

# MASTER'S OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENT HANDBOOK

Calvin University



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# CALVIN UNIVERSITY MSW STUDENT HANDBOOK

## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Do you believe things can be better? At Calvin, we believe in Christ's promises to make all things new. With heart and mind, we strive to understand *what is* and live our lives in light of *what can be*.

After all, *what is* a vacant lot *can become* a community garden. What is a muddied river can become a fresh water supply. And what is a broken relationship can become reconciliation in action. With the right lens, and God's transformative hand in the world, an unsolved problem can become the catalyst for a game-changing solution. (<https://calvin.edu/about/who-we-are/>, 2019)

The Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Calvin University strives to equip students to engage in this important work by developing the perspectives and skills of the social work profession. Calvin University is committed to offering a liberal arts education from a Reformed Christian perspective, aiming to equip students "to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world" (<https://calvin.edu/about/who-we-are/>). Jesus taught us by his words and actions that the Christian life requires us to look out for the vulnerable and marginalized to pursue social justice. It seems natural then that Calvin would offer a social work curriculum.

In fact, Calvin first offered a social work class in 1934. This was a course in social casework that involved classroom work and volunteer service for area social service agencies. In the late 1960s, a course in social welfare policy and one in social work practice was introduced. By 1971-72, Calvin was offering internship experiences in social work. In 1981-82, Calvin began offering its first formal social work program: a supplementary concentration consisting of five social work courses and an additional psychology or sociology course. In 1982-83, the Department of Sociology changed its name to the Department of Sociology and Social Work. In 1986-87, with the addition of a social work interviewing course, the supplementary concentration (by then called a group minor) was changed to include six social work courses: a welfare policy course, a practice course, a child welfare course, the interviewing course, and two semesters of field education. Students would major in Sociology or Psychology and take the group minor in Social Work. In 1989-90, the BSW curriculum was implemented and the first group of BSW students graduated in May 1990. In June 1992, Calvin's BSW program was granted accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE); Calvin's BSW program was re-accredited in June 1997, June 2005, June 2013, and June 2021.

When the social work program first considered the addition of an MSW program in 1995, Roberts Wesleyan College was beginning the first explicitly Christian MSW program in the country, and there were real concerns about whether such a program would ultimately be accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Now there are many such schools, including Abilene Christian University, Azusa Pacific, Baylor, the Catholic University of America, Loma Linda, Northwest Nazarene, Texas Christian University, Union University, and two in Michigan, Andrews and Spring Arbor. In addition to Christian MSW programs, there

are at least two other programs that currently attract students we believe would be interested in a Calvin MSW. Western Theological Seminary has a dual degree MDiv/MSW program with Western Michigan University, and Grand Rapids Theological Seminary/Cornerstone offers a Masters in Counseling.

The social work profession's origins in North America lie in early twentieth century efforts to meet the needs of the poor, neglected children, and exploited workers. Early social workers led in the struggle for child labor laws, humane working conditions, voting rights for women, cooperation and peace between nations, and many other reforms.

Today's social workers belong to a growing profession which addresses social concerns as varied as child abuse, substance abuse, homelessness, aging, and mental health. Professional social workers continue to advocate for clients and multiple systems levels—individuals, groups, families, communities, and organizations—and perform a wide range of services in a variety of practice settings. Some search out adoptive and foster homes for children. Some counsel patients and families experiencing traumatic illnesses. Some work with people with disabilities. Others organize community members to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods or work for policy changes at the local, state, or federal level. Still others assist older adults to make new life adjustments. Social workers practice in diverse settings such as government agencies, faith-based organizations, neighborhood centers, health care organizations, schools, and private practices.

Today, Calvin University offers a Bachelor of Social Work degree program (BSW) and a Master of Social Work degree program (MSW). Calvin's BSW/MSW curriculum integrates a Reformed perspective grounded in Scripture with the knowledge of the social work profession to best prepare graduates for service in a variety of settings.

## THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

According to the International Federation of Social Workers, the social work profession, “promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work” (2000). Similarly, the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics states that the mission of the social work profession aims “to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (2008, p. 1). The goals of the social work profession are achieved by providing services directly to individual clients but also by working within economic, social, and political structures to implement programs and policies that promote social change and social justice.

Social work engages people at all different client levels—individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations—in a variety of different practice areas—mental health, behavioral health, diversity and equity, community organizing, policy and evaluation, interpersonal practice, international social work, peace and social justice, aging, bereavement/end of life care, school social work, violence and victimization, and with a variety

of populations—children, youth, families, and older adults. Recognizing the importance of context, social workers consider the interactions of persons and their social environments when providing services.

If you are interested in learning more about social work or careers in social work set up a meeting with a social work professor, take Social Work 240 (Introduction to Social Work), or refer to the National Association of Social Worker's (NASW) *Careers in* page at <https://www.socialworkers.org/Careers>.

## CALVIN UNIVERSITY MSW PROGRAM

In order to understand the social work program at Calvin University, it is important to become acquainted with the mission of Calvin and the goals and objectives of the MSW program. This section presents Calvin's overall mission and then explains how this mission helps define the nature and purposes of Calvin's MSW program.

### Calvin University Mission Statement

Calvin University equips students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

The mission of Calvin University is well articulated in institutional documents that serve as guides for the work of the administration, faculty, staff, and students. The documents that guide work at Calvin University today include three statements:

- [\*Expanded Statement of the Mission: Vision, Purpose, Commitment\*](#)
- *An Engagement with God's World: The Core Curriculum of Calvin University* (Calvin University, 2006)
- *From Every Nation: Revised Comprehensive Plan for Racial Justice, Reconciliation, and Cross-Cultural Engagement at Calvin University* (<https://calvin.edu/directory/publications/from-every-nation-fen>, 2004)

Calvin's mission statement, most fundamentally, involves graduating students who are intent on involvement in the world in service to others. This commitment has proved to be a hospitable context in which to offer a professional degree in social work.

### Calvin University Vision Statement

By 2030, Calvin will become a Christian liberal arts university with an expanded global influence. We envision Calvin University as a trusted partner for learning across religious and cultural differences and throughout the academy, the church, and the world.

Calvin University will be animated by a Reformed Christian faith that seeks understanding and promotes the welfare of the city and the healing of the world. We welcome all who are compelled by God's work of renewal to join us in the formative pursuits of lifelong learning, teaching, scholarship, worship, and service.

## **MSW Program Mission Statement**

The Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Calvin University will prepare students to be leaders and social work professionals, advancing social justice in their communities. Framed by the [NASW code of ethics](#), the Council of Social Work Education competencies, the integration of Reformed Christian perspective, the dependence on evidence-based practices, and the engagement with scholarly research, the MSW degree at Calvin is designed for students who want to both deepen and broaden their understanding of the social work field. MSW students at Calvin will explore historical, global, environmental, and cultural influences as they prepare to competently collaborate with and serve others. Guided by the core belief of the dignity and worth of every person, the MSW program will equip students to work toward the advancement of social justice in a variety of clinical and macro level settings through teaching and by utilizing anti-racist, anti-oppressive social work practice.

## **MSW program goals**

1. To prepare students for competent and effective entry-level, generalist practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
2. To promote and develop in students an understanding of social work knowledge, values, and skills with a strength's perspective emphasis.
3. To prepare students for professional practice within the context of a Reformed Christian, liberal arts perspective—particularly its emphasis on the pursuit of interpersonal, social, and economic justice with diverse persons.

## **Generalist Social Work Practice**

Generalist social work practice has been defined in various ways. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) uses the following definition:

Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person-in-environment framework. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, based on scientific inquiry and best practices. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice. (2022, p. 17)

The generalist practice curriculum design is intended to create opportunities for students to increase their knowledge, practice their skills, and understand the values connected to the nine CSWE advanced generalist competencies and the additional two competencies of Calvin's MSW program. Thought was given to the sequencing of classes as well as class modalities. For both the regular standing and advanced standing, students will be taking classes and engaging in practical field education simultaneously.

## **MSW Program Specializations**

Calvin's MSW program has two areas of specialized practice: Clinical Practice and Macro Practice. Students who do not choose either of these specialized practice tracks can choose to take courses from either the clinical practice track or macro practice track and will be on the advanced generalist track.

As described in the CSWE Educational Policy M3.2, specializations “build on generalist practice by integrating expanded and extending and the nine social work competencies that manifest in holistic professional practice. Specialized practitioners extend and enhance social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes, and demonstrate an ability to engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate across client populations, problem areas, and methods of intervention” ([CSWE Interpretation guide](#), p. 31)

### ***Specialized Clinical Practice***

Through Calvin's MSW program, students in the clinical specialization meet the eleven advanced generalist social work competencies *and* clinical social work competencies (see p. 8). This is achieved by taking courses tailored to the development of clinical skills in addition to advanced generalist courses and in replacement of distinct macro courses.

A competent advanced generalist practitioner with a specialization in clinical social work, through completing an accredited MSW program, has the social work knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes to work with individuals in varying degrees of complexity and clinical settings. They identify with the social work profession and apply ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the micro level.

To understand all of the core competencies that characterize the clinical specialization in Calvin's MSW program, see section titled “Core Competencies” on page 9.

### ***Specialized Macro Practice***

Through Calvin's MSW program, students in the macro specialization meet the eleven advanced generalist social work competencies *and* macro competencies. This is achieved by taking courses tailored to the development of macro and policy skills in addition to advanced generalist courses, and in replace of distinct clinical courses.

A competent advanced generalist practitioner with a specialization in macro social work, through completing an accredited MSW program, has the social work knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes to work with communities and organizations in varying degrees of complexity and settings. They identify with the social work profession and apply ethical principles and critical thinking in practice at the macro level.

To understand all of the core competencies that characterize the macro specialization in Calvin's MSW program, see section titled “Core Competencies” on page 9.



## **Strengths Perspective**

The strengths perspective rests on the following principles: First and foremost, despite life's problems, all persons and environments possess strengths which can be marshaled to improve the quality of clients' lives. Practitioners should respect these strengths and the directions in which client systems wish to apply them. Second, trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity. Third, social work practitioners do not know the upper limits of the capacity for growth and change in their clients. Fourth, discovering strengths requires a process of cooperative exploration and collaboration between clients systems and workers; "expert" practitioners do not have the last word on what clients need. Fifth, all environments—even the most bleak—contain resources. Sixth, social work practice takes place within a context of caring and caretaking which emphasizes that people have the right to be cared for and to care for others (Saleebey, 2009, p. 15-18).

## **Reformed Christian Liberal Arts Perspective**

A Reformed perspective suggests that God is sovereign over the entire world and every creature living in it. The Christian life is a person's response to God's revelation through the Holy Scriptures and creation. Living that life involves everything a person does, whether it be selling insurance, studying Spanish, nurturing one's children, attending a worship service, or practicing as a professional social worker. All activities and callings are potentially of equal value and all can be carried out in a manner faithful or unfaithful to God's revelation. In order to live the Christian life, it is crucial to be informed about God's creation and discern from God's revelation through the Scriptures and creation the manner in which Christians ought to relate to the many parts of God's creation.

