriculum requirements, and must be in good academic standing.

Second Year Field Placement Schedule

Second year field practicum days are generally Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays beginning in the first week of September and continuing until early May. Standard days are eight hours in length and do not include time for lunch or other breaks. Students and their agency-based Field Instructors work together to finalize the student's schedule. In some instances, students may arrange to attend placement on other days or at other times as long as they can take all required courses and recommended electives. Additionally, some placements require students to begin before the semester begins or to continue on after the semester ends. In these instances, the relationship between the student and agency is voluntary and not subject to university requirements, policies, or protections although both parties are encouraged to continue to act ethically. For more information please see [Section 5: Field Placement Time Requirements and Attendance Policies](#).

Second Year Field Placement Activities, Tasks and Projects

Field Instructors collaborate with their students to develop and implement a [Competency-Based Learning Agreement](#) specifying the assigned field learning tasks, activities and projects that are intended to help students develop and demonstrate identified generalist social work practice competencies. The learning agreement provides the basis for periodic evaluations of student work. Field Consultants typically visit agencies in the fall or winter to review the learning agreements with students and Field Instructors.

Modes of practice can vary widely in these settings depending upon area of specialization. They generally involve, however, more in-depth and advanced tasks which can include advanced clinical interviewing and assessment; specialized clinical case management or psychotherapy; advanced documentation and report-writing or significant responsibility for meeting management; program planning, coordination, and evaluation; advocacy; policy analysis;

development; or other executive functions. Direct practice students are allowed to spend time engaged in management and planning practice, and macro practice students are allowed to spend time engaged in clinical practice depending upon approval of their Field Consultant and the agency's ability to accommodate their learning needs. Students may petition their Field Consultant for an exemption to expand the time that they may spend learning the other method. Decisions will be made based upon evidence that the student already possesses advanced experience in their area of specialization; the student's overall career goals; and the availability of appropriate, specialized field practicum assignments.

MSW students in specialized field placement continue to attend to the nine practice competencies established for field education. Behavioral anchors for the competency scale, however, are adjusted to reflect specific knowledge and skills that are to be demonstrated for the student's area of specialization. These extended and enhanced competencies continue to guide task assignment, field instruction, and evaluation in the second year of field education.

Second Year Field Seminar

In the second year MSW students are encouraged to take advanced electives, both in the School of Social Welfare and in other university departments, that inform their approach to field placement duties, tasks, and identified competencies. They are also frequently provided with more extensive on-site learning support and opportunities, including seminars, group supervision or extra individual supervision, training, and consultation.

The specialization field integration seminar builds upon the generalist foundation and facilitates the development of holistic competence in areas of specialized practice. The Council on Social Work Education views holistic competence as the organizing construct for professional education. In response to unique practice situations, social workers must use "cognitive and affective processes" including self-regulation and critical thinking to select and integrate the most pertinent values, knowledge and skills as they make professional judgments and act. As social workers learn to do this consistently well across varied contexts and situations, they develop holistic competence.

3.5 Field Enrollment Requirements and Exceptions

Concurrent Requirements for Placement into Field Education

Students placed into field education are expected to be concurrently enrolled in the required generalist or specialized curriculum courses in the required sequence, unless they have a pre approved, modified academic plan. Concurrent enrollment in field integration seminars is required each semester a student is in field practicum. Students must be eligible for field placement to be eligible to enroll in concurrent field seminars.

Students must be in [good academic standing in the Social Welfare MSW Program](#) to be eligible for field placement. Students with a grade point average that falls below a 3.0, who fail a required generalist or specialized curriculum course, or who accumulate two or more Incomplete (I) grades in any one semester, may not have field placement initiated, or may be suspended from field placement, until all academic standing concerns are resolved. If a student is suspended from field placement, we cannot guarantee that they will be able to return to that same placement. Students suspended from field placement may or may not be eligible for partial credit depending upon the circumstances.

Exceptions to Field Practicum Hours Requirements

Because it is in their best educational interest, all Social Welfare MSW students are expected to fully satisfy the field hours requirement specified by our program (400 hours for the first year placement and 720 for the second year placement).

In rare and unusual circumstances, the field program may consider student petitions for a reduction of requisite field hours, subject to the following conditions:

1. The decision to allow consideration of petitions for a reduction in the field hours requirement is at the discretion of the Chair of Field Education.
2. The ability to grant requests for exceptions to required field practicum hours is not guaranteed.
3. **In no circumstance may total field hours requirements be reduced to less than 325 hours for first-year students, or 575 hours for second-year students.**

Under the terms of this policy, extenuating circumstances are generally limited to unanticipated operational conditions that are likely to have a significant impact on the student's ability to complete the full number of required hours, such as:

- Emergent and unexpected changes in field placement agency capacity related to declared public health emergencies.
- Health conditions that require isolation, medical monitoring or treatment.

- An unexpected change in student caregiving responsibilities for a child, elder, or dependent adult who no longer has access to daycare, school, or regular care as a result of emergency conditions.

Students facing extenuating circumstances that may qualify for an exception to field hours requirements should reach out to their assigned Field Consultant faculty as soon as reasonably possible to discuss the situation and the potential reduction in field hours. In that consultation, your Field Consultant will assist you in weighing the pros and cons of the request (e.g., in terms of student immediate needs, educational goals, impact on agency, stipend-related requirements, and future opportunity costs such as employability). If the decision is made to proceed, the Field Consultant will help facilitate submission of your petition. Formal requests must be made in writing by email to the Chair of Field Education, providing a rationale for the request and confirmation that any exceptions granted from field hours requirements will not result in the student completing less than 900 total hours of field practicum.

When a decision is made by the field program to accept petitions for a reduction in field hours, requests will be considered by the Chair of Field Education, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the student's assigned Field Consultant, based on:

1. The qualifying extenuating circumstances that justify the request.
2. Existing, sufficient evidence that the student has or will have achieved competency in all specified practice competencies for field education by the end of placement.
3. Evidence that the student has completed a sufficient and normative amount of projects, tasks and client assignments to enable competency ratings at the generalist level for first-year students, or the specialization level for second-year students. Competency ratings are based on the deliverable products and observable practice described in the student's approved [Competency-Based Learning Agreement](#). Satisfactory participation in orientation, on-boarding, informational meetings, and training are necessary, but not sufficient for students to attain required competencies.
4. Confirmation that the proposed reduction in field hours does not result in the student completing less than 900 total hours of field practicum.

Section 4: Field Placement Processes, Policies and Procedures

Berkeley Social Welfare MSW students complete two distinct field placements in the Social Welfare MSW graduate professional degree program. Placement processes for both the first year generalist placement and the second year specialized placement include a review and determination of a student's eligibility to begin or continue in field education, and an assessment of any accommodations students may need to successfully complete the required field practicum courses.

4.1 Student Eligibility for Field Placement

All students accepted for admission into the Social Welfare MSW Program must be eligible for field placement, and for required coverage under the School's professional liability insurance policy. Admission to the MSW Program does not, however, automatically guarantee a field education placement. Students are assessed by their assigned Field Consultant faculty for initial eligibility for field education as part of the first year field placement process. Eligibility for field placement is monitored throughout the course of study. Students must maintain eligibility for field placement to be considered in good academic standing in the Social Welfare MSW Program.

To be eligible for initial or continuing enrollment in the required field education courses and placement in an agency-based field practicum, students must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Students must be eligible for professional liability insurance coverage, as determined in the pre-placement insurance questionnaire.
2. Students must be in full compliance with all [mandatory health screening and immunization requirements](#) as mandated by the University of California Office of the President.
3. Students must have completed all required pre-placement safety training modules and the university's [required sexual violence and sexual harassment \(SVSH\) awareness and prevention education courses](#).
4. Students must have satisfied or be able to satisfy all [concurrent enrollment requirements](#) for placement into field education.
5. Students must be able to demonstrate their understanding that serving vulnerable clients or populations in an agency setting requires a set of attitudes and capacities that are different from those related to classroom learning.
6. Students must demonstrate the willingness and ability, with or without reasonable accommodation, to adhere to the standards of professional conduct and meet all

essential performance expectations for the Social Welfare MSW Program as stated in the MSW Student Handbook.

7. Students must be willing and able to demonstrate all of the following prerequisite professional behavioral abilities for field placement, with or without reasonable accommodation:
 - a. Attend reliably and punctually. Because clients and colleagues rely on essential tasks being performed in a time-sensitive manner, students must show up and perform at the placement site consistently on scheduled days without a pattern of excessive absences (defined as a maximum of 1 absence within a 30-day period) or tardiness (defined as 1 or more arrivals later than 15 minutes within a 30-day period).
 - b. Possess sufficient stamina, strength, sensory perception, mobility, or dexterity to perform essential tasks.
 - c. Remain focused on and attentive to tasks so as to ensure quality and timely completion of service and projects.
 - d. Remember and follow complex instructions with minimal repetition.
 - e. Analyze, organize, and communicate large amounts of data sufficient to complete related records and reports.
 - f. Simultaneously organize, prioritize, track, and complete a wide variety of tasks for multiple clients or projects in a timely manner.
 - g. Display good judgment with respect to safety, ethics, and higher order priorities.
 - h. Appropriately manage intense emotions, cognitions, and reactions that may occur in response to clients or agency events in order to remain in a professional role.
 - i. Listen to and implement feedback given by clinical instructors and colleagues without becoming overwhelmed, reactive, argumentative, or defensive.
 - j. Self-monitor and accordingly adjust their own behaviors so as to be in accordance with professional roles, standards, and contexts.
 - k. Communicate and respond to communication in a timely, diplomatic, and effective manner.
 - l. Respect the rights of clients and stakeholders to hold differing values and to refrain from imposing personal values on others.
 - m. Possess sufficient skills in spoken and written English to understand and communicate relevant information.

- n. Display good judgment in communication, interpersonal behaviors, and personal and professional boundaries.
8. Students must be able to successfully obtain an approved field placement through an interactive interview process with approved agency partners. Students who are not able to succeed at obtaining an agency-based placement after three interviews may be deemed ineligible for placement into field education and advised to withdraw from the Social Welfare MSW Program until more time has passed to meet agency eligibility requirements.

Students who are either unwilling or unable to satisfy all of these criteria may be deemed ineligible to begin or continue in field education.

