

Master of Social Work Program Handbook

Welcome

The UNLV School of Social Work is grounded in the core values of our profession—social and economic justice, the inherent dignity and worth of all people, cultural humility, and the right to self-determination. In a rapidly evolving urban landscape like Las Vegas, these values are not only relevant—they are essential.

Our program prepares future social workers to meet the complex and diverse needs of our communities with innovation, compassion, and integrity. Through a forward-thinking curriculum and engaged faculty, students are equipped to work across a broad range of practice areas, including mental and behavioral health, aging, substance use, child and family services, housing insecurity, and systems-level policy and advocacy.

We recognize that today's social workers must be trauma-informed, data-informed, and equity-driven. Our trauma-informed practice concentration continues to grow in its response to public emergencies, interpersonal violence, and systemic harm—strengthening our curriculum, faculty training, and research capacity.

At UNLV, your social work education will challenge you to think critically, confront structural inequities, and build meaningful change. You will gain the tools to work collaboratively across systems and lead efforts that promote healing, resilience, and justice. This is more than a degree—it is a commitment to service, leadership, and lifelong growth in a demanding but deeply rewarding profession.

Christopher Stream
Director

Mission Statement(s)

The mission of the MSW program is to provide graduate education in advanced professional social work practice for practice with diverse urban populations in three concentrations: Direct Practice, Trauma Informed Practice concentration, and Management & Community Practice.

The MSW curriculum is designed to:

1. Provide a generalist foundation and advanced practice concentration curriculum in Direct Practice (DP), Trauma Informed Practice (TIP), and Management & Community Practice (MCP), with a focus on enhancing the functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities in a diverse urban society;
2. Provide advanced knowledge, promote humanistic values, model ethical conduct, and educate students to work collaboratively toward the creation of a society based upon social and economic justice; and
3. Educate students to promote the development and well-being of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities, as well as social and economic justice.

The MSW Program goals are to:

1. Educate graduate social work students for competent practice at an advanced level in an area of concentration.
2. Provide students with an understanding of the effects of situational factors, such as racism, sexism, poverty, and material deficits, on individual, family, group, and community behavior and choices; utilizing the knowledge to promote social and economic justice through social work practice.

3. Provide students with an understanding of the effects of social welfare history, policies, and programs on diverse urban populations.
4. Prepare students to: integrate research knowledge into practice; generate and utilize research knowledge to evaluate and improve their own social work practice interventions at all system levels; conduct research in a client-centered and ethical manner; and understand the connection between research and competent social work practice.
5. Prepare students to: engage in critical thinking; advocate for social and economic justice utilizing social work values and ethics at all system levels.
6. Create in students a desire for life-long learning and professional development, and for contributing to the professional knowledge base of social work.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

[Master of Social Work](#) | [Academics](#) | [University of Nevada, Las Vegas](#)

Advanced Standing Plan of Study

Regular Standing Plan of Study

Official program requirements are found in [the Graduate Catalog](#).

Contact Information

[Social Work Home](#) | [School of Social Work](#) | [University of Nevada, Las Vegas](#)

School of Social Work

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Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience](#) are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

This Handbook is effective Fall 2026.

Degree Program Benchmarks

The MSW Program consists of 63 credits. Thirty credits make up the foundation studies and thirty credits are focused on the student's concentration area of Direct Practice, Trauma Informed Practice, or Management & Community Practice. For most students taking the Capstone Track, the final three credits are for the Capstone Seminar. Students can also select the Thesis Track, following the guidelines for thesis completion under the guidance of the Advisory Committee. Students may only enroll in thesis credits after they have completed all course requirements except for thesis credits, successfully passed their thesis proposal by the advisory committee, complete and filed all required forms for the program. Those choosing the thesis option will enroll in SW 796 for 2 semesters and will orally defend the thesis before a chosen committee. They are not required to take SW 795, the Capstone Seminar, or one of the elective courses as shown on the Plan of Study.

The culminating experience of the MSW Program is a comprehensive examination.

Students are required to have a reliable PC/laptop/tablet with webcam capabilities, or they can loan this equipment, if available, from UNLV Technology Loan Program. Laptops are the recommended technology. Official program requirements are listed in the [Graduate Catalog](#)

Program Timeline

MSW students are admitted into the fall semester and can complete the program full-time in two academic years. A part-time three-year or four-year program option is also available. **The School of Social Work requires that all courses be taken in the prescribed sequence (plan of study);** any changes to the Plan of Study must be discussed with the Graduate Coordinator and approved through the petition process for the MSW Program. All students, full-time or part-time, must complete the MSW Program within four years after admission.