Christians who share this Reformed perspective, as a community, have historically been committed to Christian higher education as a means of achieving the Christian life. The existence of Calvin University and other Reformed universities are evidence of this commitment. Moreover, Calvin has long embraced a core study of the liberal arts integrated with understandings from Scripture as the most effective way to achieve the understanding necessary to live the Christian life. In 1999, Calvin University published *An Engagement with God's World: The Core Curriculum of Calvin University*. This document asserts that Christians, as a community, are called to engage with creation and to exercise our gifts in a life of service (Calvin University, 1999). As part of Calvin's liberal arts education there is a commitment to "engage in the rigors and the rewards of the academic life as a Christian calling, and to prepare students for their respective vocations, ever mindful of the aching distance between the basic goodness of this fallen world for which God incarnate died and the surpassing splendor of the world which is to come and for which all Christians hope" (1999).

## **Integration of Faith and Social Work Practice**

The unique character of Calvin's MSW program is represented in the integration of the above ideas. A Reformed perspective has definite implications for how we conceptualize generalist social work practice and integrate this perspective into our teaching.

Reformed thinking views God's special revelation (the Bible) as teaching that there are three predominant turning points in God's relationship to creation. First, God made everything in the

world perfect—physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual reality (creation). Second, sin entered the world and distorted the creation (the fall). Third, God, in infinite love, sent his son to sacrifice himself for the disobedience of human beings and to offer the hope of ongoing restoration of the creation (redemption). Reformed thinking differs from many other theologies in that it gives primary emphasis to the “relationships” among the various parts of creation rather than to the parts themselves. Thus, in reflecting on the impact of the fall on human beings, Reformed thinkers emphasize the distortion in relationships that occurred between people and their environments, between people and God, between one another, and so forth. Similarly, in reflecting on the implications of redemption, these thinkers emphasize that, because God has not abandoned his world but rather sent his son to redeem it, healing and justice can occur in broken relationships in different areas of life. In Reformed-Christian terminology, this process of restoring broken relationships in the world occurs through participation in God’s redeeming work, actively pursuing the ideal relationships intended by God in creation.

We have conceptualized generalist social work practice in the MSW program at Calvin to be one aspect of this transformational or restorative process. Therefore, a worthy calling for a Christian is to gain the professional knowledge and skills necessary to productively aid clients in meeting their developmental needs and so contribute to the restoration of a troubled world.

In addition, as Calvin’s MSW program has matured, we have come to believe that “reconciling broken relationships” at all levels of society is best accomplished by practitioners focusing on and identifying the strengths of clients and the directions in which they want to apply them. We believe this strengths emphasis, addressed in many of the courses in the social work major, reflects the redemptive theology of a Reformed, Christian outlook. Furthermore, together with the Calvin community and as outlined in Calvin University’s *From Every Nation* (2004) document, the social work program is committed to restoring relationships through our commitment to racial justice and reconciliation. The program seeks to highlight cultural and ethnic diversity through opportunities such as its global social work class and seeks to end discrimination through several means including encouraging faculty and students to participate in anti-racism trainings.

### **Program Competencies (Student Learning Outcomes)**

The MSW curriculum prepares its graduates for advanced generalist practice through mastery of a set of core competencies, defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) promote academic excellence in baccalaureate and master’s social work education. The EPAS specifies the curricular content and educational context to prepare students for professional social work practice and set forth basic requirements for these purposes. An integrated program design includes program mission, anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, implicit and explicit curriculum, and assessment (CSWE, 2022).

According to the CSWE, “the purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social, racial, economic, and environmental justice; the

creation of conditions that facilitate the realization of human rights; the elimination of poverty; and the enhancement of life for all people, locally and globally" (CSWE, 2022, p. 14).

Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable behaviors comprising knowledge, values, skills, and affective processes. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Among the nine competencies are variations in their applications among each specialization of Calvin's MSW program (Advanced Generalist, Clinical, and Macro). The nine core CSWE (EPAS, 2022) competencies, two additional competencies unique to and approved by Calvin University, and their distinctions are listed below.

Comparison Chart of Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context (C1.1)	Identify, attend to, and facilitate ethical considerations including maintaining physical, interpersonal, spiritual, emotional, and psychological boundaries for clients and client systems, face to face and virtual, and demonstrate the ability to assess and address barriers to safety for clients across the lifespan	Apply an anti-oppression framework integrating the principles included in the NASW and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) ethical codes, evidence-based knowledge, and relevant legal and policy-related information (CM1.1)
2	Demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication (C1.2)	Use reflective supervision and case consultation to build self-knowledge, enhance professional competency, and to examine clinical interactions and practitioner (CC1.2)	Model appropriate professional use of self in the different social work roles required in professional macro environments (MC1.2)
3	Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes (C1.3)	Explore client's experience of trauma as it relates to age, class, race, ethnicity, culture, ability, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, religion, and tribal status (CC1.3)	Use multiple digital, written, and verbal communication skills to engage different constituencies, partners, and target audiences (MC1.3)
4	Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior (C1.4)	Maintain an active and robust referral stream and collaborate across disciplines and systems to gather resources for clients	Demonstrate their leadership roles on inter-professional teams in practice and engage in supervision with an eye to

		to facilitate referrals to needed or desired services (CC1.4)	learning how to provide ethical and professional supervision and leadership in the future. (MC1.4)
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Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competency (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels (C2.1)	Apply understanding of social, racial, and environmental justice to advocate for the human rights of clients and their families at all levels of practice (CC2.1)	Integrate knowledge of human rights theories, frameworks, international documents, conventions, and covenants into practice to improve social, economic, and environmental well-being (MC2.1)
2	Engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice (C2.2)	Provide leadership by implementing and advocating for mental health systems, policies, and practices which promote the rights of all clients (CC2.2)	Identify and engage key stakeholders to advocate for access to resources, services, benefits, and opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized clients, constituencies, and communities (MC2.2)

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels (C3.1)	Critically appraise and articulate an understanding of various forms and systems of oppression, discrimination, and trauma that affects individuals and their families with cultural humility, self-awareness, and empathy (CC3.1)	Formulate inclusive engagement strategies based on an intersectional analysis of systems of power, privilege, and oppression both within and outside organizational, community, and policy contexts, including the political economy and, for example, areas of racism, sexism, and nativism (MC3.1)
2	Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power,	Educate themselves about and utilize non-oppressive, anti-racist language (CC3.2)	Create a climate of inclusion that builds on the strengths of diverse constituencies, integrates diverse points of view, and facilitates full

privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences (C3.2)		engagement in ways that embrace the cultural and spiritual histories of people (MC3.2)
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Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs (C4.1)	Apply ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive research practices that challenge inherent biases in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work (CC4.1)	Engage in critical analysis and ongoing review of research findings, macro practice models, and practice wisdom to inform organizational, community, and policy practice (MC4.1)
2	Identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work (C4.2)	Contribute to and produce clinical research and practice which informs multi-disciplinary theories, frameworks, and perspectives. Recognize the contributions and limitations of various disciplinary perspectives and their corresponding research methods (CC4.2)	Collaborate, mobilize, and organize constituents, stakeholders, and colleagues to engage in research for advocacy, policy making, program design, and evaluation, and the dissemination of research findings to improve policies, programs, services, and interventions (MC4.2)
3	Critically analyze their own positionality and practice cultural humility through respect for the lived experience of clients to improve access to proximal and distal systems (C4.3)		Develop and select research questions that strategically inform the research process and its impact on communities, programs, organizations, and policies (MC4.3)

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of	Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies at the local, state, federal, and international level that affects access to mental health	Analyze policies at local, state, national, and international levels to assess their impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

	and access to social services (C5.1)	promotion, prevention, and intervention services and actively work to dismantle oppressive policies, infrastructures, and practices (CC5.1)	and on the values of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice (MC5.1)
2	Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice (C5.2)	Educate stake holders in formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies that impact clients and their families as those policies relate to human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice from the local to the international level (CC5.2)	Demonstrate leadership in formulating and implementing comprehensive advocacy campaigns that use carefully selected strategies and tactics (MC5.2)

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies (C6.1)	Implement diversity informed relationship-based engagement strategies based on knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and recommended practices to build trust and collaboration (CC6.1)	Develop and implement multiple engagement strategies that reflect an understanding of structural, environmental, and power dynamics; policymakers' characteristics and objectives; and the strengths, priorities, and interests of stakeholder groups (MC6.1)
2	Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies (C6.2)	Respect the experience and bodies of knowledge that all individuals, families and groups bring to the engagement process (CC6.2)	Use interpersonal skills and relationship building to gain credibility with allies, clients, and constituents at the grassroots level in defining and communicating community and organizational needs and advancing potential solutions with decision makers (MC6.2)
3		Practice self-regulation within the present moment and maintain a curious and respectful posture by actively listening. Hold emotional intensity, tolerate ambiguity, respond authentically, and	Use the roles of facilitator, organizer, educator, coach, trainer, and bridge builder to engage with members of a community groups and organizations to collaborate on a problem or condition they have mutually identified and

		endeavor to understand other's experiences (CC6.3)	want to solve or change (MC6.3)
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Competency 7: Assessment with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies (C7.1)	Utilize anti-racist, anti-oppressive, evidence-based theories of practice to assess strengths and needs of clients and constituencies (CC7.1)	Assess and analyze assets, needs, benefits, gaps in services, rights, and the inequitable distribution of resources and power to identify appropriate macro interventions (MC7.1)
2	Demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan (C7.2)	Continually invest in self-reflective practice to integrate knowledge of bias, power, and privilege which guides the collaborative assessment process with diverse clients and constituencies (CC7.2)	Develop, select, and conduct assessments using culturally appropriate metrics, analytical methods, frameworks, and tools, including primary data sources (e.g., surveys, interviews), secondary data sources (e.g., census, polling, precinct data), and the lived experience of affected individuals, families, groups within organizations, communities, and policy arenas (MC7.2)
3		Enhance comprehensive assessment process with clients by contributing to interprofessional collaboration with social work professionals and other professionals as defined by practice setting (CC7.3)	Collaborate with community members, professional colleagues, and political stakeholders throughout the assessment process (MC7.3)

Competency 8: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Engage with clients and constituencies to critically	Utilize anti-racist, anti-oppressive, evidence-based	Utilize anti-racist, anti-oppressive, evidence-based

	choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals (C8.1)	theories of practice to co-create culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies (CC8.1)	theories of practice to co-create culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies (MC8.1)
2	Incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies (C8.2)	Continually invest in self-reflective practice to integrate knowledge of systems of power which may impact the development of treatment plans with diverse clients and constituencies (CC8.2)	Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies and facilitate their participation in macro interventions (MC8.2)
3		Enhance comprehensive intervention treatment plans with clients by contributing to interprofessional collaboration with social work professionals and other professionals as defined by practice setting (CC8.3)	Initiate and facilitate interprofessional collaborations within and between organizational, community, and policy partners to achieve positive system change (MC8.3)

