SOCIAL WORK, MASTER OF (M.S.W.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

Program accreditation
Council on Social Work Education

Program goal
The VCU School of Social Work offers a graduate professional curriculum accredited by the Council on Social Work Education leading to the Master of Social Work degree. The purpose of the M.S.W. program at VCU is to educate persons for advanced practice in either clinical social work or social work administration, planning and policy practice. The guiding principle in educating students is the promotion of a more just society that includes a commitment to the value of diversity and social work practice in a multicultural society. The VCU School of Social Work emphasizes critical thinking, self-awareness, data-based decision-making and ethical integrity. Graduates of this program will be able to address personal and social problems; formulate, implement and evaluate policies and programs; engage in knowledge development for the profession; and influence community decision-making. The educational program focuses on service to and empowerment of people who experience oppression or vulnerability due to inadequate or inequitable distribution of personal, social or institutional resources. Within this context, social work practice is defined as the application of professional knowledge, skills and values across a range of settings and populations for the prevention and amelioration of personal and social problems. The interactions among persons and their environments are the primary targets of social work practice. Services provided by social workers include the restoration, rehabilitation, maintenance and enhancement of optimal functioning of individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. Knowledge for social work practice is based on analysis and critical application of qualitative and quantitative research from within the profession and related social, behavioral and biological sciences. Skill in professional practice is based on the differential application of theories and research findings about people in their sociocultural and organizational contexts. Skill is developed by the social worker through the educational process, self-critical practice and the use of supervision and consultation. Values in social work practice are articulated in the profession’s code of ethics and reflect the core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of each individual, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

Student learning outcomes
1. A foundation of knowledge, skills, ethics and values essential for work with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations
2. A concentration that prepares students for advanced practice in clinical social work or social work administration, planning and policy practice in a range of settings
3. To apply the profession’s values and ethical principles
4. The implications of diversity by through education on identifying cultural strengths and ways to counteract individual and institutional prejudice, oppression and discrimination
5. To use research methods to analyze and critically evaluate professional practice, programs and service delivery systems
6. Advocacy and involvement in advocacy to affect social and economic justice

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs
The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.graduate.vcu.edu) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/candidacy)

Degree candidacy requirements
A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master’s or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student’s graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student’s faculty regarding the student’s academic achievements and the student’s readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/candidacy)

Graduation requirements
As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/graduation-info)
Apply online at graduate.admissions.vcu.edu (http://www.gradient.admissions.vcu.edu).

**Admission requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree:</th>
<th>Semester(s) of entry:</th>
<th>Deadline dates:</th>
<th>Test requirements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.S.W.</td>
<td>Summer (advanced standing format)</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall (regular standing formats – all on-campus part- and full-time and distance education)</td>
<td>Third Wed in Jan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Special requirements**

- The School of Social Work requires a specific outline for the personal statement that is different from what is shown in the graduate admissions website and also requires that a checklist be submitted with application materials. Please visit the School of Social Work website for this specific information.

Full-time, part-time and distance education format applicants are admitted to begin study in the fall semester only. Advanced standing format applicants are admitted for the summer session only. At the time of application, applicants may apply for only one of the following: full-time on-campus Richmond, part-time on-campus Richmond, part-time distance education or advanced standing. Application forms and instructions for applying to all graduate programs are available on the Graduate Admissions website (http://www.graduate.admissions.vcu.edu).

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements), the School of Social Work has established the following minimum criteria for admission to the 60-credit hour full-time or part-time format:

1. A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university
2. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate course work and a 3.0 (B) for the last 60 credit hours
3. A broad liberal arts background. Applicants must have completed a minimum of 30 semester credit hours in the liberal arts. Applicants must have completed at least one course (unless otherwise specified) in each of the following four areas:
   a. Mathematics/computer sciences: math, logic, statistics, computer sciences
   b. Humanities: English composition, literature, art history, music appreciation, philosophy, languages, religious studies, multicultural studies
   c. Social and behavioral sciences: psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, political science, economics (with at least three credit hours in psychology and three credit hours in sociology)
   d. Biology and physical sciences: anatomy/physiology, botany, general biology, zoology, chemistry, ecology, physics, geology, astronomy (with a minimum of three credit hours in human biology content)

Applicants who have not completed all the liberal arts prerequisites may be considered for admission but must have completed the prerequisite courses prior to enrollment and must provide official transcripts to document their completion. Courses may be completed at a community college or four-year institution. In addition to the academic requirements, the applicant must demonstrate commitment to social welfare and social justice. This should be reflected in (1) the personal statement and (2) the applicant’s academic background, social work employment, internships and volunteer work in community agencies serving vulnerable and/or oppressed populations.