4.1a Background Checks, Health Screenings, and Related Disclosures

Criminal Conviction History

To be eligible for placement into an agency-based field practicum, students must meet and continuously maintain eligibility requirements for mandatory coverage under Berkeley Social Welfare's professional liability insurance policy. After being admitted to the MSW program, students are assessed for their eligibility for field education by participating in a comprehensive, interactive process with their assigned Field Consultant. As part of this assessment, **students must disclose all relevant ethical violations or legal convictions before the pre-placement process can begin.**

Required disclosures include convictions prior to entry into the MSW program, and offenses that occur that may lead to conviction while a current student at Berkeley. Failure to fully disclose relevant circumstances at any time during the admissions or when required will subject a student to recommendation for dismissal from the Social Welfare MSW Program.

Disclosure does not automatically disqualify a student from field placement, although it is possible that some agencies may not accept for field placement a student with certain criminal history backgrounds or a positive drug screen. Although if, however, an appropriate field placement cannot be arranged for a student because of the recent nature or severity of criminal history, the student may not be able to continue in the program. It is also possible that a criminal history could limit or prohibit a student's or graduate's ability to obtain social work licensure, a specialized credential (such as school social work), or employment in the field. The California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS), which licenses social workers in California, evaluates all social work license applications with a prior conviction history on a case-by-case basis to determine the applicant's ability to practice with safety to the public. For more information, please visit [California BBS Criminal Convictions](#).

Agency Disclosure and Background Check Requirements

When a Social Welfare MSW student seeking field placement does have a conviction history, however remote, we do require disclosure to any potential field placement site. We typically ask students to disclose at the time of their placement interview, and we confirm that the disclosure has happened before finalizing the placement.

In addition to required disclosures, many agencies are also legally mandated to perform their own criminal background checks or fingerprinting on prospective employees or interns. It is also possible that students may be required to complete multiple background checks or fingerprinting processes due to privacy limitations on sharing sensitive personal data. Students are responsible for obtaining any required background checks or fingerprinting at their own expense.

Health Screenings

Some field placement sites require additional health screening beyond the university's [mandatory tuberculosis \(TB\) screening and immunization requirements](#). Some placements also require a general physical examination, respiratory capacity screening, or urine toxicology screen. Since students are likely to be expected to obtain required health screenings at their own expense, we recommend students utilize University Health Services (UHS) Tang Center.

Agencies should notify Field Consultants of any changes to requirements and Field Consultants should advise interested students of known clearance requirements that may be extensive. If a student does not wish to submit to legal or health screening for whatever reason, they may request information about other available placement options.

4.1b Resolving Field Eligibility Concerns

Agency Assessment of Student Acceptability and Readiness

The ability to obtain an approved field placement through an interactive interview process with our approved agency partners is also required for placement into field education.

In the instance that a student has been forwarded for three successive field placement interviews and has not been accepted, the assigned Field Consultant faculty member will collect and analyze related agency feedback, will review the eligibility criteria for field education, will review identified competencies applicable to the student, and will directly discuss behavioral feedback and concerns with the student. In some cases, students may be coached to success on how to present themselves more effectively.

When student acceptability, readiness, or suitability factors are determined to be primary reasons for the student to be found unacceptable by multiple agencies, those factors are shared directly with the student in an interactive process. Whenever possible, we will provide the student with suggested pathways to address the concerns agencies appear to have about their acceptability and readiness for field placement. In some cases, students may be asked to address life concerns. In other cases, students may not be accepted for placement due to the recent nature or severity of their criminal history and may be advised to withdraw from the program until more time has passed to meet agency eligibility requirements.

Failure to succeed at obtaining an agency-based placement for whatever reason may be viewed as evidence of unsuitability for the degree or profession at the current time. Students unable to ascertain a field placement for themselves after three interviews may be assigned an unsatisfactory grade in field education. They may also be placed on academic probation and are at risk for eventual dismissal if the concerns cannot be resolved within a semester.

Resolution Processes for Eligibility Determination

When concerns arise about a student's eligibility for field placement, every attempt is made at informal resolution. This usually involves direct discussion with the student about areas where they need to demonstrate improvement to meet the relevant eligibility criteria. In most cases, particularly when the student is amenable and responsive to feedback, concerns can be resolved at an informal level.

When attempts at informal resolution are unsuccessful, the cognizant Field Consultant faculty member will typically convene a case conference with the student, and the Chair of Field Education or Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, as needed, to review the criteria for eligibility for field education and discuss the concerns together. Students, faculty and staff may also seek additional consultation from other campus partners and student support units.

Several possible determinations may be made based on these consultations and the case conference meeting:

1. The concerns have been resolved before or during the formal meeting. In this case, the student shall be eligible for either agency interview and/or admission to field education and will be monitored accordingly.
2. Although concerns remain, they are not serious enough to prevent placement. In this case, the Field Consultant may discuss the concerns with the student and the intended agency field instructor, identify any field practice competencies that may be impacted, and require these concerns to be addressed in the student's learning agreement. The Field Consultant will also closely monitor the placement, and arrange an early visit to review student progress.
3. Concerns are sufficient that the student is deemed ineligible for placement into field education for up to an entire semester. When a student has been deemed ineligible for field education, they are typically provided with a recommended pathway to address the concerns, which may include participation in an informal tutorial or formal independent study, outside evaluation or intervention from a qualified professional, outside training or educational event, or other relevant assessment or remedy. Students are eligible for reassessment no later than one semester from the time they are determined to be ineligible for field education, although eligibility remains subject to the previously stated criteria and is never guaranteed.

Following this meeting, the student will be notified in writing by the Chair of Field Education or Associate Dean about the status of their eligibility for field education and any related restrictions, mandates, recommendations, rights, privileges, or next steps.

Students who are unable to be placed into field practicum are usually not allowed to participate in the concurrent field seminar.

Students ineligible for field practicum may not represent themselves to community agencies as being eligible for Berkeley Social Welfare-affiliated social work internships. If they should assume volunteer or paid positions during this period, they must explicitly disclose that these are not affiliated with the Berkeley MSW field program, and are never retroactively given academic credit for them.

A student who has been determined to be ineligible for field education may also be subject to a letter of warning, or a recommendation to the Graduate Dean for placement on formal academic probation. If ineligibility for field placement persists for more than one semester, the student may be subject to recommendation for dismissal from the MSW program for failure to make satisfactory academic progress.

Berkeley Social Welfare students are afforded the opportunity to resolve complaints regarding field placement eligibility determinations under the [Student Grievance and Appeal Procedures outlined in the MSW Student Handbook](#).

4.2 The First Year Field Placement Process

Incoming graduate students are typically oriented to field education in the summer before they begin studies in the MSW Program. Pre-placement orientation activities usually include:

- Watching an online video and reviewing written or electronic materials about the Berkeley Social Welfare MSW field education program.
- Completing online pre-placement and liability insurance questionnaires.
- Revising and updating your resume.
- Meeting individually with your assigned Field Consultant in-person, by videoconference, or by telephone. In this meeting, you discuss your past experience, future plans, needs, learning goals, and any potential accommodation needs for first year placement.

Based on the information gathered in these pre-placement activities, your Field Consultant will verify your eligibility for field education and work collaboratively to identify an appropriate agency for placement.

Since the first year of the MSW program is designed to provide a broad introduction to social work and social welfare, field agencies are selected by Field Consultants for their ability to familiarize students with key approaches, institutions and multiple levels of practice. After being assigned to a placement interview, the student then meets with the agency Field Instructor and they assess together the suitability of the proposed placement. In the instance that this process does not result in a mutually satisfactory arrangement, another placement interview may be offered. As described in the requirements for [Student Eligibility for Field Placement](#), failure to obtain placement after three interviews requires a review of the student's eligibility for field education and suitability for the degree and profession.

The placement time table, process, or available options may be different or restricted for students accepted into certain specialized program options with additional field requirements, such as stipend-based training programs (e.g., Child Welfare Scholars (Title IVE); Latinx Center of Excellence in Behavioral Health) or credentialing programs (e.g., Pupil Personnel Services Credential in School Social Work). Students always have the option of withdrawing from these specialized programs, but may be subject to consequences such as repayment of any disbursed stipend awards.

4.3 The Second Year Field Placement Process

The second year placement process is complex, involving approximately 100 students and over 350 agencies. Therefore, a clear standard placement process is established to assure fairness and to minimize confusion. In December, eligible agencies wanting to offer a second year placement in the next academic year receive a placement timetable and a request for updated placement information. In January, students participate in a mandatory orientation to the second year placement process provided by the Social Welfare MSW field program. At this time, information about all potential placements is made available through a password-protected, web-based database accessible to all eligible students. The database entry for each available placement provides contact information, the specialization area(s) for which the placement is approved, the identified Field Consultant faculty member, descriptions of placement requirements and opportunities, and a link to the agency's website. Past student reviews of field placements may also be made available.

After meeting with their assigned Field Consultant and searching the data, students may meet with other field faculty to refine their choices. Many second year placements are cross-listed for multiple specializations. Workshops are offered to assist students including an orientation to all available workforce development stipend programs, their eligibility criteria and terms, and workshops on revising resumes, writing cover letters, and interviewing effectively.

In February, students are permitted to self-apply for two to four placements that are preapproved for their specialization area by emailing a cover letter and resume to the agency contact person. In some instances, additional application materials such as essays or letters of reference are required. Depending upon the volume of applications received, some agencies conduct a "paper screen" where they only interview the students who appear most qualified; other agencies interview all applicants. When offered, the intent of the interview is to permit mutual exploration concerning the fit between the students' interests and learning goals and placement opportunities and demands. Students have about five to six weeks in which to complete their interviews. Students must complete all assigned interviews within the established interview timetable, without exception.

To protect their exploration of a wide array of options, students are not allowed to accept offers of placement until they have completed all interviews. Upon completing their interviews, students are then allowed to receive offers of placement directly from agencies where they interviewed and may accept, pause, or decline offers. Once an offer is accepted, the student must complete an online link; a corollary link is then sent to the intended Field Instructor to confirm acceptances and commitments on both sides. During this time, students may receive consultation from their assigned Field Consultant. Once a student accepts an agency offer of placement, they are expected to demonstrate professional integrity and honor that commitment.