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes (C9.1)	Utilize anti-racist, anti-oppressive, evidence-based theories of practice to evaluate programs and services provided for clients and constituencies (CC9.1)	Utilize anti-racist, anti-oppressive, evidence-based theories of practice to evaluate programs and services provided for clients and constituencies (MC9.1)
2	Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (C9.2)	Continually invest in self-reflective practice to integrate knowledge of systems of power which may impact the evaluation process of services and programs for diverse clients and constituencies (CC9.2)	Develop evaluation plans that include clear goals, outputs, and outcomes, and operationalize all aspects of a planned evaluation, including partners, measures, data collection, analysis, and dissemination (MC9.2)

Competency 10: Utilizing a Strengths Perspective			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)



1	Identify and implement the key principles of the strength perspective in social work practice (C10.1)	Develop, manage, and maintain therapeutic relationships with clients within the person-in-environment and strengths perspectives; and (CC10.1)	Identify and implement the strengths, expertise, and potential contributions of relevant stakeholder groups (e.g., coalitions, think tanks, organizations, associations, voters, and affected constituencies) to collectively exert influence for social change (MC10.1)
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Competency 11: Demonstrating a Reformed Perspective			
	Generalist Social Work Competency (C)	Clinical Competencies (CC)	Macro Competency (MC)
1	Articulate a Reformed Christian understanding of the social work profession as a way to participate in God's renewal of all things (C11.1)	Integrate a Reformed Christian understanding of the social work profession as a way to participate in God's renewal of all things (CC11.1)	Treats communities, organizations, and all constituents with dignity and respect and creates space for self-determination (CM11.1)
2		Treat each person with utmost dignity and respect, valuing their diverse life experiences and religious/spiritual expression (CC11.2)	Diligently works toward restoration of relationships and systemic justice (MC11.2)

## MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The MSW degree program is intended for students who want to prepare for a career of Christian service as a professional social worker. The regular standing master's program consists of 60 credit hours, and advanced standing requires 36 credit hours. Regular standing students begin with 500-level courses, and advanced standing students begin with 600-level courses. The minimum requirement of agency-based hours for field education is 900 hours total. The courses in the program are:

### **SOWK 501: Social Work Foundations**

**Catalog Description:** This course introduces students to the profession of social work. Students will be given an overview of the history of social work, review the National Association of Social Work (NASW) code of ethics, learn the generalist strengths based social work model, and be introduced to the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. Using a Reformed Christian framework, students will also explore concepts of justice as it relates to social work.

### **SOWK 510: Spirituality, Faith, and Social Work**

**Catalog Description:** Using a social work lens, students will explore the topic of ethics and spirituality. This course will explore differing spiritual frameworks and how to create culturally sensitive and respectful ways of engaging and assessing client's spiritual resources and needs. Students will be introduced to spiritual assessment tools and learn how to apply them.

#### **SOWK 520: Diversity, Inequity, & Social Justice**

**Catalog Description:** SOWK 520 creates a Biblical foundation for understanding the gift of diversity and the value of each person as image bearer of God. The course is an introductory course which explores systemic social and economic inequalities experienced both globally and domestically with particular attention to gender, race, ability, class, and sexuality.

#### **SOWK 550: Human Behavior and the Social Environment**

**Catalog Description:** This course involves studying persons in their environment with a focus on human behavior and development using a Reformed perspective of creation, fall, redemption. Persons are described as biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual beings who grow and develop throughout their lives. Theoretical frameworks, with special emphasis on systems perspectives, are applied to enable students to explore and assess micro, mezzo, and macro influences on human behavior and development.

#### **SOWK 555: Introduction to Applied Social Research**

**Catalog Description:** SOWK 555 is an introduction to ethical applied social behavioral research practices. Students will learn the research process from developing research questions to communicating research findings. Special attention will be paid to examination of potential bias and developing research practices which support anti-racist, anti-oppressive, culturally sensitive research.

#### **SOWK 560: Social Welfare Policy**

**Catalog Description:** This course helps students examine and think critically about how social welfare policies in the United States affect client systems. Specifically, students examine how structural and institutional barriers have influenced, and continue to influence, social welfare policy and practices. Students are introduced to the history of social welfare policies, ideologies and values that influence policy decisions, and major policies that influence social work practice. Students will evaluate and analyze policies as well as develop practical advocacy skills in relation to human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

#### **SOWK 571: Introduction to Practice with Individuals, Families, and Groups**

**Catalog Description:** Students will learn about the generalist intervention model in social work practice with individuals, families and groups. They will develop practice competencies in solution-focused interviewing with individuals, examining family systems, and exploring group dynamics. Special attention will be to anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice and to competent and ethical documentation.

#### **SOWK 575 Introduction to Practice with Communities & Organizations**

**Catalog Description:** Framed by change theory and the social work value of advocacy, this course will introduce students to understanding macro level social work with communities,

organizations, and institutions. Congregational and faith-rooted community social work will also be explored.

### **SOWK 580 – Field Education I**

**Catalog Description:** This praxis-oriented course requires a 400-hour onsite practicum (spread over SOWK 580 and SOWK 581). The practicum will be accompanied by a weekly 90-minute synchronous online seminar. Guided by a biblical perspective and NASW values, students will apply areas of social work content to experiences in the practicum, including professionalism, the planned change process, social policy, anti-oppressive practice, and professional ethics. Within the practicum setting, students will engage, assess, and intervene with client systems at the individual, family, group, community, and organizational levels. Students may complete a placement proximate to their geographic location. Assistance in finding site placement will be provided by the Field Director. This course includes a \$215 fee for first time users of the Experiential Learning Cloud software platform.

### **SOWK 581: Field Education II**

**Catalog Description:** This praxis-oriented course requires a 400-hour onsite practicum (spread over SOWK 580 and SOWK 581). The practicum will be accompanied by a weekly 90-minute synchronous online seminar. Guided by a biblical perspective and NASW values, students will apply areas of social work content to experiences in the practicum, including professionalism, the planned change process, social policy, anti-oppressive practice, and professional ethics. Within the practicum setting, students will engage, assess, and intervene with client systems at the individual, family, group, community, and organizational levels. This course includes a \$20 for course materials.

### **SOWK 610: Trauma Informed Social Work Practice**

**Catalog Description:** In this course students will learn about defining and understanding the nature of trauma and the impact of trauma on individuals, families and communities. Students will learn about trauma-informed care and interventions, focusing on empowering clients and promoting resilience. The importance of self-care for social workers dealing with trauma will be emphasized, along with strategies to prevent and respond to secondary trauma.

### **SOWK 620: Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice**

**Catalog Description:** This course takes a deep dive into understanding anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice. The course will cover history as well as social work ethics and values and how this approach can be applied through all levels of practice as well as a global context. Students will also learn about internalized superiority and oppression and the ways that these have misshaped the image of God in us as well as distorted God's design for how we are to live in community with one another. Finally, students will investigate the ways that the church and the profession of social work have been complicit in perpetuating racism and other forms of oppression.

### **SOWK 630: Mental Health and Social Work**

**Catalog Description:** This course will provide an overview of both mental health disorders and the social work challenges associated with mental disorders. Course material will introduce students to some of the more commonly occurring disorders outlined by the DSM-V. Social work issues related to mental disorders such as impact of labelling, homelessness, the criminal

justice system, and working with families will be discussed. Mental health treatment and the effects of culture, gender, racism, ableism, and sexuality will also be discussed.

### **SOWK 650: Advanced Practice with Individuals**

**Catalog Description:** Advanced Practice with individuals is a practice course which builds on the theories and skills learned in SOWK 571. Students will strengthen their skills by practicing culturally appropriate engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation and termination within a strengths-focused context. Students will be introduced to theories such as, ecopsychology, functional theory, psychosocial frameworks, and relational therapy. Modalities will include cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy. Special attention is given to competent and ethical documentation.

### **SOWK 660: Advanced Practice with Families and Groups**

Advanced Practice with groups is a practice course which builds on the theories and skills learned in SOWK 571. Students will strengthen their skills by practicing culturally appropriate engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation and termination within a problem-solving, strengths focused context in working with groups. Students will learn theories such as change theory and social network theory and be introduced to modalities of psychoeducation for grief, loss, and trauma, substance use, and mutual aid group models.

### **SOWK 632: Social Work Practice with Infants, Children, and Families**

**Catalog Description:** This course will provide an overview of the theories and social work practice for working with infants, children, and their families. Topics will include child development theory, attachment theory, and resilience theory. The course will also review childhood mental health disorders. Students will be introduced to engagement skills such as trust and rapport building and assessment skills such learning how to utilize mental health assessment tools. Students will be introduced to structural family therapy, parent child interaction therapy, and emotion focused therapy.

### **SOWK 633: Social Work Practice with Adolescents and Families**

**Catalog Description:** This course will provide an overview of the theories and social work practice for working with adolescents. Topics will include identity development theory, family systems theory, neuroscience research, and electronic exchange theory. The course will also review common adolescent mental health disorders. Students will be introduced to engagement skills such as trust and rapport building and assessment skills such learning how to utilize mental health status tools including conducting a mental status exam. The course will also introduce interventions such as emotion regulation strategies including boundary setting, trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, distress tolerance, and DBT skills with adolescents. Students will extend their knowledge and skills set by practicing using a variety of new assessments such as the PHQ-9 for adolescents, the AUDIT, and the Columbia Suicide Scale. (SOWK 633)

### **SOWK 640: Ethical Leadership and Social Work Supervision**

**Catalog Description:** The Ethical Leadership and Supervision course examines the challenges and importance of ethical leadership as it relates to stewarding authority, recognizing bias, and increasing awareness regarding different cultural values. The course will also offer practical exploration of a supervisor's administrative, educational, and supportive roles and the task of

evaluating others. The impact of secondary trauma, compassion fatigue and the importance of self-care in leadership will also be reviewed.

### **SOWK 670: Advanced Practice with Communities and Organizations**

**Catalog Description:** This practice-based course builds upon the theories and knowledge learned in SOWK 575. This course further explores change theory and legal and ethical dilemmas connected to serving in communities and organizations. Students will continue to develop skills in writing grants and conducting community assessments.

### **SOWK 675: Evaluating Social Work Programming**

**Catalog Description:** The Social Work Program Evaluation course will equip social work students with the skills necessary to understand the purpose of program evaluation, how to plan for a program evaluation, and how to conduct a program evaluation at the organizational level. Students will also understand the role of fiscal and performance program evaluations at the federal level, and how this impacts social programs and diverse populations. Students will identify program objectives, populations impacted by programs, and how to measure program effectiveness. Students will have the opportunity to plan a program evaluation, including collecting, analyzing/evaluating, and reporting relevant data.