**General admission procedures**

Applications will only be reviewed when they are complete and received by the deadline. This includes the application form, three letters of reference (such as from faculty, employers and/or colleagues who know the applicant’s academic and work/volunteer abilities), official transcripts from all undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities attended, including VCU transcripts from those who are VCU graduates, a personal statement based on the outline provided on the M.S.W. website (http://socialwork.vcu.edu/programs/msw/admission.html) and an employment and volunteer experience resume. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all materials are submitted prior to the application deadline.

**Admission to the advanced standing format**

The advanced standing format leads to a Master of Social Work degree upon completion of 42 credit hours. This format begins in late May, continues through the summer and culminates with graduation the following May. The advanced standing format is offered only and cannot be pursued on a part-time basis. Admission to the advanced standing format is available to a select group of students with a bachelor’s degree (B.S.W.) from an undergraduate social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, completed no more than five years prior to the date of application to the M.S.W. program. The minimum requirement for admission to the advanced standing format is a 3.2 GPA on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate course work. As part of the application packet, applicants must submit their field practicum evaluation(s) and a reference letter from the field practicum faculty. Applicants who meet these criteria will be scheduled for a structured on-campus interview, which includes a written case assessment. Refer to the M.S.W. website (http://socialwork.vcu.edu/programs/msw/admission.html) for more information.

**Transfer admits**

Applicants transferring from other CSWE-accredited M.S.W. programs must submit course syllabi, field practicum evaluations and a statement of good standing from the dean or director of the program from which the student is transferring. These materials must be submitted in addition to the required application form, transcripts, personal statement, resume and reference letters. No more than 30 credit hours will be accepted in transfer, and transfer credit will be awarded in accordance with university policies governing transfer credit and time limits for degree completion.

Applicants from non-social work graduate programs must submit course syllabi for transfer evaluation. A maximum of six credit hours of elective course work may be accepted in transfer from non-social work graduate programs in accordance with Graduate School policies governing transfer.
credit and time limits for degree completion. No course credit is given for life or work experience.

Course waiver information for new M.S.W. students

Students may request to be waived from courses in the M.S.W. program if they can demonstrate they have satisfactorily completed the equivalent courses. Students must present evidence of content equivalency to the M.S.W. program director and have earned an A or B grade in the courses that are the basis for the waiver request; these courses must have been completed within the past five years. A portfolio process is used to assess equivalency. Graduate students from non-M.S.W. programs, from B.S.W. programs (but not in the advanced standing format), and from B.A., B.S. or other undergraduate programs may be waived from no more than three of the following foundation courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 601</td>
<td>Human Behavior in the Social Environment I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 610</td>
<td>Human Behavior in the Social Environment II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 609</td>
<td>Foundations of Research in Social Work Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The course waiver does not result in award of credit. Credit may be awarded only through transfer of graduate courses (see Transfer Policy). Students who are granted waivers but not transfer credit hours must take elective courses to fulfill the number of credit hours that have been waived. Students interested in pursuing a waiver for one or more of the specified foundation courses should contact the M.S.W. program office to request the Equivalency Portfolio Form(s) and instructions.

Degree requirements

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/graduation-info), the regular standing format for the M.S.W. degree requires the completion of 60 credit hours of graduate study (two years of full-time study). The first 30 credit hours (foundation curriculum) may be taken in one academic year on a full-time basis or may be extended to a maximum of two years in the structured part-time format. To earn the M.S.W. degree in the advanced standing format requires 42 credits of full-time graduate study. Students in the advanced standing format do not complete the foundation curriculum but instead take 12 credit hours during the summer prior to entering the concentration curriculum.

All students select an area of concentration for the last 30 credit hours, which can be completed in one academic year on a full-time basis or extended to a maximum of two years in the structured part-time format. Students are usually in a field instruction practicum two days each week during the foundation curriculum and three days each week during the concentration curriculum. Course credit for work or life experience is not granted in lieu of M.S.W. course credit hours.

The purpose of the Master of Social Work program is to prepare graduate-level social workers with mastery of the knowledge, values and skills essential for advanced social work practice in a multicultural society.

The foundation curriculum comprises the first 30 credit hours of the M.S.W. program. The purpose of the foundation practice, in laying the groundwork for concentration study, is to develop the knowledge and skill base necessary to apply and carry out core competencies (relationship building, problem identification, assessment, selecting and planning interventions, implementation, and evaluation) with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. Foundation practice emphasizes critical thinking, client strengths, commitment to social work values and ethical principles, self-awareness, professional development, evidence-based decision-making, multicultural competency and social and economic justice. The foundation curriculum includes courses in social work practice, human behavior, social policy, social justice, research and field instruction.