Similar to the first-year placement process, the placement time table, process, or available options for second-year placements may be different or restricted for students accepted into certain specialized program options with additional field requirements, such as stipend-based

training programs (e.g., Child Welfare Scholars (Title IVE); Latinx Center of Excellence in Behavioral Health) or credentialing programs (e.g., Pupil Personnel Services Credential in School Social Work). Students always have the option of withdrawing from these specialized programs, but may be subject to consequences such as repayment of any disbursed stipend awards.

Students admitted to the MSW Program with advanced standing status will typically begin the process for their specialized field placement in May. A designated Field Consultant faculty member will guide the student in determining at least two potential placement options for interview and selection.

4.4 Student Accommodations in Field Placement

Berkeley Social Welfare is committed to and experienced at arranging field placements for MSW students who require accommodations to successfully complete their degree program. Our policies and procedures align with university and Berkeley campus requirements and expectations for accommodations and supportive measures meant to ensure that all students have a fair chance at academic success.

In order to be eligible for field placement, all students must be determined to meet the requisite criteria and abilities necessary for successful field learning. Essential capacities for particular field placement settings may vary, however, depending on the type of placement and the educational needs of the student. Although we have access to a wide range of agency partners and can often find an agency that could serve as a suitable field placement site for a particular student, we cannot guarantee that all sites can accommodate all students.

Students who may require **disability-related accommodations** should register with the campus [Disabled Students Program \(DSP\)](#) as soon as possible. When disability-related accommodations may be needed for success in a field placement, students are encouraged to proactively discuss their needs with their assigned Field Consultant early in the placement process. Because the field practicum experience occurs off-campus and involves responsibility for public agency clients and projects, students registered with DSP should request [Letters of Accommodation](#) specifically customized for field practicum courses (SOC WEL 410A, 410B, 412A, 412B). The Social Welfare MSW field program will assist you with identifying all relevant and feasible accommodations for the unique context of the field practicum experience. Your assigned Field Consultant is also available to consult with your DSP Specialist when requesting Letters of Accommodation. **Information about a student's disability is confidential**, and may not be shared with other students. Students are never required to disclose personal health information to school faculty or staff or field placement agency personnel.

Students who may require **accommodations for pregnancy and parenting** may be eligible for alternative field placement arrangements, or granted a Parenting Leave, for up to one academic year (two semesters), subject to the terms and conditions outlined in the Graduate Division's Student Parent Policies. Students should consult with the designated Graduate Student Affairs Officer (GASO) for the Social Welfare MSW Program to inquire about or request parental accommodations, and notify their assigned Field Consultant when such requests are activated.

Generally speaking, accommodations may not alter the "fundamental nature" of the student's degree program. Pedagogical needs of a class, including field education courses, are typically the key criteria when deciding whether a proposed accommodation is appropriate. An agency's ability to effectively meet accommodation requests for field placement may also be considered. Some common accommodations utilized for social work field placements include:

- Alternative field placement schedule arrangements, including different start and end dates or times; allowing a student to begin the placement sooner or to extend it later, if

acceptable to the agency; or allowing a student to begin or complete field practicum hours during winter, spring, or summer breaks.

- Allowing students to pursue concurrent academic courses on a reduced course load basis or in a different sequence than normally required.
- Allowance for occasional disability-related absences or late arrivals.
- Arranging for a field placement in close proximity to reduce travel time or burden.
- Access to assistive technologies or alternative media, or to a customized workspace when feasible.
- Selecting a field placement setting and Field Instructor able to implement the student's accommodation needs.
- Approving students to complete all field practicum placement hours in one agency.

Approved accommodations are normally maintained for the duration of a field placement, but may be modified as needs and demands change so long as they do not compromise academic standards, or pose significant health, safety, or privacy risks to the field placement organization and its clients. Regardless of applied reasonable accommodations or modifications of learning conditions, **total service time requirements and competency-related standards of performance in field education remain the same for all students.**

In the instance that the university, school, or field placement agency cannot provide a student with reasonable accommodations for a particular setting, the Social Welfare MSW field program will make every effort to identify an available alternative where reasonable accommodations may be applied. When the need for accommodation exceeds the limit of what is considered reasonable, or no available placement appears to exist after a prudent search, the student will be directly advised of this and counseled regarding their future educational options.

Accommodation Resources and Support

[Campus Academic Accommodations Hub](#)
[Disabled Students Program \(DSP\)](#)
[Disability-related Policies and Guidelines](#)
[Graduate Division Student Parent Policies](#)

4.5 Field Placement in an Employing Agency

Students may be approved for field placement in an agency where they are or have been employed if the agency is able to confirm they can provide:

1. substantial learning opportunities that are specifically related to all identified competencies for Berkeley MSW field education requirements, and that are equivalent to those available at approved internship sites outside of the student's employment; **and**
2. a qualified Field Instructor who can dedicate the time required for educational supervision.

Approval of employment setting-based field placement is not automatic. Students seeking to complete a field placement in an employment setting must collaborate with their employing agency and assigned Field Consultant faculty or the Chair of Field Education to develop and submit a written request that:

1. Proposes an appropriate MSW field education internship portion of employment that meets all Berkeley MSW field education standards and requirements
2. Identifies the qualified field instructor.
3. Proposes an appropriate field placement internship schedule.
4. Identifies new or enhanced tasks or project assignments that are separate from regular, day-to-day employment duties and that map directly to all identified competencies for the field education program.
5. Anticipates problems and identify resolution strategies in advance.

Supporting materials for an employing agency-based field placement typically include the student's resume and a copy of their current job description.

The Chair of Field Education is responsible for evaluating and approving requests for employment-based field placements and determining if the proposed placement arrangement meets all standards and requirements for the Berkeley MSW field education program. As part of this determination process, field program faculty and administrators typically meet with the student to review the proposal, and confirm the student's understanding of the educational costs and benefits of this arrangement vis-à-vis other available field placement opportunities. Students may also be asked to interview concurrently for other types of field placements so that they can fully consider the comparable educational benefits of all potential MSW field education placement opportunities.

Before approving the request, we always confer with the intended agency-based field instructor and program manager to ensure that all educational requirements can be met throughout the intended duration. We offer strategies to protect the students' learning and to separate out educational goals from their employer-based needs. Specifically, we discuss "time walls" between their educational time and their employment time so that there will be an accurate accounting of each and a separate reporting and evaluation relationship for each. Finally, we

enlist their commitment to continue the student's educational internship for the entire length of the intended duration even if employment should cease for whatever reason.

In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Field Education may approve a student to complete both of their placements in one agency where they are or have also been employed. This generally involves consideration of the student's career goals, the type of agency, the variation and quality of learning assignments available for both placements, and a comparative analysis of the benefits of other available placements that may enrich and broaden the student's graduate learning.

If we become aware that field learning tasks or educational supervision are not occurring as planned, we reserve the right to terminate the placement and to ask the student to complete another educational placement of full length. Although we encourage the agency and the student to make clear agreements about pay and benefits during the internship portion of employment, Berkeley Social Welfare cannot enforce agreements related to employment, only those related to field education standards. With these processes and protections in place, it has been our experience that employment-based field placements can be viable and advantageous in many situations.

Section 5: Field Placement Time Requirements and Attendance Policies

All students and field placement settings are expected to follow the policies and procedures established by the Social Welfare MSW field program for time, attendance and required supervision in field practicum. Regular attendance and punctuality in field practicum are considered prerequisites for eligibility for field education. A pattern of excessive absence or lateness will affect eligibility for field education or ability to complete the field placement.

When circumstances arise that impact a student's attendance in field placement, or the Field Instructor's ability to provide required weekly supervision, these should be identified and addressed in a timely manner directly with the student, Field Instructor, and the student's assigned Field Consultant.

Regardless of circumstance, students cannot be exempted from the total time requirements needed in field education to be eligible for degree conferral. In certain instances students may petition for an alternative schedule for field practicum, when such arrangements are feasible and advantageous to student learning, and do not affect the student's ability to satisfy other required academic obligations. Requests for alternative field placement schedules are considered on a semester-by-semester basis, and approval is not guaranteed. If granted, alternative schedule arrangements should be documented in the Learning Agreement. Regardless of schedule accommodations for field placement, the total hours requirement remains the same for all students.

5.1 Field Placement Attendance, Supervision and Timekeeping Requirements

Field Placement Schedule and Attendance Requirements

Berkeley School of Social Welfare deliberately schedules academic and field days separately to avoid conflicts. Students are generally not allowed to miss academic classes because of field placement obligations. Subject to conditions described below, students may be allowed to petition for an alternate field schedule as long as it does not affect their ability to enroll in or attend required and desired elective courses. Any schedule modifications must be approved by the field agency and the student's assigned Field Consultant as part of the Learning Agreement. Schedule adjustments are only approved on a semester-by-semester basis as academic schedules change each semester.

Unless otherwise arranged and pre-approved, **first year MSW students** are expected to be at internship for two, eight-hour business days, not including lunch or other break periods, on Wednesday and Thursday. Placement on other days and times is usually not possible due to academic scheduling requirements. First year placements usually begin the third or fourth week of September and end the last week of April or first week of May. Students must complete no less than 400 hours and often complete substantially more.

Unless otherwise arranged and pre-approved, **second year MSW students** are expected to be at internship for three eight-hour business days, not including lunch or other break periods, typically on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Second year students may be able to request a modification to their field schedule in order to enroll in required or desired elective courses, but approval is not guaranteed. Since academic schedules vary by semester, a modified field schedule may not be possible for both semesters of the second year placement. Second year placements usually begin the first week of September and end the last week of April or first week of May. Second year MSW students must complete no less than 720 hours and often complete substantially more.

For all field placements, internship start times, end times, and designated break times such as lunch typically follow the agency's standard schedule for social workers in the same unit, unless otherwise negotiated and approved by the student's agency-based Field Instructor and assigned Field Consultant. Internship days are normally 8 hours, not including a lunch break which must be taken on the student's own time.

Supervision Requirements

Field Instructors are expected to provide **no less than one hour per week of dedicated field instruction supervision** time, in addition to appropriate administrative time. Field Consultant faculty will intervene directly with field placement settings and Field Instructors if they have any reason to believe field instruction is not occurring regularly as agreed, including meeting the commitment to minimum weekly supervision requirements.

Timekeeping Requirements

Students are expected to attend placement regularly. The Field Instructor should immediately discuss any significant problems with regard to attendance or punctuality with the student directly and notify the student's Field Consultant.