### **NOPM 609: Designing a Effective Non-Profit Organization** (co-located course with the Masters of Business Administration)

**Catalog Description:** Nonprofit organizations, whether newly developed or established, need to incorporate effective methods and processes to be sustainable. This course focuses on how to design a nonprofit organization capable of raising the human and financial resources to sustain the organization as well as emerging methods for effective programming and nonprofit evaluation methods. Learn the various aspects of resource development including fund-raising strategies, processes, trends and ethics, public and private grant writing, submission, measurement and evaluation. The course emphasizes the examination of current trends in earned-income strategies, social entrepreneurship, and maximizing available ‘corporate social responsibility’ resources. Underscoring the importance of volunteers in achieving nonprofit goals, the course also focuses on approaches to volunteer development, volunteer recruitment, training, retention/theories of motivation, and leadership and certain ethical issues associated with volunteers. We’ll examine the nonprofit sector from a business perspective, understanding aspects of the business model of various nonprofit organizations, from a sociological perspective, understanding the societal function various nonprofits serve in community and from a Christian perspective, examining the role of the sector as an expression of Christian stewardship, justice, and love.

### **SOWK 680: Advanced Field Education I**

**Catalog Description:** This praxis-oriented course provides an on-site learning opportunity for students to demonstrate the achievement of the nine CSWE competencies in a specialized social work practice setting. In conjunction with SOWK 681, students will complete a 500-hour practicum in a social work setting working toward mastery of their generalist social work skills (such as engagement, assessment, intervention, evaluation, and termination) while learning additional skills connected to their specialization. On-site practicum is accompanied by a weekly synchronous hour-long seminar where students connect with a faculty liaison and learn from

peers' experiences. Students may complete a placement proximate to their geographic location. Assistance in finding site placement will be provided by the Field Director. This course includes a \$215 fee for first time users of the Experiential Learning Cloud software platform.

## **SOWK 681: Advanced Field Education II**

**Catalog Description:** This praxis-oriented course continues the work started in SOWK 680 and provides continuation of on-site learning opportunity for students to demonstrate achievement of the nine CSWE competencies in a specialized social work practice setting. Students will complete a 500-hour internship in a social work setting where they will work toward mastery of generalist social work skills (engagement, assessment, intervention, and termination) and those related to one's specialization. On-site practicum is accompanied by a weekly seminar where students connect with a faculty liaison and learn from peers' experiences. Licensure requirements as they relate to the nine competencies will also be reviewed.

## **PROGRAM OPTIONS**

### **Full Time Program Outline**

The various social work major courses required for a MSW degree have been combined into the following four model tracks in the MSW program, each with the option of Generalist, Clinical, and Macro focuses:

1. ***Full Time Regular Standing – Fall Start only (September)***
2. ***Part Time Regular Standing – Fall Start only***
3. ***Full Time Advanced – Summer Start (May) or Fall Start (September)***
4. ***Part Time Advanced – Summer Start or Fall Start***

<b>MSW Program Schedule</b>		<b>Mode</b>		<b>FA 1</b>	<b>FA 2</b>	<b>SP 1</b>	<b>SP 2</b>	<b>SU 1</b>	<b>SU 2</b>
SW 501	Social Work Foundations	Hi-Flex	Synchronous	2 cr					
SW 510	Faith, Spirituality, and Social Work	Online	Synchronous	2 cr					
SW 580	Field Education and Seminar I	Online	Synchronous	4 cr					
SW 520	Diversity, Inequality and Social Justice	Hi-Flex	Synchronous		2 cr				
SW 550	Human Behavior and the Social Environment	Online	Synchronous		2 cr				
SW 571	Practice with Individuals, Families, and Groups	Hi-Flex	Synchronous			2 cr			
SW 560	Social Work Policy	Hi-Flex	Synchronous			2 cr			
SW 581	Field Education and Seminar II	Online	Synchronous			4 cr			
SW 575	Practice with communities and Organizations	Online	Synchronous				2 cr		
SW 555	Applied Social Research	Online	Synchronous				2 cr		
SW 610	Trauma Informed Social Work	Online	Synchronous						4 cr
SW 620	Anti-Oppressive, Anti-Racist Social Work	Intensive	Intensive					4 cr	
SW 630	Mental Health and Social Work	Online	Synchronous						4 cr
SW 680	Advanced Field Education I	Online	Synchronous	4 cr					
SW 681	Advanced Field Education II	Online	Synchronous			4 cr			
SW 650	Advanced Practice with Individuals	Online	Synchronous	4 cr					
SW 660	Advanced Practice with Families and Groups	Online	Synchronous	4 cr					

SW 632	Social Work Practice with Infants, Children, and Families	Online	Synchronous			4 cr		
SW 633	Social Work Practice with Adolescents	Online	Synchronous			4 cr		
SW 670	Advanced Practice with Communities & Organizations	Online	Synchronous	4 cr				
SW 675	Social Work Program Evaluation	Online	Synchronous		4 cr			
SW 640	Ethical Leadership and Social Work Supervision	Online	Synchronous			4 cr		
Varies	Non Pro	Online	Synchronous				4 cr	

## Part time Course Options

Along with the 2-year full time program option, the MSW program at Calvin also provides a five-year, four-year, and three-year program option.

**Five-Year MSW Program Option:** For the five-year option, students would take generalist courses for the first three years and then take advanced courses for the last two years. All generalist courses (500 level) are 2 credits, with the exception of SOWK 580: Field Education I and SOWK 581: Field Education II, which are 4 credits each.

During year 1, students will take foundational courses in their first year with their practice courses being taken in the second year. First year courses would include SOWK 501: Foundations in Social Work, SOWK 520: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, SOWK 560: Social Welfare Policy, and SOWK 555: Applied Social Research. Second year courses include SOWK 510: Spirituality, Faith, and Social Work, SOWK 550: Human Behavior and the Social Environment, SOWK 571: Introduction to Practice: Individuals, Families, and Groups, and SOWK 575: Introduction to Practice: Communities and Organizations. SOWK 580: Field Education I and SOWK 581: Field Education II would be taken in year 3 for option A.

SOWK 560: Social Welfare Policy will be taken in year 1 as a prerequisite for SOWK 575: Introduction to Practice: Communities and Organizations which would be taken during year 2. SOWK 555: Human Behavior in the Social Environment will be taking in year 1, which is a prerequisite to SOWK 571: Introduction to Practice: Individuals, Families, and Groups, which would be taking during year 2. SOWK 580:

**Table 3.1.1c Generalist Course Progression for Five-Year Program Option**

	Fall 1	Fall 2	Spring 1	Spring 2
<b>Year 1</b>	SOWK 501 (Foundations)	SOWK 520 (Diversity)	SOWK 560 (Policy)	SOWK 555 (Research)
<b>Year 2</b>	SOWK 510 (Spirituality)	SOWK 555 (Human Behavior)	SOWK 571 (Inds, Fams, Grps)	SOWK 575 (Coms & Orgs)
<b>Year 3</b>	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)

**Four-Year MSW Program Option:** For the four-year program option, students would take all of their course work during year 1, would include foundational courses, theory courses, and practice courses. The practicum courses, SOWK 580: Field Education I and SOWK 581: Field Education II, would be taken in year 2. The overall program could be completed in four years with students

taking generalist courses for the first two years and then taking advanced courses for the last two years.

**Table 3.1.1d Generalist Course Progression for Four-Year Program Option**

	<b>Fall 1</b>	<b>Fall 2</b>	<b>Spring 1</b>	<b>Spring 2</b>
<b>Year 1</b>	SOWK 501 (Foundations) SOWK 510 (Spirituality)	SOWK 520 (Diversity) SOWK 555 (Human Behavior)	SOWK 560 (Policy) SOWK 571 (Inds, Fams, Grps)	SOWK 555 (Research) SOWK 575 (Coms & Orgs)
<b>Year 2</b>	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)

**Three-Year MSW Program Option:** For the three-year program option, students would take all of their course work during year 1, would include foundational courses, theory courses, and practice courses. The practicum courses, SOWK 580: Field Education I and SOWK 581: Field Education II, would be taken in year 2. In the third year, students would complete all of their coursework and their practicum. The overall program could be completed in three years with students taking generalist courses for the first two years and then taking advanced courses for their final year.

**Table 3.1.1e Generalist Course Progression for Three-Year Program Option**

	<b>Fall 1</b>	<b>Fall 2</b>	<b>Spring 1</b>	<b>Spring 2</b>
<b>Year 1</b>	SOWK 501 (Foundations) SOWK 510 (Spirituality)	SOWK 520 (Diversity) SOWK 555 (Human Behavior)	SOWK 560 (Policy) SOWK 571 (Inds, Fams, Grps)	SOWK 555 (Research) SOWK 575 (Coms & Orgs)
<b>Year 2</b>	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 580 (Field Ed I)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)	SOWK 581 (Field Ed II)

## ADMISSIONS POLICIES

### Admission to the MSW program

#### Application Evaluation Process

The completed application for the MSW program is first received by Calvin University's graduate admissions department. The graduate admissions committee will then review the application to ensure that the application meets the minimum requirements. If the application meets the minimum requirements, the application is then forwarded to the Social Work Admissions Committee for review. If an application is close to meeting minimum standards, the application will still be forwarded to the Social Work Admission Committee for review by the Graduate School Admissions Committee as there is a lot of discretion on the part of the Social Work Admissions Committee as to who is offered admission into the Master of Social Work program. The Social Work Admissions Committee makes their decision and then communicates that decision to the Graduate Admissions Committee.



In order to reduce bias, the Social Work Admissions Committee is comprised of at least three people; the MSW Program Director, the BSW Program Director, and the Field Director. Other full time MSW faculty may be invited to review applications as well.

## **Admission Decisions**

### **Social Work Admission Committee Decisions**

*Status:* In alignment with Calvin University's School of Graduate and Continuing Studies, prospective students would receive one of three responses: acceptance to the program, denial, or waitlist.

### **Decision Types**

1. *Acceptance to the Program* – applicants are admitted to the program immediately and invited to matriculate at the next program start date.
2. *Denial to the Program* – applicants are alerted to the decision to deny access to the program. Decisions to deny a prospective student would be based on not meeting the minimum criteria.
3. *Waitlist* – applicants are informed that they are admitted to the program but that there is a waitlist due to capacity. Applicants are informed that they will be notified when an opening in program becomes available.

### **Admission Decision Timing**

The program elects to adopt the institution's admission notification policies and procedures. To communicate well with students and to help them plan moving forward, the decision about the admission status will be made within a week of receiving the application. Students are encouraged to apply by January 31s to optimize their practicum placement setting availability and preference.