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

The UNLV School of Social Work strictly adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics as guiding standards of practice and requires that MSW students do so also. The full Code of Ethics is available at NASW www.naswdc.org [NASW Home](#)

Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the Probation and Separation section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

The MSW Program has adopted grading policies as one part of its commitment to program quality and professional competence. In the case of a grade of less than C in a course, a student will need to

repeat that particular course and cannot move on to subsequent classes. The deficiency cannot be made up through an independent study; the student must retake the class, when offered. Furthermore, in the process toward completing the MSW degree, unsatisfactory progress is defined as follows:

- The graduate student will be placed on probation if he or she receives one grade of C or lower in one course or when the Grade Point Average goes below 3.0. The student who receives grades of C- or lower in two courses may be separated from the program after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.
- The graduate student will be placed on probation if he or she receives two incompletes. The student who receives three or more incompletes may be separated from the program after being placed on probation via the Graduate College process.

The School of Social Work has also developed a formal policy and procedure for counseling out for non-academic reasons, the UNLV School of Social Work Professional Conduct Policy. The full text of the policy: A student may be terminated from the MSW Program for non-academic reasons as a result of one or more of the following factors:

- The student has displayed unprofessional conduct in the University or field placement, which represents a substantive violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The student has exhibited attitudes, values and/or behaviors that are grossly inconsistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and the profession of social work.
- The student's mental health is impaired to the extent that the student is unable to meet the expectations of the Program. Such impairments may include, but are not limited to medically diagnosed psychosis, severe depression, violent behavior, inappropriate affect, irrational behavior or other symptomatology that interferes with the student's ability to meet the expectations of the School of Social Work.
- The student is abusing non-prescription or prescribed substances.
- The student is not meeting the School of Social Work expectations for performance in the field placement.
 Unacceptable performance in the field placements may include, but is not limited to the student's not fulfilling his/her assigned responsibilities for the field placement; consistent tardiness or absence in the field placement; displaying an inability to engage in a professional helping relationship with clients; an inability to appropriately use supervision; violating the NASW Code of Ethics; and/or inappropriate conduct toward clients or agency staff.
- The student has been engaged in criminal behavior that has or could result in a felony conviction.
- The student has given false information about him/herself in the admissions procedure or to any staff associated with the program, including employees of field placements, and clients.
- The student displays unacceptable behavior toward faculty and/or students that undermines the teaching process.
- The student's behavior violates the provisions of the College's Student Conduct Code.
- Other behaviors which evidence the student's inability to adequately handle the demands of professional social work practice, such as, but not limited to consistently not meeting deadlines in field or academic settings; consistently being unable to manage personal difficulties so that they do not interfere with the student's ability to meet academic responsibilities; an inability to engage in self-observation and reflection; and an inability to accept constructive criticism.

NOTE: This document is not intended to address issues of student impairment that fall under the purview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In cases in which an ADA impairment is identified or suspected, the affected student would be directed to the University's Disability Resource Center to document the impairment and access the appropriate accommodations.

Step 1: Meeting of Faculty, Student and Student's Advisor

A faculty member concerned about a student's ability to continue in the social work program will call a meeting with the student and his/her advisor. Individuals involved are provided with information pertaining to the nature of the concerns. The purpose of this meeting is a collaborative brainstorming between the student, the involved faculty member, and advisor leading to a possible corrective action to remedy the presenting problem(s). A timeline to meet the criteria is specified. A monitoring process is established, and agreed upon by faculty member, advisor, and student. Procedures are:

- Meeting with student, faculty member and advisor;
- Establishing corrective actions between student, faculty member and advisor;
- Specifying a timeline for completion and scheduling the next meeting(s) to evaluate progress;
- Establishing appropriate documentation;
- Signing and dating by all parties of a written agreement outlining the above.

Step 2: Follow-up Evaluation of Corrective Action Procedures

Faculty member, student and advisor meet at the completion of the corrective action plan to evaluate progress. Parties may explore further course(s) of action. If the matter is not resolved, all documentation will be submitted to the School of Social Work Grievance Committee by the advisor in consultation with the student.

Step 3. School of Social Work Grievance Committee

The chair of the Grievance Committee will notify all parties of the time, place and date of hearing. Relevant information will be distributed to all members of the Grievance Committee at least one week before the scheduled meeting. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the Grievance Committee will submit its recommendation(s) to the Director in writing.