Students and Field Instructors are expected to keep accurate records of the student's service time, as well as of field instruction supervision time, and to report them honestly to the Field Consultant on end-of-semester evaluation forms and during site visits. The Social Welfare MSW field program accepts time verifications when first semester progress reviews and final evaluations are due. Time is also monitored by field faculty during their quality assurance visits and consultations.

5.2 Absences from Field Placement

Illness or Personal Emergencies

First year students are allowed up to six (6) absences, and second year students are allowed up to nine (9) absences, per academic year due to illness or personal emergency. These absences do not need to be made-up. If a student must be absent from placement due to illness or some other emergency reason, the student must call the agency to make sure that their duties are covered before their scheduled shift begins. Email communication or communication after the beginning of the shift is not considered sufficient. Compelling reasons do not include social conflicts, the student's failure to plan to complete one's routine academic work appropriately, or other work or personal obligations that are not related to illness or emergency.

Religious Observances

Students who observe religious holidays or practices that may conflict with their field placement schedule are encouraged to identify those potential schedule conflicts at the beginning of placement and to proactively discuss possible accommodations with their Field Instructor and Field Consultant. In general, we ask that field agencies accommodate the religious obligations of our students by allowing temporary alterations to the student's schedule of service.

Designated Break Periods

During designated break periods (usually two weeks from mid-December to early January and a week in late March), students are expected to arrange for continuity of coverage for their cases and administrative projects. They are not, however, generally expected to be present or to respond to clients or collaborators. Students are also not responsible for clients or administrative projects at days and times when they are not scheduled to be in field placement. If necessary, appropriate coverage must be provided or arranged by the Field Instructor or another identified agency staff member.

Other Schedule Obligations

Student commitment to field education supersedes other obligations they may hold, including graduate student researcher or instructor positions, fellowship programs, and employment.

Students requiring accommodations related to disability or significant parenting or caregiving responsibilities may request that field placement schedule modifications be considered as part of their approved accommodations. Students enrolled in concurrent degree programs may also be approved for scheduled modifications on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of schedule accommodations for field placement, the total hours requirements remain the same for all students.

Students who need more flexibility in service of time increment due to their health, caregiving responsibilities, or unforeseeable catastrophic events can complete the minimum service increment as long as they also continue to meet all identified competency standards.

We also ask that flexible scheduling be permitted during the last few weeks of each semester (for final examinations and assignments), and during field placement interview periods for the second year placement process (occurring for first year students, mostly in February and March).

5.3 Field Placement Attendance in Times of Disruption

Labor-Management Disputes

When a field placement agency experiences a labor dispute or actions such as a strike, student attendance at field practicum may not be possible. In general, the student should confer with their Field Instructor, the Agency Training Coordinator, and Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Field Consultant to determine the most appropriate course of action. If labor action is likely to disrupt the student's access to learning activities and appropriate educational supervision and instruction, then students are not allowed to be at placement until such time as access to learning activities and instruction can be reinstated. In many cases, meaningful tasks may be assigned for the student to complete remotely including administrative, planning, and evaluation work, or analyzing the contractual or labor-management dispute so they learn more about unions as they function in social service agencies.

Students who miss field placement due to labor disputes and are not able to do meaningful work remotely must still fulfill the minimum service time commitment. If the labor dispute persists for a protracted period of time and another comparable placement is available, the School reserves the right to place the student in another field setting so that they may complete their education in normative time.

Natural or Human-made Disasters

The San Francisco Bay Area is subject to wildfires, earthquakes, power outages, flooding, and other natural or human-made disasters that may impact the agency, the student's home, or the mode of transportation between them. In these instances, the field program usually sends correspondence to all agencies and students about whether field placement has been cancelled for affected agencies or students. If placement cancellations occur for less than two placement weeks in an academic year and the student uses those days to learn about how agencies provide services to their constituents during times of disaster, the placement days typically do not need to be made up. If the disaster is of such a magnitude that placement is disrupted beyond two placement weeks, students may be allowed to meet the minimum time service increment as long as they also continue to meet all identified competency requirements. In extreme cases of natural disaster where an agency must temporarily or permanently close, the student may need to be placed into another field setting so that they may complete their education in normative time.

5.4 Modified Service Dates for Field Placement

Every field placement represents a three-way agreement between the individual student, the university and the placement site. In some cases, placement sites require accepted students to commit to a start, end or break schedule that differs from that of the Berkeley Social Welfare field calendar. Any requirements that lie outside of the posted field calendar must be communicated to the Field Consultant and the student no later than the point at which a placement offer is made, and the terms must be codified in the completed learning agreement. The school and university will provide educational services and related benefits and assurances for the beginning and end date of the internship even if those begin before or end after the university's official academic calendar. Successful completion of an internship includes adhering to agreed-upon start and ending dates, regardless of the number of hours accrued by a student at the end of the academic year.

Revised 7 April 2021

5.5 Registering for Additional Field Units

Students in enriched training programs that offer onsite seminars or enhanced supervision with readings and assignments, and where they serve an extra half-day or day of service per week, may request approval to enroll in 1 to 2 units of SOC WEL 401-Field Practicum per semester. The assigned field faculty member in consultation with the Chair of Field Education will decide if the training program meets the definition of “enriched” and may ask to review seminar syllabi, readings, or assignments. These activities should be clearly enumerated in the student learning agreement. Units earned in SOC WEL 401 count toward the minimum of 12 units needed to register each semester but do not count as academic units. The student’s field faculty member usually serves as the instructor of record for these additional enrichment units.

5.6 Early Termination of Field Placement

Although every effort is made to ensure a successful field education experience, early termination of a field placement is sometimes necessary due to compelling circumstances. These may include a serious and irresolvable conflict between the student and the agency Field Instructor, serious breaches of ethical conduct on the part of the student, unsatisfactory performance by the student, the loss of a qualified Field Instructor, closure or reorganization of the agency, serious climate problems in the agency, serious safety issues for the student, or the student's withdrawal from field education for personal or medical reasons. Short of these circumstances, termination of the placement should be considered as the option of last resort and only after every attempt has been made to complete the placement.

A request to terminate the placement early may be made at any time by the student, the Field Instructor, or the Field Consultant. The decision to terminate a placement should involve the student, the Field Instructor, the Field Consultant, and the Chair of Field Education. This decision is typically made after a joint conference among the student, Field Instructor, and Field Consultant, and involves consultation with the Chair of Field Education. Although the Social Welfare MSW Program generally requests that agencies not terminate a student before this consultation process occurs, Field Instructors, agencies, and Field Consultants hold the right to terminate a placement. Students, however, are not allowed to terminate placements on their own, and must work with their assigned Field Consultant on their concerns. Students who refuse to continue in placement without approval of their Field Consultant are likely to receive an unsatisfactory grade and face additional consequences for dropping a required course without advance approval.

In some situations, students who are reluctant to continue in their field placement may be instructed to give the opportunity more time. Students who refuse to make consistent, good faith efforts to resolve professional concerns or conflicts may be subject to academic consequences. Students are expected to maintain their composure and professionalism even if they have strong feelings about their situation.

If a decision is made to terminate a placement before its intended ending, the following steps are typically completed:

1. The Field Consultant requests and reviews a written evaluation from the Field Instructor of the student's performance up to that point, shares that evaluation with the student, and allows at least one week's time for the student to respond in writing, if desired.
2. If the student's performance is deemed deficient or problematic by the Field Instructor, the Field Consultant will initiate a consultation process usually involving the Chair of Field Education, the Field Instructor, other Agency Personnel such as the Training Coordinator or Program Manager, the student, or the Berkeley Social Welfare Associate Dean. After gathering a variety of perspectives and available sources of information, final responsibility for determining the grade rests with the assigned Field Consultant.

3. The Field Consultant communicates in writing to the student his/her/their grade, the related rationale, and how much credit, if any, they shall receive for days served and what requirements remain to complete their field education experience.

If the Field Instructor's recommendation of an unsatisfactory grade is deemed valid by the Field Consultant, the student will receive an "Unsatisfactory" for that grading period, and no additional placement may be provided in that semester. An unsatisfactory grade in either field placement is likely to be grounds for the student being placed on academic probation and facing dismissal if the concerns are not resolved by the following semester. This would especially be the case if a student had performed in a manner inconsistent with the NASW Code of Ethics or the Berkeley Student Code of Conduct or in a manner that caused or could have caused harm to a client, colleague, to the agency or School.

Students who receive an unsatisfactory grade do not receive partial credit for their experience even if they were successful during parts of the experience. If and when students who receive an unsatisfactory grade are permitted to repeat field requirements, they will usually have restricted choice and be assigned to a well-established placement with an experienced Field Instructor by their Field Consultant. In addition, insertions may be made to the learning agreement that addresses areas that were problematic in the original placement, they may be more closely monitored, and they may be assigned an independent study or other remedy.

Calculation of Make-Up Days Following Early Placement Termination

Although a substantial number of days may have been successfully completed before a placement is prematurely terminated, the student is usually expected to complete another placement in full because of the cumulative nature of field learning and competency attainment process.

In some circumstances, students may petition their Field Consultant in writing for hours of credit that may be applied toward their next placement. Students are expected to include their rationale for the request and a time breakdown. In evaluating the number of days of credit to be authorized, if any, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

1. The student must have performed satisfactorily in the placement on any day for which credit is given. If the student is terminated for unethical or unprofessional behavior or for failing to meet agency standards, generally no credit is awarded.
2. Credit is generally not given for orientation activities that are agency specific. Credit may be given, however, for orientation activities that are likely to be generalizable to the next field placement.

Section 6: Field Policies and Procedures to Support Student Safety

Student safety in field education is a shared responsibility of everyone involved in the field learning experience. Our safety and security policies and procedures are designed to support the protection of students from undue occupational risk, and the protection of clients and constituents from privacy breaches and substandard psychosocial care.

Safety policies have been extensively revised and updated to reflect the valuable lessons learned and experience gained from responding to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. All students, faculty, staff, Field Instructors, and other stakeholders in field education should review these policies and procedures on a regular basis.

Prior to beginning field placement, all Berkeley MSW students complete multiple required online modules focused on safety, self-care, harassment, legal/ethical requirements. Field education program safety policies, procedures and criteria are reviewed with all Field Instructors during the annual Field Instructor Training Institute, and reinforced by Field Consultant faculty communications and in-person site visits throughout the academic year. Field placement agency safety policies and procedures should be communicated to students during the orientation period and reinforced throughout the student's field placement experience.