Students will receive the notification via email from the graduate school admissions office indicating the admissions decision.

Once admitted to the MSW program, each admitted student will be supported in two ways. First, the admitted student will be connected to a School and Graduate and Continuing Studies full time staff person, the Graduate Studies Coordinator, who is designated to support newly admitted students. In addition, students will be contacted by social work faculty through direct connection via a phone or video call (whichever the student prefers). Students will have an opportunity to ask any questions they have, which may mitigate some of the concerns students may have before they enter the MSW program.

Students will also be informed about the different support services at Calvin including the Center for Intercultural Student Development, Student Success (Academic Support including Disability Services) and Center for Counselling Wellness. Student Success has procedures for how to engage with students who have taken a leave of absence.

As part of the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies, Calvin's MSW program will be adopting many of the SGCS's admissions policies (Calvin University, 2024c).

## **Admission Criteria to the Regular Standing Program**

Admission will be considered for students with a baccalaureate degree earned from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting association. Students are simultaneously admitted into the program and the institution.

Requirements for admission to the regular standing MSW program are:

- A commitment to the NASW values of social work (importance of human relationships, service, social justice, integrity, competency, and the dignity and worth of every person)
- A completed application (common application for all graduate programs across the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies)
- Unofficial transcript from any undergraduate institution you attended
- Official transcript from the undergraduate institution from which you graduated\*
- Minimum undergrad GPA of 3.0 (in a 4.0 scale) \*\*
- Resume
- Purpose Statement
- Two letters of recommendation

The program elects to admit students simultaneously into both the institution and program. The program is still evaluating whether they will admit international students in the future but for the first year, the program is not equipped to do so.

\*A student may be granted advanced standing but may need to retake any 500 level course (with the exception of Field Education courses) if they did not achieve a B- or better in the equivalent 300 level BSW social work course.

\*\*Students who have not met the minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 will have their admission file reviewed by the social work admission committee. The admission committee may decide to have a designee (typically the program director) meet with the prospective student to give the applicant an opportunity to share an explanation for the lower than required GPA.

## **Admission Criteria to the Advanced Standing Program**

Advanced standing is awarded only to those with a(n): 1) CSWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree; 2) CASWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree (from the Canadian social work accreditor, recognized through an [MOU](#) with CSWE and CASWE); and 3) Internationally earned [ISWDRES](#)-evaluated degree comparable to a baccalaureate social work.

Advanced Standing will be considered for students who have earned one of the following:

- CSWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree
- CASWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree (from the Canadian social work accreditor, recognized through a [MOU](#) with CSWE and CASWE)
- Internationally earned [ISWDREShttps://www.cswe.org/centers-initiatives/international-degree-review/](https://www.cswe.org/centers-initiatives/international-degree-review/)evaluated degree comparable to a baccalaureate social work

Advanced Standing will not be offered to:

- Graduates from unaccredited baccalaureate social work programs

- \*Graduates from baccalaureate social work programs in candidacy
- International graduates without a CASWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree (from the Canadian social work accreditor, recognized through an [MOU](#) with CSWE and CASWE)
- International graduates without an internationally earned [ISWDRES](#) <https://www.cswe.org/centers-initiatives/international-degree-review/>evaluated degree comparable to a baccalaureate social work

\* If the institution receives initial accreditation while the student is enrolled in the MSW program, students may be considered for advanced standing so long as the student can document that their baccalaureate program was granted initial accreditation, and that accredited status retroactively covers their degree.

In order to be considered for Advanced Standing, prospective students will need to meet the following criteria:

- A commitment to the NASW values of social work (importance of human relationships, service, social justice, integrity, competency, and the dignity and worth of every person) as demonstrated in their personal statement
- Minimum undergrad GPA of 3.0 (in a 4.0 scale)
- A baccalaureate social work degree (BSW) from a CSWE-accredited institution earned within the last seven years\*

And fulfill the following application requirements:

- A completed application (common application for all graduate programs across the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies)
- Unofficial transcript from any undergraduate institution attended
- Official transcript from the undergraduate institution from which you graduated
- Minimum undergrad GPA of 3.0 (in a 4.0 scale)
- Resume
- Statement of purpose
- Two letters of recommendation
- Minimum GPA of 3.0 in all 300 level social work courses taken at the undergraduate level \*\*

\*Students who 1) are graduating from a BSW program that has not yet received its initial CSWE accreditation or 2) earned their BSW over seven years ago may not be eligible for advanced standing but they may be eligible to waive up to 16 credits.

\*\*Students who meet all other criteria for Advanced Standing but have not earned a “B-” or higher in a 300-level (Calvin BSW equivalent) social work course(s) taken at the undergraduate level may be required to retake the course through Calvin’s MSW program. The only exception would be field education (practicum) and seminar taken at an institution that is CSWE accredited or in candidacy, in which case, only credit is required. These decisions are made by the MSW Program Director using transcripts, the course descriptions, and syllabus content.

## **Transfer Policy**

Calvin University's stated procedures and policies regarding transfer students are stated in the University catalog. In brief, students transferring from other universities and universities must follow the same application process as first-year graduate students. Students are invited to submit a request for transfer credits during the admissions process. All requests for transfer credits must relate to transfer-level coursework, including transfer requests for certificate programs. Transfer credit will normally be awarded for courses that are:

1. Taken at an accredited institution and represented on an official transcript by the credit-granting institution;
2. Academic and similar in nature to graduate-level courses offered at Calvin;
3. Completed with a minimum grade of B- (or its equivalent);
4. Approved by the program director (or designee); and
5. Completed within seven years of enrolling in the graduate program at Calvin.

Transfer course work is not computed in the Calvin University grade point average.

Once admitted to Calvin, the records of transfer students are first evaluated by the registrar's office and then passed on to the director of social work, provided there are courses on these records which might transfer as credit for courses in Calvin's Master of Social Work program. The program director makes these determinations after reviewing course syllabi of the social work courses taken at other institutions (the syllabi must be detailed enough to indicate learning objectives, course topics, learning assignments, required reading, suggested readings, and, ideally, course bibliographies). If the course is similar in nature after comparing the course description and course learning outcomes/objectives, the course will be approved for transfer credit. Care is taken in this procedure to grant transfer students the maximum allowable credit for their previous academic work without violating course sequencing in the MSW program or otherwise compromising the integrity of the program.

In the evaluation of transfer credits or past experiences, academic credit is not given in Calvin University's MSW program for life or previous work experience. This policy applies to all courses in the MSW program including all Social Work Field Education.

## **Transfer Limits**

Students may request to transfer a maximum of 9 credits from other regionally accredited institutions (or a recognized foreign institution) to satisfy graduate degree requirements at Calvin University.

## **Transfer Process for Current Students**

Current Calvin University graduate students who change programs may request to apply up to 50% of earned credits into another Calvin graduate program. The program director, for the new program, and the registrar approve the requests for transfer credit across graduate programs.

Field education and practice course transfer credits will only be considered if they originate from other CSWE accredited or candidacy social work programs. Transfer course work is not computed in the Calvin University grade point average.

## **Waived Courses**

### **Regular Standing with Waived Courses**

Prospective students who earned a BSW from a school that is not CSWE accredited or earned their BSW over seven years ago would not be eligible for the Advanced Standing program. However, for students who have earned a BSW not to repeat generalist curriculum taken in a BSW program, several of the courses in the first year of the MSW program will be waived. Students must have earned a B- or better in the equivalent BSW course in order to be eligible to waive the following MSW courses:

- SOWK 501: Social Work Foundations (2 credits)
- SOWK 550: Human Behavior and the Social Environment (2 credits)

Students who received credit for practicum education and seminar in a BSW program would be eligible to waive the following courses:

- SOWK 580: Field Education I (4 credits)
- SOWK 581: Field Education II (4 credits)

Students who have earned a BSW earlier than seven years ago or was not earned from a CSWE accredited institution will take eight credits from the first year MSW program course offerings as outlined below:

### **Required Courses (4 credits):**

- SOWK 510: Faith, Spirituality, and Social Work (2 credits, Fall 1)
- SOWK 520: Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice (2 credits, Fall 2)

### **Electives (4 credits):**

- SOWK 560: Social Work Policy
  - OR
- SOWK 571: Practice with Individuals, Families, and Groups (2 credits, Spring 1)
- SOWK 555: Applied Social Research
  - OR
- SOWK 575: Practice with Communities and Organizations (2 credits, Spring 2)

Regarding elective credits, admitted students who do not qualify for advanced standing but have earned a BSW will have a collaborative conversation with the MSW program to determine which courses listed above would be appropriate for them to avoid repeating generalist curriculum while maximizing their MSW social work experience. These 8 credits may differ from student to student, depending on which courses they have already taken at the BSW level. Transcripts will be compared and if students have earned a “B-” or better in the generalist equivalency course listed above, a different course may be taken as a substitution.

Waiving certain generalist courses is an effort to recognize the work, time, effort, and learning that students have already put in to earning their BSW degree. Waiving some courses may also positively impact student’s financial health by relieving the financial burden of paying for some classes with material they have already taken. However, the intent of requiring students to take

one course per term before advanced standing courses is to help them reengage with academics and current academic discussions on the field of social work.

## **FIELD EDUCATION ADMISSION PROCESSES**

### **Field Education Hours**

CSWE considers field education the "signature pedagogy" of any BSW/MSW curriculum, placing field education as the center of importance regarding social work education. CSWE (2022) states, "Field education is designed to integrate the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the explicit curriculum in the field setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and field—are of equal importance, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria and measures of student acquisition and demonstration of the nine social work competencies" (p. 20).

Field education is an integrative experience which reinforces and deepens previous learning acquired in the liberal arts courses as well as in the professional social work competencies. Field education facilitates the development of new knowledge, skills, and competencies through the behaviors. Field education provides students with the opportunity to apply classroom learning in actual social work practice situations.

Students graduating from the MSW program must achieve 900 hours of agency-based fieldwork. Regular standing students will complete the first 400 hours during SW580 and 581. The remaining 500 will be completed in SW680 and 681. Advanced standing students will complete 500 hours in SW680 and 681 in addition to the 400 hours earned through their BSW. See below for complete field placement course descriptions.

### **Admission to field education**

MSW students are required to formally apply for the field education sequence to the field education coordinator. During the application to the MSW program and residency, field information and materials will be distributed. The application process requires:

1. A written personal statement of preferences and goals for one's field education work.
2. An interview with the field education coordinator.

Students who wish to complete their field education requirements in ways other than the normal design must apply through the field education coordinator for an exception. Exceptions are not guaranteed and must be approved by the SWPC.

Should significant reservations about a student's continuation in the MSW program arise at the point of application to field education, these will be processed by the SWPC. In cases where the committee decides to deny admission to field education, the student involved will have the opportunity to appeal the decision to the SWPC.

For more information about field education, please contact Professor Jenny Siegel, field education coordinator (Hiemenga Hall 458).

