

 UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC <hr/> School of Health Sciences	Master of Social Work Program 3200 Fifth Ave, Sacramento, CA 95817 Phone: 916.325.4646 http://go.pacific.edu/socialwork	<h2 style="text-align: center;">FAQ's</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">For Agencies Interested in Providing Field Internships for Pacific MSW Students</p>
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What is Social Work Field Education?

Field education, or the *field placement*, is the social work term for “internship” or “practicum”. Students are placed in human service organizations to develop their professional social work skills and receive academic credit for their experience. A large portion of the social work student’s academic program is devoted to field education. This fact underscores the high importance social work education places on the field experience.

The social work field experience is characterized in these ways:

- It is an educationally-driven experience, based on a Learning Agreement, using a professional setting as a “classroom”.
- The student’s educator-in-the-field is a professional MSW-level social worker with at least 2 years of post-degree experience in social work.
- The purpose of the field experience is to develop social work skills, not to train students for a particular job.
- The student’s field placement is overseen by a university-based field liaison, a faculty member, who acts as a monitor and resource for both the student and the field instructor.

The University of the Pacific MSW Field Schedule

Field Placement Level	Term	Field Activities	Time Requirement
Generalist	Spring January – April Learning Agreement 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning level: engagement, assessment, intervention planning, intervention and evaluation • Case management & psych-social assessment and support • Identify needs and refer clients to appropriate resources • Help patient communicate with health care personnel 	24 Hours/Week 15 Weeks 360 Hours
Specialist	Summer & Fall April-December Learning Agreement 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced level: engagement, assessment, intervention, planning, intervention and evaluation • Provide advanced intervention (psychotherapy, crisis management, etc. depending upon the site) to individuals, families, and groups, orgs and communities • Support family caregivers, parents, and other collateral support. • Design group curriculum & facilitate groups • Completion of tasks with increased independence and more complicated cases 	24 Hours/Week 31 Weeks 744 Hours

What is the length of a field placement?

Pacific requires two levels of field placement -Generalist and Specialist.

- Generalist Level: Generalist students begin in January and are in the internship for 24 hours (3 days) per week. The Generalist internship is 15 weeks long.
- Specialist Level: Specialist students begin in April and are also in the field for 24 hours (3 days) per week. The Specialist internship is 31 weeks long.

Who supervises the students in their placements?

The agency must provide a person with a MSW degree, and 2 years post-degree experience, to provide *field instruction*. This person is called the *field instructor*, and may be a regular employee of the agency, or a person from the outside with whom the agency contracts to provide weekly field instruction. Students are not allowed to pay for their field instructor's services; this is an agency responsibility. In addition to the field instructor, the agency may also provide a student with a Task Supervisor. This person is not required to have an MSW and is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the student. Students **MUST** have a Task Supervisor when an off-site field instructor is utilized.

What do agencies receive in exchange for offering placement opportunities?

In exchange for providing learning opportunities for students, agencies can expect that students will deliver agency services that advance the agency's mission. However, most students are not competent to do so until they are past their orientation, and even then, will require more supervision than a regular employee. *Thus, the agency should not expect to utilize students primarily as unpaid staff, but rather, as developing professionals in a learning environment.*

What basic qualifications must an organization meet to become a field site?

To qualify as an approved field site, an organization must:

- Be recognized as an official organization; whether *private or public, nonprofit or for-profit*. Sole proprietorships are NOT eligible to take students.
- Engage in activities that fall under the purview of the social work profession.
- Provide an MSW-level field instructor to direct and monitor the student's placement.
- Have written operating policies and procedures regarding discrimination and sexual harassment, and policies and procedures regarding health and safety.
- Be administratively and financially sound.

What are the agency's key responsibilities towards students?

The agency must provide the following:

- A sufficient number and variety of assignments to support the progression of student learning as outlined by a learning plan (called a "Learning Agreement"). The Learning Agreement is developed jointly by the field instructor and student at the beginning of the internship, and it outlines required competency-based activities.
- Adequate workspace and access to telephones, computers, records, etc., to fulfill the requirements of the agency and the Pacific Social Work Program.
- Reimbursement for expenses involved in rendering agency services.
- Release time/support for the field instructor so that they can meet the Social Work Program's criteria for working with a student.

How are students insured while at the placement?

Pacific provides professional liability insurance for all students. The University does NOT provide workers compensation or automobile insurance. Students are not able to drive clients in their own vehicles. Agencies are strongly encouraged to include students in any insurance coverage offered to other volunteers at the agency.