6.1 Mandatory Insurance, Health Screening and Immunization Requirements

Health Insurance

As a condition of enrollment at the University of California, all registered students are required to meet the university's health insurance mandate. Registered UC Berkeley undergraduate and graduate students are automatically enrolled in the [Berkeley Student Health Insurance Plan \(SHIP\)](#) as a way to meet this mandate. Berkeley SHIP is a comprehensive major medical insurance plan, providing medical, counseling, prescription, vision and dental services. To learn more about SHIP and how to access SHIP benefits, please visit [University Health Services > How to Use SHIP](#).

Students can choose to keep SHIP or waive enrollment if they have comparable coverage that meets the University's criteria. While all students are eligible to use services at the campus health center, the Tang Center will only accept SHIP insurance. For more information please visit [University Health Services > Waiving SHIP](#).

Liability Insurance

Berkeley Social Welfare provides all MSW students with professional and general liability insurance for legal protection if an act or omission occurs at field placement that inadvertently leads to harm. Premiums for this required liability coverage are paid from Professional Degree Supplemental Tuition fees charged to all Social Welfare MSW students. All students accepted into the Social Welfare MSW program must be eligible for field placement, and for required coverage under the School's professional liability insurance policy.

Mandatory TB Screening and Immunizations

All UC Berkeley incoming and re-admitted students must satisfy TB screening and immunization requirements as mandated by the UC Office of the President by the established deadlines. Failure to comply may jeopardize matriculation or continued enrollment in the Social Welfare MSW Program. To learn more about these requirements, deadlines and steps to complete, please visit the Tang Center's [Mandatory TB & Immunization Program](#).

Some field placement sites require additional health screening. If a student does not wish to submit to additional health screening for whatever reason, they may request information about other available placement options.

6.2 Universal Safety Standards for Students and Agencies

The Berkeley Social Welfare MSW field program has established the following universal criteria for supporting student safety in field education at all times.

1. Students should be in full compliance with all mandatory insurance, health screening and immunization requirements prior to starting any field placement. Students should maintain this compliance throughout their graduate student career, including timely satisfaction of any new or additional requirements that may be mandated by the University of California, Berkeley Social Welfare, or any agency hosting social work student field placements.
2. Students should complete all mandated pre-placement safety training and orientation requirements by established deadlines.
3. When in field placement, all students are required to follow the occupational health and safety requirements of the placement site at all times.
4. Agencies hosting social work student field placements should have explicit, written safety and security policies and procedures in place that meet the policies for safety, security and privacy outlined in this guide. Field placement sites should require student interns to follow the same safety and security policies and procedures that are required for all agency staff. Agency-based Field Instructors should orient students to all agency safety and security policies and procedures, and review them regularly throughout the student's placement experience. At a minimum these should include:
 - Required health screenings and clearances, including immunizations
 - Building and office security
 - Home visits
 - Client transportation
 - Working with clients who may pose a safety risk
 - Emergency preparedness and response
 - Confidentiality of client information and agency data
 - Use of social media and technology
 - Safety and security of remote and telehealth services
 - Personnel policies for the prevention of and response to incidents of harassment or discrimination.
5. Agencies hosting social work student field placements and all students in field placement should adhere to established public health guidelines, and be fully compliant with all public health directives or emergency orders that may be implemented or currently in effect at any time.
6. Agencies hosting social work student field placements should provide training opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills and abilities related to safe social

work practice, social workers' responsibilities for emergency preparedness and disaster response.

7. Field placement agencies and agency-based Field instructors should establish and implement protocols for providing support to students who express concerns about their safety in field placement.

6.3 Agency Safety Policies

Agencies hosting social work field placements for Berkeley Social Welfare MSW students should require student interns to follow the same safety and security policies and procedures that are required for all agency staff.

Field Instructors are expected to communicate and orient students to all agency policies and procedures for safety, and review them regularly throughout the student's placement experience to reinforce knowledge, skills and abilities related to safe social work practice. At a minimum this should include information about:

- Site, building and office security.
- Procedures for ensuring that the Field Instructor or other staff know (or can easily ascertain) a student's location during field practicum hours.
- Occupational health and safety requirements specific to the field placement setting.
- Emergency preparedness and response procedures, including when and how to summon security or police assistance; and, in the event of natural disaster, evacuation routes and procedures.
- Universal precautions and safety protocols in place for public health emergencies, including agency policies and procedures for implementing or responding to public health directives or emergency orders.
- Staff responsibilities and procedures governing work with clients who may pose a safety risk, and the management of violent clients or other individuals.
- Procedures for responding and providing support to students who express concerns about their safety in field placement.
- Safety on home community visits, including when, where, and under what conditions visits should or should not be made, when the student should be accompanied, and how back-up is provided.

Home Visits

Thorough preparation should be made for student home community visits with consideration given to the following elements:

1. Selection of clients and home environments that are not presumed to be dangerous to the student.
2. Provision of a safe means of transportation, whether by agency vehicle, the student's car, or public transportation where such can be judged normally safe.
3. Discussion of the neighborhood including any potentially dangerous areas.
4. Discussion of appropriate risk-reducing behaviors in the neighborhood and in the client's home.

5. Clarification of the purpose and development of a specific plan for the visit.
6. Discussion of what to do should the client or anyone else present a threat to the student.
7. Opportunity for the student to observe home visits before conducting them and/or to be partnered with another member of the agency.
8. Provision of appropriate support and backup. Depending on the situation and the student's experience with home visits, this may range from accompaniment by another worker or security person, to immediate availability of telephone consultation. At minimum, the student's Field Instructor should know when and where a visit is to take place, and arrange for telephone consultation.

6.4 Prohibited Student Activities

Berkeley Social Welfare MSW Students in field practicum placements may not be assigned the following activities:

1. Physical restraint of clients.
2. Transportation of a client in the student's private car.
3. Transportation of a client with a recent history of violent behavior in an agency car.
4. Treatment of a client with a history of violence toward staff.
5. Work in the agency at times when or in areas where other staff are not present; or, if performing remote duties, when a supervisor is not immediately available by phone or text message.
6. Distribution or handling of medications.
7. Clinical responsibility for a client at high risk for suicide without reviewing if the student possesses the requisite time, skills, knowledge, and supports to manage the client.
8. Clinical responsibility for other high risk clients without review.
9. Other activities that go beyond the scope of social work practice or the capacity of an MSW intern or may place the intern or client at risk for harm.

Students should immediately disclose any safety concerns to their assigned Field Consultant.

6.5 Confidentiality of Client Information and Agency Data

[NASW Code of Ethics](#) requirements regarding confidentiality of client information extend to the use of confidential information from field placement in classes, seminars, and in student assignments. **Students may not divulge client, collateral, or collegial information.** All students in field placement must adhere to the following requirements for ensuring confidentiality of client information and agency data:

1. Students are required to disguise all names, demographic information and any case details that might identify a client or co-worker.
2. Client files and records should not be removed from the agency without following clear agency protocols about their maintenance and protection.
3. Students should only review records of clients they are actively engaged with or are assigned to review for learning purposes.
4. Students should not use agency data, even if de-identified, for classroom assignments or public consumption without the explicit permission of the agency.
5. When a student is completing remote tasks electronically, they must use agency technology or equipment and follow all agency protocols related to protecting privacy information.

6.6 Use of Social Media and Technology

While at field practicum, students must refrain from checking their personal phones and devices for emails, phone calls, and text messages that are personal in nature and from conducting personal internet browsing from agency computers. Use of social media including text messaging, tweets, Instagram, and Facebook-type postings should never directly or indirectly reference information or events related to field placement or include images or photographs. As students assume professional roles, they are encouraged to update their privacy settings and to use professional discretion about what they post online.

Work-related electronic documents that may be confidential in nature should not be downloaded or saved onto personal or home laptops, computers, smartphones, or other devices. Other precautions should be taken to protect the boundaries between personal and professional and to protect the safety and privacy of the client and agency.

6.7 Suspension of In-person Field Education

When extreme emergent operational or environmental conditions lead or are likely to lead to suspension of in-person field education, the Berkeley Social Welfare MSW field program follows established protocols for proactive communication and decision-making. In any emergency situation, our overarching goals and guiding principles mirror those of the Berkeley campus to (1) prioritize health and safety, and (2) preserve our academic and professional training missions to the greatest extent possible.

Short-term disruptions to in-person field placement, or those localized to individual students or agencies are normally handled according to our policy on [Field Placement Attendance in Times of Disruption](#).

Longer-term disruptions and those impacting the entire UC Berkeley and larger communities are managed under existing campus protocols for emergency response and crisis management. Decisions about continuing in-person classes and learning activities, including in-person field placement, are generally made by a central campus committee typically composed of instructional, medical, legal, administrative, and other cognizant stakeholders. Decisions are arrived at by weighing the educational mission of the University; student health and safety; and the public health and safety of the local community. The campus reserves the right to suspend in-person learning immediately at any time with notice, in response to any emergency orders, public health directives or disaster response mandates issued by state, county, or City of Berkeley authorities.

When in-person learning is suspended at Berkeley:

1. All students and field agency sites will be immediately notified by the Berkeley Social Welfare Dean's Office and the field program via email.
2. Our instructional goal is to preserve in-person field education learning opportunities to the greatest extent possible while also weighing the agency context of practice, individual student risk, and currently available public health and safety guidance. Students will be provided with approved alternative field education opportunities as allowed, either in agencies that can provide fully remote learning opportunities, or in the form of Berkeley Social Welfare field program-delivered field internship activities that will count toward student field education requirements.
3. Agencies and students will be encouraged and supported in adapting student learning to an all-remote environment, whenever possible. When not possible:
 - a. The student may [petition for a reduction in field hours requirements](#).
 - b. The student may petition for an exception to the suspension of in-person field education as permitted (see the following section for more information).
 - c. The Social Welfare MSW field education program will assume responsibility for providing approved alternative pathways for field practicum completion that are

remote and compliant with relevant accreditation and school educational standards governing competency-based professional education. Alternative pathways may include skill-based training, special projects, continuing education courses, professional development activities, additional service activities, or additional proposals.