## **ADVISING**

The MSW program uses a model of dedicated advising faculty. All graduate advisors have MSW degrees from CSWE-accredited schools and use their years of professional experience from the field to inform their work. The MSW program director and field director, who are both assigned to the social work program full time, will serve as academic advisors for the MSW students. Each graduate advisor is a full-time social work professor and thus is very knowledgeable about curriculum planning and the University's administrative structure, procedures, and resources, and experienced in working with diverse groups of people.

### **Upon Admittance**

Once admitted to the MSW program, each admitted student will be supported in two ways. First, the admitted student will be connected to a School and Graduate and Continuing Studies full time staff person, the Graduate Studies Coordinator, who is designated to support newly admitted students. In addition, students will be contacted by social work faculty (either the Program Director or the Field Director) through direct connection via a phone or video call (whichever the student prefers).

The purpose of the initial meeting is three-fold:

1. To welcome to student into the MSW Social Work program and answer any questions they may have
2. To provide academic advising re: academic requirements and specializations
3. To provide professional advising via discussions about field placements and how they may connect to future areas of social work students may be interested in.

First, during the initial meeting, students will have an opportunity to ask any questions they have which may mitigate some of the concerns students may have before they enter the MSW program. During the meeting/call, students will also be informed about the different support services at Calvin including the Center for Intercultural Student Development, Center for Student Success (Academic Support including Disability Services), the Career Center, and Center for Counselling Wellness. The Center for Student Success has procedures for how to engage with students who have taken a leave of absence.

Second, the field director or program director will also provide some information regarding academic advising and field education. By the end of the meeting/call, incoming students will be given an overview of the program, course requirements, and options for specializations. The conversation will be followed by an email communicating the needed academic and field placement information.

Third, during the welcome and orientation meeting, students will have an opportunity to ask about field placements. The field director or program director will provide some information regarding field education and review the selection and orientation process.

### ***Summer Orientation***

After the initial meeting, students will be required to attend an orientation meeting during the summer prior to beginning their field education placement. The expectations for orientation will

be reviewed with regular standing students, and the weeklong intensive summer class will be reviewed for the advanced standing students. Students who are placed on the MSW regular standing – with waived classes will have the option of attending summer field orientation.

### ***Ongoing Advising***

MSW Social work faculty will meet with their advisees one per term to help provide academic advising. Social Work faculty will provide a check-in for students to also see if the pacing of the courses are sustainable as part-time and full-time options for both regular and advanced standing are available.

**Providing Early and Periodic Evaluation of Student Performance.** The program's advising structure contains several monitoring points of student performance. As all MSW students have a social work faculty member as an advisor, there is term by term monitoring of academic performance until an MSW student graduates. As the handbook states, MSW students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA and not receive lower than a B in any of their social work major courses. Finally, when a student is in field education, each student's performance is monitored and evaluated in writing by the student's field supervisor.

**Preparing for Field Education.** The field director is primarily responsible for providing orientation to field settings and selection of field education sites. Nevertheless, advising meetings create opportunities to talk with students who are preparing for future field education about what they hope to learn and where they hope to be placed. For advanced standing students, the conversation around field education may focus around the student's interest in a clinical placement that aligns with their clinical specialization or a macro setting which would align with their macro specialization. If students are unsure, they may also be advised to be open to either type of placement which would align well with the generalist MSW degree. Because faculty advisors often know their advisees better than other students in the major, students often use this relationship to seek advice about appropriate field education sites. This information is then passed along to the field education coordinator in committee meetings.

### **Professional Advising**

#### ***Policies regarding Professional Advising***

Faculty advisors are required to provide both academic and professional advising to students in the social work major. Aspects of advising that focus more on professional advising help students to explore potential career opportunities, make decisions related to graduate school, learn about licensure, and engage with the Calvin Career Center, among other activities.

During the initial meeting with admitted students, the Career Center at Calvin will be highlighted as one of the resources for students' professional development. Professional advising for social work begins at the first meeting, then again during orientation and continues through spring term of a student's final year.

In addition, professional advising by faculty members occurs through advising and informal conversations during instruction hours. Many of Calvin's MSW instructors will be practitioners who can share their career path. Some of the professional advising is built into the curriculum as well. For instance, SOWK 580 Field Seminar includes a requirement for students to attend a



resume workshop or participate in a mock interview with someone at the Calvin Career Center. SOWK 681 (Advanced Field Education II) also involves a section on licensure so that students are aware of licensing requirements by state. In SOWK 501 (Social Work Foundations), students complete an assignment to interview a social worker in the community, which aims to help students explore a potential career interest. There will also be additional elements of coursework that encourage students to explore different aspects of professional social work. Further, certain course work will encourage students to become involved in activities or events related to professional social work organizations such as NASW, CSWE, or NACSW.

## RETENTION IN THE MSW PROGRAM

### Policies and procedures for continuance and graduation

Due to the nature of social work practice and the expectations of a professional program, academic standards for continuance in the program include professional behaviors and practices. All under-graduate social work students will receive and are required to comply with the following standards as well as related policies in social work course syllabi and field education handbooks. Social work students are also expected to adhere to the *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics* and the Michigan Social Work Licensing Code of Ethics. These expectations also align with the CSWE 2015 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards, particularly the competencies of conducting oneself as a professional social worker, engaging in ethical decision-making, communicating effectively, and engaging diversity and difference in practice.

All students must meet the basic requirements of the social work program with or without accommodations. Please refer to the section on accommodations for students with disabilities (p. 16). Faculty members regularly evaluate students' academic and professional performance in several areas, including but not limited to the following:

### Academic Performance Expectations

**1. Academic Integrity** - All MSW students are required to adhere to Calvin's Academic Integrity Policy.

a. Plagiarism and cheating of any kind is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade for that exam or assignment. It may also result in failing the course. The Student Conduct Code (<http://calvin.edu/directory/policies/student-conduct-code>) section VI outlines disciplinary procedures that must be followed if a faculty member wishes to impose a sanction for academic dishonesty.

b. If there is a pattern of dishonesty, the instructor will submit a report. If you are in doubt about whether or not some form of assistance or use of materials constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, **please talk with a professor**. See the very helpful definition of plagiarism the English department has developed at: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/engl/writing/plagiarism>

### 2. GPA and Academic Performance

- MSW students need to earn a minimum of a B in all social work classes. They maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Classroom performance and class attendance constitute behaviors that factor into a course grade.
- Fulfills the expectations and standards detailed in the field education manual.
- Obtains a mid-year (or mid semester for block placements) evaluation from the field education instructor and faculty liaison that satisfactory progress is being made

toward competent, ethical practice; earns a final evaluation in the field education which affirms the student is adequately prepared to graduate as a beginning generalist social work practitioner. Specific expectations and standards are detailed in the Field Education Manual.

### 3. Behavior Expectations in Course Work (on SOWK syllabi)

- **Online Engagement**

- a. At Calvin we aspire to educate for shalom, which means we are called not only to develop disciplinary knowledge and technical skills, but also to cultivate relationships of trust, reciprocity, and justice through the practices of Christian community.
- b. When you communicate with your professor and fellow students, have in the front of your mind that you are communicating with a human being, someone who bears the image of God.
- c. Respect the work of others. For example, before posting to a discussion board, be sure your question or topic has not already been addressed. Before asking a question about course expectations, read the syllabus.
- d. During synchronous class times, students are required to be present and engaged with the camera on the majority of the class time
- e. Do your part to build a Christian discourse community. For example, before you hit “send”, ask yourself if what you’ve communicated is marked by patience, gentleness, and self-control. Conversely, give others the benefit of the doubt. Practice simple manners, i.e., say “please” and express gratitude, and if wronged, practice forgiveness. Do not use ALL CAPS, which is often taken as shouting, and remember that tone matters: sarcasm can be difficult to successfully convey in written comments.
- f. Respect the sacredness of time by resisting the 24/7 temptation of life online and take a regular sabbath. Allow your professor and fellow students to do the same. Respect the time of both your professor and fellow students. Avoid posting irrelevant links, comments, or pictures to discussion forums.
- g. Offer to help peers who are having access or bandwidth challenges.

- **Assignment Deadlines and Submission Guidelines**

All assignments need to be submitted on Moodle before the due date/time. It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignment is *fully* submitted. There will be a minimum grade reduction of 5% for each day the assignment is late. Additionally, assignments will **not** be accepted more than one week late. If you are falling behind in the course, it is important to contact the professor to discuss your individual circumstance. No assignments will be accepted after the scheduled exam time.

- **Incompletes**

It is the student’s responsibility to *request* an Incomplete before the end of the semester (i.e. the final exam day/time). The decision to grant an Incomplete is at the professor’s discretion.

### Professional Behavior Expectations

Due to the nature of social work practice and the expectations of a professional program, professional behavior and practices are included in standards for continuance. All graduate social

work students will receive and are expected to comply with the standards as well as related policies in social work course syllabi, student handbooks, and field education handbooks. These standards include:

1. The *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics* (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>).
2. *CSWE 2022 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards* (<https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/bb5d8afe-7680-42dc-a332-a6e6103f4998/2022-EPAS.pdf>), particularly the competencies of conducting oneself as a professional social worker, engaging in ethical decision-making, communicating effectively, and engaging diversity and difference in practice.
3. Calvin University's *Student Conduct Code* (<https://calvin.edu/policies/student-conduct-code>)

In addition to the professional standards stated above, all MSW students will be required to demonstrate the following professional behaviors.

4. Basic Professional Behaviors

a. Ethical and Professional Behavior:

- i. Practices using effective oral and written skills;
- ii. uses existing technologies as appropriate;
- iii. employs effective interpersonal skills including the ability to take appropriate responsibility for one's own actions and decisions and their potential impact on others;
- iv. possesses the ability to identify and acknowledge limitations.

b. Stress Management and Emotional Self-Awareness

- i. Effective self-care and coping skills;
- ii. handles stress appropriately by use of self-care techniques and supportive relationships;
- iii. recognizes personal needs and plans accordingly.
- iv. Interpersonal maturity:
- v. demonstrates understanding of appropriate self-disclosure;
- vi. maintains respectful relationships with peers, colleagues, faculty, and others;
- vii. demonstrates empathic support to peers;
- viii. uses assertive problem-solving strategies rather than aggressive or passive actions;
- ix. seeks professional help for medical or emotional issues that interfere with professional and academic performance.

c. Professional Judgment

i. Comprehension of ethical behavior:

1. demonstrates adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics, state licensing laws, and field education site policies and procedures;
2. practices within the competencies and limits of an MSW practitioner.

ii. Committed to professional learning:

1. takes responsibility for learning and seeks feedback and/or supervision from field education instructors, faculty, peers, and colleagues; participates in classroom discussions and stays engaged in learning;
  2. holds oneself accountable for work assigned.
- iii. Self-awareness:
1. demonstrates awareness of one's own attitudes and beliefs (economic status, age, ethnicity, and lifestyle differences) and their impact on professional practice; acknowledges when personal values or biases interfere with professional practice and client relationships and makes appropriate referrals or takes appropriate action.