Is it permissible for employees of an agency to do their field placement at their place of work?

The Pacific Social Work Program recognizes that students may want to explore field internship opportunities in their place of employment. *While professional activity and learning are not incompatible, there is a difference between the goals of educational development and those of employment.* The focus of the field internship must be on the student's academic learning.

- Students who are interested in exploring the option of an Employment-Based Internship must complete an application that outlines how the internship will be both different from their employment and will present the student with a learning curve/challenge. An application will be rejected if the employment-based field internship keeps a student in the same kind of agency environment with the exact same population and the exact same kind of supervision.
- The agency must provide an employment supervisor who is a different person than the Field Instructor. This is to ensure, in part, that the Field Instructor is free to focus on the educational aspects of the internship while the employment supervisor can focus on workload issues.
- This option is most appropriate in large agencies with multiple sites and service opportunities. Students should NOT be expected to assume a regular employee caseload in an employment-based internship but should be viewed as a student and provided with support and learning opportunities similar to non-employee students.

What is the role of the field instructor?

Field instructors are agency staff members or contractors, who possess a MSW and who, with the approval of agency administrators and the Field Office, are **willing and able** trainers and mentors of social work students. Field Instructor are similar to a social work faculty member in that their key responsibility is the mandates of the national accrediting organization, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In order to fulfil these responsibilities, they carry out three different roles relative to each student:

- Educator: In this role, the Field Instructor guides and assesses the overall professional development of the student.
- Teacher: In this role, they facilitate "learning opportunities" for students, model for and observe the student, and provide meaningful feedback.
- Gatekeeper: In this role, they assist the Field Liaison (Field Faculty) in assessing whether or not the student is appropriate for the profession--demonstrates the personal/professional capacities/behaviors requisite of professional social workers.

How much time should a field instructor expect to spend with a student?

The Field Instructor must meet weekly for at least one hour per week. During the initial or orientation phase, this time will necessarily be more than one hour per week. The "best practice" is for the meeting to take place at the exact same time every week.

What are the specific responsibilities of field instructors?

These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide a comprehensive initial orientation to the agency and populations served, to risk management and to intern activities. This can take approximately 8+ hours of training in the first weeks. This training and orientation can be done by the Task Supervisor or other

agency staff.

- Provide one hour of regularly scheduled “field instruction” per week. The “field instruction” must be done by the MSW Field Instructor.
- Provide time for reading student materials, holding informal conferences and meetings, and consulting with Pacific Faculty Liaison.
- Develop a written educational contract (Learning Agreement) with the student.
- Provide appropriate assignments for the student throughout the placement.
- On an ongoing basis, assess and provide feedback to students regarding their social work skills, professional behavior/identity and to provide written evaluations consistent with the Pacific’s calendar and deadlines.
- Conduct a formal written evaluation of the student at the end of each semester.
- Complete an evaluation of the field liaison using the form provided by Pacific.
- Participate in an “Introduction to Field Instruction” and, thereafter, engage in field instruction seminars at least once a year.

What is expected of Field Instructors who are off-site?

Field instructors who are off-site are responsible for ensuring that the responsibilities noted above are carried out in whole through both their own efforts as well as those of the Task Supervisor (see below). The off-site Field Instructor must meet with the student weekly for 1 hour at a regularly scheduled time. The focus of these meetings is social work content – social work perspective, values, ethics, practice theories, and theories for practice. These hours constitute the “instructional hour”. In addition to the instructional hour, the off-site Field Instructor must communicate with the Task Supervisor to obtain feedback on the student’s progress in the area of SKILL development and must review the student’s process recordings and case notes. Lastly, the off-site field instructor is responsible for completing the student’s evaluation in concert with the Task Supervisor.

What is the role of the Task Supervisor?

A Task Supervisor is a regular staff member who is responsible for the day-to-day assignments of the student and the observation and assessment of the SKILLS portion of student learning. A Task Supervisor is required for an off-site Field Instructor.

The individual staff member assuming this role must be approved by and able to work with the field instructor of record. It is expected that the Task Supervisor will model skills and observe the student in his/her daily assignments, meet with the Faculty Liaison as appropriate, and provide relevant feedback to both the student and the field instructor.

Summary

Agencies that provide field placements to social work students are a vital and essential part of social work education. In the great majority of situations, agencies find our students to be a significant asset to their organization’s programs and clients.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to further the careers of the Pacific MSW student and to promote the social work profession.