On balance, our policy is to follow all campus guidelines, and to provide students the most up-to-date information available about public health and safety conditions. Our goal is to assist students in making informed decisions about their field education in relation to their current learning and future occupational goals and commitments. We appreciate that such decisions are complex, may not comport with student or faculty preferences, and may require students to ultimately make decisions that are not in alignment with their original goals in pursuing an MSW degree, given what our program can reasonably offer under extreme circumstances.

Exceptions to Suspension of In-Person Field Placement

When Berkeley Social Welfare suspends in-person field education, students currently enrolled in field practicum may be allowed to petition for an exception if their field placement agency continues operations. All of the following criteria must be clearly met for a student to be eligible for approval to continue with in-person field placement when the campus has suspended in-person learning activities:

- 1. Policy Exceptions Permitted by UC Berkeley:** Campus authorities have explicitly communicated the conditions and procedures required for academic units to request exceptions to emergency directives suspending in-person learning, including fieldwork courses required for completing a graduate professional degree.
- 2. Agency-Based Learning Necessitates In-Person Attendance:** The core of the student's agency-based learning can only be achieved by in-person attendance at least some of the time because of the nature of services provided, or options for remote learning are severely limited or do not exist.
- 3. Enhanced Safety Protocols are in Place:** In addition to existent occupational health and safety measures or emergency mandates that may be in effect, the setting and student are willing and able to commit to higher levels of safety and enhanced measures beyond what is minimally required or recommended to reduce and mitigate risk.
- 4. Student Understanding of Risk:** The student fully understands the elevated risk they, and those who live or socialize with them, may face by their resumption of in-person field education, and is willing and able to engage in risk reduction.
- 5. Strict Adherence to Public Health Guidance:** In public health emergency situations the student understands and agrees to follow all statewide, regional, and UC Berkeley campus public health orders, even when outside the learning environment, to reduce and mitigate risk while at internship.

- 6. Lack of Coercion:** The student is not being pressured by the agency or others to engage in in-person field education and is not doing so out of fear of not being considered employable by the agency.

Even if all of the above criteria are clearly met, approval for an exception to in-person field is not guaranteed. The Berkeley Social Welfare MSW field program may also establish additional requirements as necessary.

Students should contact their assigned Field Consultant to request consideration for an exception to suspension of in-person field education when allowed. Requests require approval of the Chair of Field Education.

6.8 Safety and Security of Remote and Tele-Health Services

When Berkeley Social Welfare MSW students are permitted or requested to provide remote social work or telehealth services - or field placement agencies are asked to allow students to serve remotely, when possible - the ability to do so will normally depend upon the nature of social work services provided, the population served and service context.

When a student will be providing clinical social work services to vulnerable clients or constituents remotely, the following must generally be true:

- It is the responsibility of the agency to ensure students are well-oriented to and follow all relevant state and national guidelines to protect confidentiality of client and agency information and to obtain informed consent.
- The agency ensures that the technology and process of telehealth and distance counseling are in compliance with state and national guidelines for the protection of client and agency confidentiality.
- The agency must issue the student an approved device with all of the appropriate programs, software, applications, and encryption installed, or will make certain the appropriate programs, software, applications, virtual private network (VPN), and/or encryption are installed on the student's devices.
- The student must complete mandatory tele-health learning modules that will be provided by the field program regarding law and ethics and best practices.
- The field instructor will explicitly discuss consultation expectations and protocols, and crisis response protocols for students who are remotely engaged in client-facing services.
- The field instructor, training coordinator, or another appropriate employee of the agency must be immediately available to the student providing tele-health services for urgent consultation regarding clinical risk, consultation expectations and protocols for when students are remotely engaged in client-facing services.
- The student must take reasonable steps to ensure client or patient privacy when they are engaged in service provision such as using earphones and arranging for as private a space as possible.

6.9 Managing Field-related Conflicts, Concerns and Problem-solving

On occasion, issues arise in field placements that create learning problems for the student, or teaching problems for the Field Instructor. These may be due to incompatibility of teaching and learning styles, personality conflict, communication breakdown, incompatible expectations, or other factors. Experience has shown that the sooner issues are identified and addressed, the more likely it is that the placement will continue successfully. Conversely, if problems are ignored or discussion of them is delayed, the problems are further exacerbated and the probability of successful resolution is decreased.

In many cases, students and Field Instructors are able to discuss and resolve these issues as part of the educational supervisory process. However, if problems interfere with the progress of the student/Field Instructor relationship or the student's performance, it is essential that the Field Consultant be contacted immediately. The Field Consultant has the overall responsibility for facilitating the successful completion of the placement for both student and Field Instructor, and can provide assistance with clarifying and addressing the issues. This may include site visits or individual conferences with the student, Field Instructor, or both.

Resolution of difficult issues may require developing a corrective action plan. The Field Consultant should be involved in developing this plan in writing, and it should be signed by student and Field Instructor, attached to the learning agreement, and specifically reviewed in the next written evaluation.

Immediate attention to problems is essential in order to prevent the early termination of the field placement whenever possible. Early placement termination can have many negative consequences for students including disruption of the learning process, their ability to complete course assignments that are often based on field experiences, and their ability to progress along normative timelines for degree conferral. This may result in students receiving an Incomplete grade, and also require them to make up the days during the summer, which could pose a hardship both in commitment of time and additional tuition costs.

Many students who have had difficulties in their field placement later report that they learned important professional lessons that strengthened their ethics, character, fortitude, and integrity. Field Instructors also report this. In social work employment environments, conflicts are expected, and the ability to resolve or cope with them maturely is required.

Managing Conflicts with Peers

On occasions, students may also experience severe conflicts with peers who are also placed at the same agency or are enrolled in the same field integration seminar. When this is the case, the affected students should make every effort to address the conflicts directly, to demonstrate listening, to express perspectives in a non-blaming manner, and to see if differences can be understood, accepted, or resolved. In most cases, students will not be allowed to transfer to another field seminar section or change placements due to interpersonal conflicts. If good faith informal attempts at resolution have not been successful, the affected students may involve

their assigned Field Consultant. The Field Consultant will help to assess the situation, provide mediation, if appropriate, and provide guidance and recommendations to the affected students. Students are expected to form and maintain working and professional relationships with one another as colleagues.

Conflicts with Field Consultants

On occasions, students may also experience severe conflicts with their assigned Field Consultant. When this is the case, the affected students and Field Consultant(s) should make every effort to address the conflicts directly, to demonstrate listening, to express perspectives in a non-blaming manner, and to see if differences can be understood, accepted, or resolved. Generally, students are expected to be able to form and maintain a working and professional relationship with their assigned Field Consultant. If good faith informal attempts at resolution have not been successful, the affected students or Field Consultant(s) may involve the Chair of Field Education or other designated Social Welfare MSW Program administrators.

6.10 Suspected Harassment or Discrimination Occurring at Field Placement

UC Berkeley is committed to ensuring that all individuals who participate in University programs and activities including field education can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Unfortunately, these experiences can sometimes occur in field placement agencies or be perpetrated by agency employees. A range of confidential services are available to students affected by these concerns including [University Health Services \(Tang Center\)](#), the campus [Ombuds Office](#), the [Student Advocate's Office](#), and the [PATH to Care Center](#).

While students are strongly encouraged to report experiences of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation to their assigned Field Consultant, all faculty and staff are considered by the university to be "responsible persons" who are required to report these experiences to the [Office of Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination \(OPHD\)](#). OPHD is the campus authority responsible for ensuring the University provides an environment for all students, faculty, and staff that is free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence. OPHD takes and responds to reports alleging violations of University of California and UC Berkeley policies prohibiting protected category [discrimination](#) and harassment, including sexual harassment and violence.

When incidents of harassment or discrimination may have occurred in field placement, Field Consultants and students review the situation carefully and discuss options for a response to the situation that considers their safety, their educational needs and goals, OPHD guidelines, and the student's personal values and preferences. In some cases where a student has been harassed in an agency, OPHD may speak to an officer or official in that agency for cross-reporting purposes. In some circumstances, appropriate protections may be put in place so that the internship may proceed, and in other cases, the student may be placed in a different environment.

6.11 Emotionally Distressed Students in Field Placement

On occasion, a student may manifest signs of distress while in field practicum due to personal problems, health or mental health issues, or community events either they or their family are experiencing. Any indication that a student may have difficulty in safely and effectively practicing social work in a field placement setting will be directly addressed and further assessed. These issues may be detected by agency personnel, by Field Consultants or Field Instructors, by other students or colleagues, or by the student themselves. Our objective in addressing such situations is to preserve student confidentiality to the greatest extent possible, to offer the student referral to help, to make accommodations in the field where appropriate and possible, and most important of all, to ensure that agency clients and services are not adversely affected by student distress.

If the student indicates that the noted behavioral issues arise from an underlying disability, the Field Consultant will refer the student to the Disabled Students' Program ([DSP](#)) for evaluation. DSP may, in turn, request specific accommodations for the student's disability. The consultant may also refer the student for assistance to Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](#)) at the Tang Center. The Field Consultant will make clear that use of DSP and CPS services are voluntary. Under certain circumstances where there is concern about the student's safety or health, the Field Consultant may involve other campus resources such as the [Center for Support and Intervention](#).

Depending upon the student's circumstance and the degree to which they appear able to meet the eligibility requirements for field placement, arrangements may be made such as taking a temporary leave from field placement, requesting a temporary reduction of hours or restriction of duties, continuing on with more applied supports, or other alternatives that balance protecting the student's health, their education, and their duties to the clients and agency.

Students experiencing prolonged distress for any reason may remain ineligible for field placement, and may be encouraged to consider withdrawing from the program and applying for re-enrollment at a later time. In some cases medical clearance may be required before a student is allowed to resume learning in a social work field placement.

6.12 Reporting Requirements and Critical Incident Debriefing

Students and agencies are required to immediately report any concerns or incidents related to student safety to the appropriate Field Consultant. If the Field Consultant is not available, the report should be made to the Chair of Field Education. For current contact information please see the online Berkeley Social Welfare [faculty directory](#).

It is not unusual for students in field placement to directly witness, hear about, or be party to a critical incident including a patient death, an incident of violence, involuntary hospitalization, the arrest of a client, or other incidents that could be considered traumatic or highly distressing. Reactions to these incidents can vary widely. We encourage all Field Instructors to proactively inquire about student reactions to adverse events in the placement agency. We further encourage students to debrief incidents with their assigned Field Consultant. If a student would like to debrief an incident in a field seminar class, the Field Consultant should be consulted in advance to determine how to help the group receive the information and offer support.