### **Compliance with other Policies, Laws, and Regulations**

In addition to all University regulations governing student conduct and responsibilities, social work majors as citizens are also subject to all federal and state laws. A student may be terminated from the social work program for violating these laws, rules or regulations. Social work students may also be dismissed from the program for violations of the NASW Code of Ethics. This policy does not supersede or replace any applicable University-wide disciplinary process or policy.

### **Policies and Procedures for Academic or Disciplinary Probation or Termination**

When an academic concern is noted, faculty use the *MSW Social Work Student Concern Form* to document these concerns. The Social Work Student Concern form is a document used internally by the Social Work department which is shared with the student. The faculty also fills out a university-wide student concern form which will begin the process of alerting the Center for Student Success and the Coordinated Care team that there is an academic concern. Both faculty and the Center for Student Success staff will connect with the student to discuss paths forward for academic success. It is important to note that faculty will make exceptions to the program's policies to follow the accommodation provided for students with disabilities who work with university resources for appropriate documentation and disclosure.

"The Registrar will notify graduate students and their program directors when students are on academic probation. In consultation with the Academic Review Committee, program directors might recommend specific actions to address the probationary status. These actions generally include, but are not limited to, regular meetings with an academic counselor or limited enrollment for the subsequent semester.

Graduate students on academic probation are subject to academic dismissal after attempting to complete courses in a subsequent semester if they have a resulting cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 or have completed less than 50% of attempted credit hours. The Academic Review Committee, in consultation with program directors, makes final decisions about academic dismissal.

Students who are not permitted to continue may appeal their academic dismissal to the Academic Review Committee. Students for whom an appeal is granted are placed on academic probation, no longer in good standing, and consequently subject to the interventions determined by the Academic Review Committee and the students' program directors".

If a professional performance concern is brought forward to the MSW Program Director from a faculty member, a field instructor, a fellow student, or a community member, the PD will evaluate if the concern should go through the process for professional performance concern. If not, a social faculty member will address concerns directly with a student and establish a plan of action with that student to resolve the concern. Faculty will use the *Social Work Student Concern Form* to document concerns. Faculty should meet individually with the student to discuss and develop a plan of action.

When a professional performance concern is brought forward to the MSW Program Director from a faculty member, a field instructor, a fellow student, or a community member and it is deemed by the PD director and the Social Work Program Planning Committee as substantive, the Program Director will set up a meeting with the student. At the time of setting up the meeting, the student will be made aware of the concern and presented with the MSW Student Professional Behavior/Academic Concern form. The student will be advised that they may have an advisor present during the meeting for support.

During the meeting, the PD addresses the concern with the student and reviews the completed MSW Student Professional Behavior/Academic Concern form. The student will then have a chance to respond to the concern. The program director documents the meeting and submits notes to the student's file. The PD will then confer with Social Work Planning Committee regarding the next best steps for the student. In collaboration with the SWPC, the PD will decide next steps, which can include the following options:

- A. creation of a remediation plan (to be done in collaboration with the student),
- B. a decision to forward the case to the Office of Accountability, Support and Restoration, or
- C. probation
- D. to immediately dismiss the student from the program.
  - Decisions will be based on the nature, the severity, and the context of the incident.
  - The PD may also consult with field instructors and the Director of the Office of Accountability, Support, and Restoration for guidance.

The PD will set up a follow up meeting with the student. During the subsequent meeting, the PD will share the outcome of the discussion with the SWPC. At this meeting, the student will also be informed of the appeals process.

After the meeting, the PD will document the interaction and then submit the notes into the student's file. Within a week of the follow up meeting, a letter will be written by the MSW program director documenting the outcome of the meeting and any actions taken. This letter will be sent to the student, the concerned faculty member, the field director, and the program's academic dean. If the matter is related to field performance, a copy will also be sent to the field instructor.

In the event of probationary status, the student will be advised in writing of the actions that must be taken to address the concerns and a timeframe for doing so to regain full program status. This may include, but is not limited to, future meetings with their advisor, seeking outside assistance, re-evaluating academic load and readiness for the major, meeting a minimum GPA during the subsequent semester, and/or a specific performance level in field.

Students placed on probationary status or terminated from the program have the right to appeal against the decision (see student appeals, p. 35).

Faculty and advisors work with students to prevent termination from the program; however, there are some academic or professional concerns that merit possible termination from the program. In cases where a student's overall GPA falls below 3.0 while in field, and "if they have a resulting cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 or have completed less than 50% of attempted credit hours, they may be considered for academic dismissal. The Academic Review Committee, in consultation with program directors, makes final decisions about academic dismissal.

Students who are not permitted to continue may appeal their academic dismissal to the Academic Review Committee. Students for whom an appeal is granted are placed on academic probation, no longer in good standing, and consequently subject to the interventions determined by the Academic Review Committee and the students' program directors".

Calvin University. (2024). *Graduate Academic Probation and Dismissal*

### **Student Appeals - Academic Performance Appeal**

If a student is dismissed for academic performance, the student is invited to appeal the decision in writing to the graduate academic review committee (GARC). The documentation must be received no later than ten days of receiving notice from the registrar's office. The GARC committee consists of the dean of graduate studies, the registrar, and one additional graduate program director (assigned from another Calvin graduate program). The MSW director serves as a reference, advocate, or critic. The student submits a letter to GARC explaining the circumstances of poor performance and articulates a plan for academic success. The MSW program director may submit a document advocating for the student's readmission articulating their experience of the student and offering a word of confidence for readmission. The GARC receives the information and may request a video-based meeting with the student. The GARC provides a decision within five days of receiving the documentation from the student and the MSW program director (*the wording for this paragraph is pending approval by Graduate Studies Committee in January 2025*).

### **Student Appeals - Professional Performance Appeal**

If a student is dismissed for professional performance, they have the right to appeal the decision. The student must submit an appeal in writing to the MSW graduate program director within one week of the date of the termination from the program. The program director will forward the appeal to the Social Work Appeals Committee, which consists of the chair of the department of social work, a member of the Office of Student Support, Accountability, and Restoration (OSSAR), a faculty representative from another Calvin professional program (e.g., speech pathology, nursing, education), and the social work program director. The student appealing may request the replacement of one member of the committee if the student believes there is bias or prejudice. If the student requests that the program director be replaced, the dean of graduate

studies will appoint a program director from another Calvin graduate program, and the chair of the social work department will lead the appeals process.

The Social Work Appeals Committee will follow this procedure, processing the appeal and communicating a decision to the student in writing within two working weeks of when the appeal is received.

The Social Work Appeals Committee will follow this procedure, processing the appeal and communicating a decision to the student in writing within two working weeks of when the appeal is received.

The following process will be used within the Social Work Appeals Committee meeting.

- The MSW Program Director (or department chair substitute if requested by the student) will present the reasons for the termination. This will be done in writing, including any supporting evidence.
- The student will present their appeal in writing and with supporting evidence.
- Other parties may submit responses and documents.
- All parties may appear in person before the Appeals Committee. The MSW Program Director must be notified if the student desires to attend the meeting in person.
- After the student, if present, is excused from the meeting, the Appeals Committee will discuss the matter and vote. A simple majority is needed to approve the appeal.
- The MSW program director will notify all parties as to the outcome. The student will be notified by email. The MSW Program Director will maintain supporting files.

Students who wish to appeal the termination from the program must include the following in their letter of appeal:

- Briefly describe the events which led you to appeal.
  - For example, the social work program has indicated a concern related to professional behaviors.

You did not receive the requisite grade in a major course.

- State what you are requesting:
  - An appeal of the decision to dismiss you from the social work program.
  - Permission to continue in SOWK 580, 581, 680, or 681 Field Education.
- State your rationale for the appeal. Include supporting data when appropriate
  - Keep your comments as concise as possible. Include a plan for action.

Students wishing to appeal the decision of the Social Work Appeals Committee should follow the University's student protest and appeals procedure, beginning at the level of the dean of graduate studies and following the outlined steps (see *Calvin University Catalog* and *Calvin University Student Handbook*). This process ensures that the student's concern is heard by a new audience.

## **Student Initiated Grievances**

On occasion, a student may have criticism of a professor for which they request some action. Criticisms may include the requirements of a course, the nature of a test, a grade received, teaching effectiveness, general performance, or sanctions given for academic dishonesty. The student should present such criticism directly to the faculty member. The student's concern or criticism should be heard and given serious attention by the faculty member.

If the faculty member's response does not satisfy the student, or if the student, for good reason, does not feel free to approach the faculty member, the student should bring the concern or criticism to the social work program director. The program director should work for resolution.

If the grievance involves the social work program director, the most senior faculty member of the program shall serve in all areas that are indicated as program director responsibilities.

If the student or the involved faculty member does not accept the advice of the program director, then one of the following procedures will be followed:

- If the complaint regards academic standards and expectations, the student must follow the appeal procedure as outlined above, submitting a written request to the program director that presents the concern and asks for resolution. This must occur within two weeks following the meeting with the program director. The program director will forward the appeal to the appeals committee, and the process noted above will be followed.
- If the complaint regards matters other than academic standards and expectations, the student must follow the procedure as outlined in the Calvin University catalog and student handbook.

## **Student Files**

The Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 along with 1976 amendments to the law require that institutions such as universities provide:

...students access to official records directly related to the students and an opportunity for a hearing to challenge such records on the grounds that they are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise inappropriate; that institutions must obtain written consent... before releasing personally identifiable data about students from records to other than a specified list of exceptions: that ... students must be notified of these rights;..." (Federal Register, January 6, 1975).

In accordance with this law and the standards of the Council on Social Work Education, MSW students will be granted access to their files for review. Requests must be in writing and must be submitted to the social work program director. Students may appeal in writing to the SWPC to remove any inaccurate information from their files. These appeals will be acted on and the student notified within four working weeks of the date of the request. Students with concerns about their files are encouraged to first discuss these concerns with their advisor.

In the MSW application materials, students will indicate electronically a "Release of Filed Information" so that social work faculty can use this information in making decisions about



student retention in the MSW program, entry into the field education, recommendations to field instructors, recommendations for employment and recommendations to graduate school.

## **STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

### **MSW Student Organization**

We encourage you to join the Master of Social Work Student Organization (MSWSO). The MSWSO consists of social work majors and students interested in social work and has one faculty advisor. The intention of the student organization is to:

- advocate for the needs of social work graduate students in the University structure,
- help social work faculty plan and execute social work professional events,
- to give suggestions and feedback about the admission, curriculum, and the field education process; and
- to promote social and educational events.