Step 4: Program Director Recommendations

Program Director reviews documentation and renders a decision. Decision may include:

- Referral for specified services
- Temporary leave of absence
- Movement into a different major, program, or class
- Probation
- Separation after being placed on probation
- Other

Step 5: University Grievance Committee

If the student disagrees with the decision by the Director, the student follows the grievance procedures outlined in the UNLV Student Handbook in the Graduate Catalog. The grievance policy outlined in the [Graduate](#)

[Catalog](#) specifies that students should first direct a grievance in written form to the faculty advisor and to the graduate program coordinator. Then if the problem is unresolved, the student should direct the grievance to the School Director; then if unresolved, to the Academic Dean; and then if unresolved, to the Graduate College Dean. Students may contact the Graduate College at any time during the grievance process.

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable

goals for the year ahead. Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each students' submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

In the MSW Program, students are assessed and self-assessed throughout the program in terms of both their course work and field practicum, according to the professional competencies as defined by the Council on Social Work Education:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice.
Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The School of Social Work philosophy stresses the importance of both sound academic education and rich practical experience in preparing advanced social work practitioners. Students are provided with academic knowledge related to theory, research, and major substantive issues in the field, as well as practice experience through field practicum in a variety of private and public agency environments.

Field practicum placement is concurrent with classroom instruction and is considered the "signature pedagogy" of the program, with 15 hours per week in foundation field practicum and 20 hours per week in the student's concentration field practicum. A wide variety of field practicum facilities is available, and students are placed in the field under the guidance of the Field Director and in cooperation with the professional supervisory staff from local social service agencies. The program seeks to encourage and accommodate varied student interests, abilities, and career goals. Close relationships between the school faculty and the service agencies have produced a rich blend of academic and community-based experience for our students in the past.

The MSW Program is consistent with the accreditation standards of the field's national professional accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The program is fully accredited by the CSWE.

The MSW Program sponsors two social work student associations:

University Association of Social Work Students (UASWS)

UASWS is an organization of students who are Social Work majors, as well as students interested in the profession of Social Work. The Association is a UNLV student group recognized by CSUN. The UASWS is organized to develop activities deemed helpful or necessary to benefit Social Work students.

Purpose of UASWS:

- o To provide workshops and seminars on social issues, social change and social work education.
- o To present a positive image of Social Workers on campus and in the community.
- o To serve the needs of members as developing professionals.
- o To provide student representation in the UNLV School of Social Work.
- o To provide social and professional associations for the student social work community.

UASWS Meetings:

Meetings are held monthly according to the need and discretion of UASWS. Content of meetings consists of workshops, speakers, and group discussion on issues of concern to members, as well as organizational business. Speakers share up-to-date information and discuss professional social work practice, employment, education, and other concerns of special interest to social work students.

Phi Alpha Honor Society

The Delta Chapter of Phi Alpha Honor Society is located in the School of Social Work at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Purpose of Phi Alpha:

- To recognize and promote scholastic achievement among students in the social work programs (BSW/MSW) at UNLV.
- To recognize, improve, and further the goals of social work in the community, state, nation, and the world.
- To stimulate interest in preparation for a career in social work.
- To encourage continued study and research at the BSW and MSW levels in professional practice.
- To recognize those professional social workers whose service contribution and leadership are held in esteem.

Membership applications are available in the School office. Membership is open to UNLV School of Social Work BSW majors and MSW students who:

- Are admitted to the major
- Have completed nine (9) credits in the BSW program.
- • Achieve an overall college grade point average of 3.50 and a minimum of 30 credits.

Discipline Resources

International Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups

<https://www.iaswg.org/>

Association for Community Organization and Social Action (ACOSA)

<https://acosa.clubexpress.com/>

Association of Social Work Boards

<https://www.aswb.org/>

Council on Social Work Education

<https://www.cswe.org/>

Influencing State Policy

<https://statepolicy.org/> or <https://www.influencingsocialpolicy.org/>

National Association of Black Social Workers

<https://www.nabsw.org/>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org/>

National Organization of Forensic Social Work

<https://www.nofsw.org/>

Nevada Board of Social Work Licensure

<https://socwork.nv.gov/>

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Institutional Engagement and Experience

The vision of the [Institutional Engagement and Experience](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's engagement mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office is housed under the Division of Human Resources and also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Graduate Appeals and Issue Resolution

The Office of Graduate Student Services at the Graduate College assists graduate and professional students with addressing concerns and overcoming personal, academic, or financial challenges that might hinder their ability to be successful in their program. The office also provides information and student-centered issue-resolution services and offers guidance, information, and assistance when regular channels have failed to provide graduate students with the information they need to solve problems. Please see website for more information: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/appeals-issue-resolution>

UNLV Global and the Office of International Student and Scholar Compliance

[International Student and Scholar Compliance \(ISSC\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The Care Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

The Intersection is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Department Vote Tally: Yes/No/Abs. (date of vote)	Changes summary
3/31/2026	Ivet Aldaba		Updated program competencies, 2 & 3
4/1/2026	Christopher Stream		Approved