Section 7: Evaluation and Grading in Field Practicum

Our MSW field education program prepares all students with basic knowledge about the field of social work, about social work values and perspectives, and with basic skills to approach learning and related tasks. At the same time, we also recognize that in the real world of agency-based practice, chance often creates uncharted opportunities to learn and renders planned tasks unfeasible. Professional social workers need to be able to adapt quickly to changing contexts and demands while upholding the core values, knowledge, and approaches of the profession.

The Social Welfare MSW field program provides several tools designed to facilitate an organized, yet adaptable, field experience for students and to respect the organic nature of the real world classroom. These tools include a set of minimum [practice competencies](#) defining expected performance outcomes, the [Competency-Based Learning Agreement](#) process, and a set of field learning task guidelines.

Students, agency-based Field Instructors and Social Welfare MSW Field Consultant faculty share accountability for the evaluation of student learning and performance in field education. As instructors of record for field education courses, Berkeley Social Welfare Field Consultants are responsible for submitting official grades.

7.1 Competency-Based Learning Agreements and Task Assignments

The Learning Agreement

The competency-based Learning Agreement is a written understanding between the student, the field placement agency-based Field Instructor and the Field Consultant about the nature and content of the student's field experience. This written understanding provides a focus for mutual planning in the development of the placement, and serves as a reference point for ongoing evaluation of the student's progress toward achieving expected competencies. The agreement is also a basis for the resolution of any disagreement that might later arise among the various stakeholders and partners in student field education.

- **The Field Instructor** has lead responsibility for overseeing the development of the Learning Agreement. This means providing guidance throughout the process including initiating discussion about the agreement, selecting appropriate assignments with the student's input, and making sure that the document is completed in a timely manner.
- **The student** is responsible for producing the Learning Agreement document, including preparation of drafts for discussion and submitting a final draft of the document to the Social Welfare MSW field education program on time.
- **The Field Consultant** is responsible for meeting with the student and Field Instructor to review the Learning Agreement and approve it when it is finalized.

Discussions about field task assignments should begin as soon as the student starts placement. The normal timeline for completing the required Learning Agreement is one month (please refer to the [current Field Education Calendar](#) for exact due dates each semester).

All Learning Agreement forms are available electronically through our online database, Sonia.

Field Task Assignments

Typically, several general types of assignments are developed each year. These assignments are selected by the Field Instructor, in discussion with the student, and should take into account the student's interests and readiness, the skills the student needs to acquire, and the range of available learning opportunities and activities in the agency.

Field placement tasks and duties should be identified that will advance student progress toward achieving each of the [nine practice competencies](#) established for the Social Welfare MSW field education program. All of the competencies should be addressed each year, although specific learning activities will differ for first and second year students.

- Learning opportunities and activities for **first-year students** should reflect learning and performance at a beginning and foundational level of generalist social work practice.
- Learning opportunities and activities for **second-year students** should approach performance levels appropriate for an entry-level practitioner in a specific area or method of specialized social work practice.

The agency may also require the student to perform additional tasks which are viewed as necessary for competent, ethical service and social work practice in the agency context. These additional tasks should be discussed with the student and Field Consultant, and explicitly noted in the Learning Agreement to clarify expectations and prevent potential misunderstandings.

The intention is for students to be assigned work in field placement that explicitly prepares them for master's-level social work. Thoughtfully assigning duties located in the student's proximal growth zone is essential. Students should not be regularly assigned clerical tasks beyond those normally required for successful work with their active clients or for completing assigned projects. We also request field placement settings refrain from assigning duties to students that are well beyond their expected skill or competency level, duties at which they already excel, or duties that are more commensurate with paraprofessional responsibilities.

Each student and Field Instructor are also asked to identify at least two to three assignments per academic year upon which feedback will be given based upon direct observation, audiovisual observation, or transcription/process recording review of the student's work. For direct practice students, this may involve the Field Instructor observing the student conducting an intake, a counseling or case management session, or group; for a macro practice student, this may involve the Field Instructor observing the student leading a meeting, giving a public presentation, or interviewing or conferring with a stakeholder. Similarly, we ask each student and field instructor to identify at least two to three tangible deliverables or work products per academic year upon which competency-based feedback will be provided. This can include psychosocial assessments, court reports, case presentations, group curricula, written protocols, grant proposals, needs assessments, program evaluations, presentation slides and materials, and other work products related to their task assignments.

Learning Agreements Modifications in Extenuating Circumstances

If extenuating circumstances arise in or around field learning that are likely to impact a student's or agency's ability to fulfill commitments made in the Learning Agreement, the Social Welfare MSW field program may request or recommend that agreements be modified. In these instances, MSW students and their agency-based Field Instructor will interact to develop and propose modifications to the Learning Agreement that may allow the student to continue progress toward achieving all of the required competencies while balancing the protection of learning with any identified or emergent health or safety risks.

When modifications to Learning Agreements are mandated due to extenuating circumstances, students and agencies should be candid, honest, and transparent with supervising field faculty about any concerns related to risk, health and safety, or the student's ability to successfully continue with the field placement under current operating conditions. Students and agencies are further guided by field program policies on [Suspension of In-Person Field Education](#) and [Safety and Security of Remote and Tele-Health Services](#).

All modifications to a student’s field placement work requirements must be clearly documented in the Learning Agreement. Supervising Field Consultant faculty will approve all Learning Agreements and modifications, and facilitate addressing and responding to any concerns in a timely manner.

7.2 Completing Research Assignments in Field Placement

All Berkeley MSW students complete a required sequence of two courses in social research methods, culminating in the design of a program evaluation project in SOC WEL 282B-Seminar in Social Research Methods, which is completed in the second semester of the final year of study in the MSW Program. In some cases, students may wish to complete this project in conjunction with their field placement. In general, the research is counted as part of their assignments for their research courses and is generally not considered field education time. Up to 4 hours per week, however, may be counted as field education learning if the following conditions are met:

1. The project must be directly relevant to the student's field education learning goals, and be planned and fully approved by the agency Field Instructor and the Field Consultant.
2. The project must be supervised by the Field Instructor or another member of agency staff such as a secondary Field Instructor.
3. The research project must be listed in the student's learning agreement and linked to competencies.
4. Participation in this research must not preempt other field learning assignments or competency development needs.

Whether research is considered part of field practicum or a separate assignment, the agency is expected to apply its own research policies and protocols related to research conducted by interns. We do ask that the agency provide access to the employee or department who is most responsible for conducting program evaluation so that students may consult with them and design final projects that are practice-relevant and contextually grounded. Agency personnel may wish to obtain information from either the supervising field faculty member or the faculty member teaching the research methods seminar.

7.3 Evaluation of Student Learning and Performance in Field

Although evaluation of progress in field education should be ongoing, formal evaluation occurs twice each year at semester's end in a (1) First Semester Evaluation, and (2) Final Evaluation. In addition, site visits and consultations during which Field Faculty members discuss progress with the student and/or the field instructor also serve an evaluation function. Sometimes formal or informal consultations also occur privately with only one party present. When private meetings are held, Field Consultants use discretion about what information to share with the other affected party or parties. All evaluation forms are available electronically through our online database, Sonia.

The evaluations are designed to facilitate a discussion between the student, the Field Instructor, and the Field Consultant on the student's progress toward achieving identified competencies. The Learning Agreement and target competencies both guide the evaluation of student performance. Many Field Instructors find it valuable to ask students to review these documents and prepare a self-evaluation to discuss. Interactive discussion between the Field Instructor and student should always precede the Field Instructor completing the written evaluation. Normally, we recommend the Field Instructor consider the student's self-evaluation, refer back to the Learning Agreement and identified competencies, consider their direct observations of the student, consider other relevant sources of evaluative input, and then finalize their written comments for the student. It is also recommended that the Field Instructor discuss the evaluation with the student in a face-to-face meeting. The student may opt to write responsive comments, and the final document should be submitted to the Field Consultant in a timely manner.

First Semester Evaluation

The first semester progress review provides important appraisal to the student as to whether they are progressing normatively or not in field education. Near the end of the first semester, the Field Instructor collaborates with the student to submit a First Semester Evaluation that is due the second week in December. The Evaluation Form emphasizes the student's progress toward becoming oriented to the agency setting and practice assignments; initially engaging with assigned clients or administrative projects; initiating assessments and intervention plans of or with clients or administrative projects; and demonstrating acceptable written and verbal communication, ethical and professional conduct, and commitment to professional growth and development. It also asks the Field Instructor and student to give preliminary competency ratings in these areas on a 3-point, behaviorally anchored scale.

The Field Instructor will be asked to describe the student's observable strengths and improvements, and to identify what would be required for the student to reach the next level of advancement for each area assessed. The Field Instructor and student also typically reflect together on their instructional relationship and how to enhance or improve it.

Finally, the First Semester Evaluation will also outline the activities and competencies that will be addressed, observed, and evaluated in the next semester so that a complete final evaluation

may be submitted. The Field Instructor will then enter an overall grade recommendation of "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory."

After receiving the final version of the First Semester Evaluation, students have the option of submitting a response in writing to be considered by their Field Instructor and Field Consultant. The student's assigned Field Consultant is ultimately responsible for submitting the student's official grade in field practicum.

Sample Field Education Progress Review Form

The final evaluation form includes a grid of all nine required competency areas, with an overview of each one and several key variables that are behaviorally anchored along a 3-point competency rating. The sample shown below is related to Competency #9, Professional Growth and Development.

Professional Growth and Development

Takes responsibility for learning and demonstrates initiative. Receives, considers, and integrates feedback from instructors. Demonstrates commitment to continual professional development, life-long learning, and leadership development.