### **Student Representation**

MSW students will also be represented on the Social Work Planning Committee (SWPC) by a student in the MSW program. The student representatives serve as ambassadors to the program, reminding students of the policies and procedures outlined in the *Social Work Student Handbook*. One MSW student and two BSW student members of the SWPC work with faculty on such matters as: reviewing student applications to the BSW program, formulating and modifying curricular and policy structures, and engaging in discussions related to admission or retention standards. When reviewing new applications to the program or student concerns, there is a review of the confidentiality standards of the committee.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND STUDENT RIGHTS**

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

No student who demonstrates professional ability and qualifications will be discriminated against or excluded from the social work program on the basis of disability. Students with disabilities seeking reasonable accommodations must work with a disability coordinator in the Center for Student Success. The Social Work Program will work with the student and the disability coordinator to make reasonable accommodations for the student.

#### ***Student Success/Disability Services Contact Information:***

Location: Hieminga Hall 227

Email: [disabilityservices@calvin.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@calvin.edu)

Phone: (616) 526-6151

### **Program Statement on Non-discrimination**

The Social Work Program Committee has adopted the following statement on non-discrimination:

The Calvin University Masters of Social Work program, convinced that all persons are created in the image of God, affirms the worth and right to personal dignity of all

persons. Consequently, the program is committed to operating in all respects without discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, age, religion, national origin, disability, political affiliation, marital status, sex, gender expression, or sexual orientation. (In regard to creed, the program appoints social work faculty who are committed to and articulate the mission of the University and the objectives of the MSW program. Regarding field instructors, students, and support personnel, the program is also committed to non-discrimination based on creed.)

Any person formally associated with Calvin's MSW program (faculty, field instructor, student, support personnel) who believes that he/she has been discriminated against has the right, and is urged, to make complaint to the director of social work (students are encouraged first to make complaint to their social work faculty advisor and then to the program director). The complaint may be related to any aspect of the program, including, but not necessarily limited to, admission to the program, course procedures and assignments, field placement procedures and assignments, classroom and field placement interactions, grades, field evaluations, faculty advising, and student organization. The director, upon receiving a complaint, will within two weeks initiate attempts to help the person reach satisfactory resolution of the complaint. If this fails, the person has the right, and is urged, to seek advice and help from those in the University administration formally empowered to respond to such complaints. (Complaints of discrimination by faculty, students, and field instructors are processed by the dean and the provost; complaints by support personnel are processed by the vice president for administration and finance.) Ethnic minority students who are making complaint are urged to contact the dean of multicultural student development for additional service and support.

### **Students' Right to Organize**

Students, including MSW students, have the right to organize for their own interests, related to matters of their academic and student affairs. Once the MSW program has begun, MSW students will be invited to join the Master of Social Work Student Organization (MSWSO). The MSWSO will consist of social work majors and students interested in social work and has one faculty advisor. The intention of the student organization will be to:

- advocate for the needs of social work graduate students in the University structure,
- help social work faculty plan and execute social work professional events,
- to give suggestions and feedback about the admission, curriculum, and the field education process; and
- to promote social and educational events.

Over the next semester, the MSW program developers will explore creating a charter for the MSWSO which would include a name, leadership, advisor, mission statement, goals, calendar, and organizational structure.

### **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Post-baccalaureate students who are degree-seeking or on a certification track are eligible for financial aid consideration in a limited number of financial aid programs and are encouraged to complete the FAFSA. These students will be considered for institutional need-based grants and

federal student loans. Post-baccalaureate students may also apply for some institutional scholarships specific to post-baccalaureate study. Post-baccalaureate students are not eligible for federal or state need-based grants, Calvin academic scholarships, and most other awards. Calvin graduates who return as post-baccalaureate students are only eligible for aid if seeking a different type of degree.

Graduate students are eligible for financial aid consideration in a very limited number of financial aid programs and are encouraged to complete the FAFSA to confirm eligibility for federal student loans. Graduate students may also be eligible to apply for the Federal TEACH Grant and some Calvin scholarships.

Scholarship application forms are available online at <https://calvin.academicworks.com/>.

Information is available in January. Awards for the following academic year are made in April. More information on each of these awards is given in the University catalog.

## **COURSE/FACULTY/PROGRAM EVALUATION**

MSW students are asked to give written evaluation of course content, and also of instructors who teach courses in the social work major. A University-wide evaluation instrument is used in these cases. Social work faculty may ask students to complete additional evaluation instruments.

Additionally, just prior to graduation, MSW students are asked to participate in an exit interview and online assessment tests to assist the program in evaluation.

## APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENT FACULTY

**Hennie Schoon**, Ed.D (Bethel University), M.S.W. (Western Michigan University)

Practice experience with university populations and residential programs for at-risk youth. She facilitates Mental Health First Aid for school and community groups, both in Canada and the U.S.; research interests include mental health, the use of technology, and social connections. Teaching includes Spirituality, Faith, and Social Work, Foundations in Social Work, Diversity, Inequality, and Social Justice, and Mental Health and Social Work. She also serves as the Master of Social Work Program Director.

**Jennifer Siegel**, Ph.D. (University of Maryland), M.S.W. (Michigan State University).

Practice experience includes work with Church World Service, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in D.C. and Zambia, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services, policy advocacy and consulting. Dr. Siegel's research examines structural conditions impacting behavioral health disparities among diverse populations. Specifically interested in structural conditions impacting mental health and substance use patterns among immigrant and refugee youth and families. Expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods as well as program monitoring and evaluation. Teaching includes Social Work Clinical Practice with Immigrants and Refugees (U of Maryland), Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Research, and BSW and MSW Practicum Director.

**Stacia Hoeksema**, MSW (University of South Florida), LMSW (State of Michigan).

Practice experience with Bethany Christian Services in Romania; in-home family counseling; medical social work; hospice social work; interdisciplinary social work; support group facilitation; anti-racism education and coaching; teaches Global Issues and Perspectives, The Helping Interview and Generalist Practice with Families, and Groups at both Knollcrest and Handlon campuses; serves as BSW Program Director.

**Sherita Washington**, PhD student (Lancaster Bible College: Capital Seminary), MSW (Norfolk State University), MA (Grand Rapids Theological Seminary).

Practice experience includes faith-based community organizing, academic advisor, adoption recruiter, child protection services advocate, cultural intelligence facilitator, anti-racism, and implicit bias trainer; research interests include the intersectionality of race and gender in Christian and secular institutions; teaches Introduction to Social Work, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Welfare Policy, and Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities.

**Meredith Mockabee**, M.S.W. (Western Michigan University), L.M.S.W. (State of Michigan).

Practice experience includes Safe Haven Ministries in case management, legal advocacy, group facilitation and domestic abuse prevention; outpatient counseling and school social work (K-8 and college) with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services; and medical social work at Calvin Rehabilitation Services. Related experience includes respite care, mentoring, foster care, and adoption. Professor Mockabee teaches Social Work Practicum Education, Generalist Practice with Individuals and has instructed The Helping Interview Labs.

## **APPENDIX B: DEPARTMENT FACILITIES**

The social work program department office is located in Hiemenga Hall 440-450. Faculty mailboxes are located in this space, and students are welcome to leave messages for faculty there. The department office houses a lounge space and is connected to HH 440, which serves as the program conference room.

Faculty offices are in HH 440-450 and HH 460. Most social work classes are taught in classrooms adjacent to these facilities. The social work program has a room designated for The Helping Interview class lab located in Spoelhof Center 212.

The social work program has office space for student research assistants that can be used for research related to coursework in the social work program and faculty-related research projects. This space is towards the back of the department office by the conference room. Telephones in this space are to be used only for social work research projects; infractions of this rule will result in the loss of privileges to use this space. Students wishing to use this space for research-based projects should contact the administrative assistant of the department.

## **APPENDIX C: OTHER RESOURCES**

### **Hekman Library**

The social work faculty has been reviewing Calvin's social work holdings and adding to them over the past several years. Faculty members review new titles in their areas of expertise and place orders to keep our holdings up to date.

We have now either acquired or have on order the most recent editions of all social welfare policy and social casework titles listed in the standard reference, *Books for University Libraries*, and the titles listed in the Council on Social Work Education's publication, *Building the Undergraduate Social Work Library: An Annotated Bibliography*. We also have several major journals in social work including *Families in Society*, *Public Welfare*, *Social Work*, *Social Work and Christianity*, *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, as well as others in social problems and social research. Calvin's library is also a partial depository of U.S. government documents holding some 100,000 items. When using the library, remember that there are library personnel willing to assist you.

### **Computer Services**

The information technology department offers several services to students. The Information Technology Center (CIT) lab is on the second floor of the library and offers PC and Macintosh computers attached to the University network. Other computer labs on campus include PCs and terminals attached to the network in residence halls and a Sun and MAC classroom in North Hall. The social work program gives instruction in computer use in its social science statistics and research design courses, and encourages its students to develop and use word processing and PowerPoint skills for their writing assignments and projects in social work courses.

### **The Service-Learning Center**

The Service-Learning Center, located on the second floor of the library, provides opportunities for students and others in the Calvin community to participate in meaningful service-learning, social justice activity, and civic participation in the Grand Rapids community. Students can get involved through academically based service-learning, non-academic opportunities such as spring break trips, or may independently seek out opportunities to get involved.

### **The Center for Counseling and Wellness**

The Center for Counseling and Wellness, located in Spoelhof Center 366-368, offers a range of professional counseling services for students. Counselors are available by appointment (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) or by daily walk-in times (3:30 to 4:30 p.m.).

### **Career Services**

Staff in the career development office, located in the Hekman Library 372, provide assistance for students searching for careers by helping them recognize their own resources and talents and by exploring with them the variety of careers available to them. The career resources area includes various career information resources including a computerized informational system. Additionally, career development staff help MSW prepare professional skills and files, such as conducting mock-interviews and resumes/cover letter help.

### **Center for Student Success**

The Center for Student Success offers services designed to help students become more effective at learning. It offers review courses in English and mathematics as well as a course which assists students in developing study skills and adjusting to university-level work. Tutoring by trained upper-class students is available in many courses free of charge for any student with permission of the student's professor.

### **Student Services for Diversity and Inclusion**

Calvin University is striving to be an anti-racist, multicultural, and inclusive Christian academic community. They hope to provide programs and support services to help students adjust to Calvin's campus culture and achieve their educational goals. Students are also encouraged to contact the Center for Intercultural Student Development (CISD) which exists to create a campus community where all students feel a sense of belonging through support services, multicultural programming, and anti-racism education. There are multiple ways to get involved in the Intercultural Student Development office. You can contact Josh Samarco, Program Director for the CISD, at [josh.s@calvin.edu](mailto:josh.s@calvin.edu), or stop by the office in Hekman Library.

### **Rhetoric Center**

This service offers tutors to assist students in writing term papers. Students at any level of writing experience are welcome to use this service. The office is on the third floor of the Hekman Library and open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday) and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Monday through Thursday) during the fall and spring semesters.