

ADMISSION TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

Application to the program: Students in the social work major go through a process of application to the program, which is an extra step after declaring a social work major and beginning to take social work courses.

The purpose of the application process is to demonstrate the student's ability not only to do coursework at an acceptable academic level, but also to demonstrate the student's understanding and adherence to the values of the social work program, as stated in the NASW Code of Ethics. This is very important because social workers come in contact with vulnerable populations and are in a position to influence those clients. Sometimes students who have an acceptable GPA may be unaware of biases, prejudices or conflicting values that could prevent them from being effective social workers, or could even cause situations where harm is done to vulnerable clients. The application process is a way of identifying potential areas of concern.

Applicants to the program are assessed by their application and GPA, as well as what their professors have seen demonstrated in the classroom. This could be comments that have been made, attitudes or behaviors that may indicate a value conflict or bias, or difficulty relating to peers. It could also include frequent absences or a lack of participation in class. Evaluation for admission to the program is determined by a rubric completed by each faculty member. If there are enough concerns, an applicant may be required to delay admission to the program and participate in a mentoring program for the following semester.

Mentoring: The purpose of delaying admission and participation in the mentoring program is NOT to prevent students from getting a degree in social work, but to prevent students from having difficulties in their field placement or employment because of these types of issues and to ensure quality care to clients. During the mentoring semester, students will meet with one or two faculty members to discuss these issues and review their progress. Students may be asked to complete an assignment that is focused on the concerns being addressed. Students may continue to take courses in the social work program during this semester, but they cannot advance to field until they are admitted to the program.

FAQs

- 1) Why do I have to apply? I have already declared social work as a major.

All accredited social work programs are required by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to evaluate their students for the goodness-of-fit between the student and the social work profession. The APSU social work faculty starts this process by having you apply to enter the program.

- 2) When do I apply?

Students should have completed two of these three classes prior to applying:

SW 2110 Introduction to Social Work
SW 3410 Values, Ethics and Diversity
SW 3420 Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Applications are reviewed twice a year, once during the fall semester and once during the spring semester.

- 3) What happens if I don't apply?

You will not be placed in a field practicum unless you have been accepted to the program.

- 4) What happens if I apply late?

If you bring your application in after the deadline, it will not be reviewed.

- 5) Is there a limit on how many people can be accepted?

No, we can accept all qualified applicants.

- 6) How does the faculty decide whether an applicant is qualified?

All of the faculty members read and evaluate the applications. Meeting as a group, we verify that the student has the minimum GPA (2.0) for the program. Students who do not have the minimum GPA will be asked to speak with their advisors to develop a plan for improving their GPA, and they may reapply to the program when their GPA is above a 2.0. (Keep in mind that APSU will not grant a diploma if a student's overall GPA is below 2.0.)

Next, the faculty uses a rubric to evaluate students and identify whether there are any concerns. Students with no concerns are admitted to the program.

- 7) A concern? What does that mean?

Sometimes students are having difficulties adapting to the values and ethics of the social work profession. Other students are having academic problems. Rather than just ignoring these warning signs, the faculty has developed a "mentoring for success" program, in which a student is assigned to work with a faculty mentor to remove these barriers to successful completion of the social work program.

Examples of concerns include:

Excessive or inappropriate self-disclosure in class (including online discussions)
Inappropriate responses to other students or the faculty
Unprofessional conduct in class (including texting or web surfing)

Statements that demonstrate a lack of respect for others or for diversity
Criticism of others who are not in agreement with you
Poor attendance or excessive tardiness
Late assignments or poor quality of work on assignments

8) Can I still take classes while I'm being mentored?

Yes, according to the plan you and your mentor develop.

9) How should I respond if my letter recommends mentoring?

You should contact your mentor as soon as possible and set up a meeting. You should also take a deep breath and relax. Being referred to mentoring is not a sign that someone on the faculty does not like you or that you should look for another major! The faculty is making the referral for mentoring so that you can be a success in the profession by addressing issues early. The faculty thinks you have the potential to be successful as a social worker IF these issues are addressed.

Bottom Line: the faculty has identified a barrier that, in their experience, can keep you from being the best social worker you can be, and they are willing to give you extra time to help you remove that barrier.