	1 Improvement Desired	2 Competent	3 Mastery
a.	Approaches learning in an overly anxious or overly confident manner	Demonstrates an appropriate level of initiative and independence	Challenges self with diverse assignments that are within reach
b.	Unprepared for the instructional hour; participates passively	Prepares for the instructional hour most of the time; actively participates	Prepares thoughtful questions for the instruction; links conceptual and practical aspects of social work
c.	Fails to sufficiently review own work; lacks insight	Able to reflect on thoughts, feelings, values, strengths, and challenges related to performance	Consistently demonstrates rigorous self-reflection and high levels of accurate insight
d.	Appears personally wounded by feedback and responds defensively or with helplessness	Receptive to suggestions and accepts constructive feedback when offered	Consistently invites feedback from others and demonstrates high levels of emotional maturity and responsiveness
e.	Unwilling or unable to correct performance at expected rate	Demonstrates observable improvements at expected rate	Consistently integrates feedback and improves performance at a faster than expected rate
f.	Strives only to meet the minimum standards	As mastery advances, seeks out additional learning activities	Always approaches challenges and consistently pursues leadership opportunities

Final Field Evaluation

Toward the end of the second semester, the Field Instructor collaborates with the student to submit a Final Evaluation that is due on or around the second week in April. The Final Evaluation is also designed to assess the student's progress on all nine practice competencies, specific to generalist practice for first-year students or specialized practice for second-year students. The Final Field Evaluation requires both the student and Field Instructor to assess all applicable competency-related areas using an anchored scale as shown above in the first semester progress review example.

The Field Instructor will be asked to describe the student's observable strengths and improvements and to identify what would be required for the student to reach the next level of advancement for each area assessed. Finally, the Field Instructor will enter in an overall grade recommendation of "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory." After receiving the final version of Final Evaluation, students have the option of submitting a response in writing to be considered by their Field Instructor and Field Consultant. The student's assigned Field Consultant is ultimately responsible for submitting the student's official grade in field practicum.

7.4 Grading in Field Placement

All field practicum courses (SOC WEL 410A, 410B, 412A, 412B) are graded under the Satisfactory (S)/Unsatisfactory (U) grading option. When taken on the S/U basis, a student must earn the equivalent of a B- grade or better to be considered passing. Grades in field practicum courses do not count toward the one-third limit on S/U-graded units. Grades in required field seminar courses (SOC WEL 290A, 290B, 292A, 292B) do count toward the S/U limit. For more information please review the MSW Student Handbook section on [Grades and Grading](#).

Grade Recommendations Offered by Field Instructors

Field Instructors provide grade recommendations for field practicum each semester on the First Semester Progress Review and on Final Evaluations:

- A Satisfactory (S) grade recommendation indicates that the student's learning and performance are proceeding at an appropriate rate, and the student is demonstrating sufficient progress toward achieving proficiency of all required competencies with a satisfactory level of skill.
- An Unsatisfactory (U) grade recommendation indicates that the student's learning or performance in field placement is not proceeding at an appropriate rate, and is deficient in one or more areas of competence. If this is the case, the Field Instructor will provide a narrative describing the problem(s), and what the student would need to do to bring their performance up to proficiency standards. If a student is seriously deficient in one or more required competency areas, or is consistently performing below proficiency, the Field Instructor should ordinarily recommend a grade of Unsatisfactory.

Grade Determinations Made by Field Consultants

As the official instructors of record for field practicum courses, Field Consultant faculty are responsible for determining and submitting student grades each semester. Field Consultants review the completed field evaluation form and accompanying comments, and the Field Instructor's grade recommendation, to determine the student's grade in field practicum. When there is a discrepancy between the Field Instructor's recommendation and the Field Consultant's grade determination, a consultation process may be initiated prior to submitting official grades each term.

Although grades are entered at the end of each semester, field practicum courses (SOC WEL 410A, 410B, 412A, 412B) are considered cumulative, year-long courses. As such, students must receive a satisfactory grade for two consecutive semesters at the same field placement in order to meet field education requirements for the MSW degree in each year of the MSW program. Generally speaking, students are not allowed to switch placements between semesters.

Incomplete Grades in Field

When a student's work is of passing quality but cannot be completed due to extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control, the Field Consultant may consider issuing a grade of Incomplete (I). **An Incomplete will not be assigned simply because a student needs additional time to complete field practicum course requirements or assignments.**

A grade of Incomplete may only be assigned if all the following conditions are met:

1. The student is in "good standing," i.e., has been satisfactorily performing assigned field tasks.
2. The student experiences events beyond their control which prevent completion of required field practicum by the date grades are due (such as illness, accident, family emergencies, or an unavoidable late start to placement).
3. The student has completed the majority of the total required field days for the semester or appears able to complete the remaining days in the foreseeable future.

Before assigning an Incomplete grade, the student's Field Consultant will obtain confirmation from the Field Instructor that the student is in good standing. If the Field Instructor cannot provide a detailed evaluation because the student was not in the field long enough to assess their work, the Field Consultant will make the relevant determination.

When assigning a grade of Incomplete, Field Consultant faculty must state the reason for the Incomplete in the comment column of the grade report in CalCentral. The student and Field Consultant must notify the Graduate Student Affairs Advisor (GSAO) of plans for completing the work via a [Graduate Student Petition for an Incomplete Grade form](#) approved by the Field Consultant. Students should notify the GSAO via email when the form has been submitted.

Break times and other non-field education days during the regular school calendar may be used to satisfy requirements to remove the Incomplete. Extension of field practicum beyond the end of the spring semester usually does not necessitate that the student enroll in summer session while they complete the work required to resolve the Incomplete.

Students with an Incomplete grade in the first year generalist field practicum may not begin their second year specialized field practicum until they have successfully completed their generalist field practicum placement.

To be considered in good academic standing in the Social Welfare MSW Program, students may not accumulate more than two Incomplete grades on their academic record. MSW students with more than two Incomplete grades on their academic record are not considered in good academic standing and may face probation and dismissal. For more information on Incomplete grade policies and academic penalties, please review the MSW Student Handbook section on [Grades and Grading](#) and the UC Berkeley [Guide to Graduate Policy section on grading](#).

7.5 Unsatisfactory Performance or Progress in Field Education

Unsatisfactory Grades in Field

If the student and Field Instructor are effectively engaged, a student will be aware of deficiencies in their performance well before the final evaluation is due. As soon as the Field Instructor identifies unacceptable or marginal performance, the Field Consultant should be contacted. Often, a conference with the Field Instructor and the student will be arranged to discuss the reason for the unsatisfactory performance and potential corrective actions. Several outcomes are possible:

1. The student may continue in the placement if this is acceptable to the student, the Field Instructor, and the Field Consultant. Identified deficits in the student's performance will be documented in a corrective action plan that outlines behavioral expectation and is added as an addendum to the student's Learning Agreement;
2. The student's placement may be terminated and the student may or may not be eligible to be placed in a new setting. If eligible for a new placement, the new placement may not begin until the following semester depending upon the timing of the termination and the circumstances;
3. The student may be allowed to request an incomplete, withdraw from the course, or withdraw from the MSW program if illness or conditions outside of the student's control are a significant factor in the student's performance;
4. If the student's evaluation reflects unsuitability for the degree and or profession and/or an inability to deliver social work services in a safe, competent and ethical manner, the Director of Field Education may request that the student be placed on academic probation and if unable to resolve the concerns by the following term, may be subject to dismissal;
5. If the student's evaluation indicates there is a level of unprofessional conduct where others may be inadvertently or intentionally harmed, the Director of Field Education may request immediate dismissal of the student;
6. When an unsatisfactory grade is assigned by the Field Consultant for the second semester, even if performance in the first semester was satisfactory, the student will receive no credit for the field practicum undertaken, and another full placement must be successfully completed in full for the student to be eligible for MSW degree conferral. This often delays the student's anticipated degree conferral date. When this is the case, the student is solely responsible for additional tuition expenses.

Following an Unsatisfactory grade, student eligibility for field education will be reassessed. In general, we also require a period of time lasting from two to four weeks for the student to reflect on what they learned from the experience before we will consider initiating additional placement interviews. If the student's ineligibility for field education persists for more than one semester on probation, they may be subject to dismissal from the MSW program.

Unsatisfactory Academic Standing or Progress in Field

A student who fails to formally enroll in, withdraws from, or receives an Unsatisfactory grade for any field practicum course (SOC WEL 410A, 410B, 412A, or 412B) or any field integration seminar (SOC WEL 290A, 290B, 292A, or 292B), may be subject to a recommendation for placement on academic probation by the Graduate Dean for failure to make satisfactory academic progress. Successful completion of all sequenced, concurrent components of field education are required for degree conferral.

Failure to remain in good academic standing may compromise the right to continue in a field practicum even if the student is progressing normally in field education. Should a student's grade point average fall below a 3.0, should a student fail a required generalist or specialized curriculum course, or should a student receive two or more Incomplete (I) grades in any one semester, field placement may either be not initiated or suspended until all academic concerns are resolved. If a student is suspended from placement, we cannot guarantee that they will be able to return to that same placement.

Students must be in good academic standing to advance to the second-year specialized field practicum. Similarly, students must be in good field standing to advance to second-year academic courses. Failure to progress normatively in either the field education or academic portion of the MSW program may lead to disciplinary action or a recommendation to the Graduate Dean for placement on academic probation, or dismissal from the graduate program.

7.6 Student Grievance and Appeal Procedures

Per University policy, all grades except “Incomplete (I)” and “In Progress (IP)” are considered final when assigned by an instructor at the end of a term. Grade changes are not permitted except in the case of clerical or procedural error. Grade changes may not be made on the basis of a reassessment of the quality of the student's work.

The only formal challenge of a grade permitted by University policy is when an instructor assigns a grade utilizing non-academic criteria (such as considerations of race, politics, religion, sex, or other factors not directly reflective of performance related to course requirements) or when sexual harassment or improper academic procedures unfairly affect a student's grade. For more information please see the Academic Senate's [Procedures for Grade Appeals](#).

Grievances about a grade should first be addressed with the instructor who assigned the grade in question. The student should first meet with the instructor to discuss the grievance and clarify reasons for the grade assignment. Students may also seek mediation assistance and advice from their designated Graduate Student Affairs Officer (GSAO), the Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Services, or the [Campus Ombudsperson](#). Keep in mind that these advisers do not have the authority to require an instructor to change a grade.

If informal mediation of a grade grievance does not result in satisfactory action, a student may submit a formal appeal to the Dean of the School of Social Welfare, subject to the conditions outlined in the School's [Student Grievance and Appeal Procedures](#). Formal appeals must be directed to the Dean of the School of Social Welfare, 120 Haviland Hall. A written statement indicating the action being appealed, the grounds upon which the appeal is based, the relief requested, and any background information that the student deems pertinent to his or her case, must accompany the appeal. The appeal must be filed with the Dean within two semesters of the alleged offense.