Concentration options

After completion of the foundation year of study or summer studies for advanced standing, M.S.W. students choose an advanced concentration in clinical practice or in administration, planning and policy practice. The concentration curriculum prepares graduates for active roles in practice and program evaluation and in the generation of knowledge for future practice, programs and policy.

Clinical practice concentration

Clinical social work practice involves a mutual problem-solving process in which multidimensional assessment, goal setting, planned intervention and evaluation are prominent components, all of which are informed by current scientific knowledge. All clinical practice is grounded in the values and purposes of the social work profession. The goal of clinical social work is to promote effective coping with life challenges and transitions. This is achieved by helping people solve problems, change dysfunctional behavior, resolve emotional and interpersonal conflicts, develop and use social networks and resources, and maintain achieved capacities and strengths. This goal rests on the fundamental belief in the dignity of all human beings and in communal responsibility for all members of the multicultural society.

Clinical social work practice takes place in the context of a purposeful relationship. The conscious use of the professional self is central in building and maintaining such relationships. Interventions may involve therapeutic, supportive, educational and resource-management activities. These interventions are based on a process of strengthening and reordering organizational structures in the lives of clients: intrapersonal (including intrapsychic), interpersonal, institutional and/or social.

Curriculum requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation courses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 601</td>
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<td>SLWK 609</td>
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<td>SLWK 610</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Select one of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 693</td>
<td>Foundation Field Instruction I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 694</td>
<td>and Foundation Field Instruction II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 60

Sample plan of study

Year one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall semester</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 601 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 602 Policy, Community and Organizational Practice I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 603 Social Work and Social Justice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 604 Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 693 Foundation Field Instruction I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 694 Foundation Field Instruction II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Term Hours: 15

Spring semester

| SLWK 605 Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families and Groups II | 3     |
| SLWK 606 Policy, Community and Organizational Practice II | 3     |
| SLWK 609 Foundations of Research in Social Work Practice | 3     |
| SLWK 610 Human Behavior in the Social Environment II | 3     |
| SLWK 694 Foundation Field Instruction II | 3     |

Term Hours: 15

Year two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall semester</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 703 Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 704 Clinical Social Work Practice I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 705 Clinical Social Work Practice II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 706 Research for Clinical Social Work Practice I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 707 Research for Clinical Social Work Practice II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 710 Concentration Social Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select one of the following:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 793 Concentration Field Instruction I &amp; SLWK 794 Concentration Field Instruction II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWK 795 Concentration Block Field Instruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Hours: 24

Spring semester

| SLWK 705 Clinical Social Work Practice II | 3     |
| SLWK 707 Research for Clinical Social Work Practice II | 3     |
| SLWK 710 Concentration Social Policy | 3     |
| SLWK 794 Concentration Field Instruction II | 3     |
| Elective                        | 3     |

Term Hours: 15

Total Hours: 60

Electives

Complete six additional credit hours of electives chosen from SLWK 717-SLWK 792. Electives from outside the School of Social Work are accepted as part of the combined offerings for dual degrees and certificates. Other electives from outside the school may be accepted with prior approval from the M.S.W. program director.

Total Hours 6

Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 60

Students pursuing the Master of Social Work have an opportunity to combine their studies and complete other degree programs offered within the university and some outside institutions in these areas.

Aging studies certificate

The School of Social Work, in conjunction with the Department of Gerontology in the School of Allied Health Professions at VCU, offers students an opportunity to earn their Master of Social Work along with a post-baccalaureate graduate certificate in aging studies. Students interested in working with older adults may earn a Certificate in
Aging Studies (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/gerontology/aging-studies-certificate) while completing their M.S.W. requirements. Students must take 11 credit hours in the Department of Gerontology; six of these hours would apply as electives in the M.S.W. program. M.S.W. students are required to complete a research project with a focus in gerontology as well as a field placement in a geriatric setting.

Application process
Students must meet the admissions requirements of both the M.S.W. program and the Certificate in Aging Studies. Admission into one program does not guarantee admission into the other. For additional information, contact:

Melissa Stewart, Ph.D.
M.S.W. Program Director
mdstewart2@vcu.edu
Phone: (804) 828-2007

E. Ayn Welleford, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Gerontology
ewellefo@vcu.edu
Phone: (804) 828-1565

Master of Divinity (M.Div)
The combination of the Master of Social Work and the Master of Divinity is a four-year professional program offered by VCU in cooperation with Richmond Theological Consortium schools, which include Baptist Theological Seminary and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. This dual-degree program prepares students for service in occupations where social work and the church’s ministries intersect, enabling social workers to perform and evaluate social work practices as they relate to biblical, theological, ethical, educational and pastoral perspectives. Graduates are equipped for various forms of ministry in which clinical and administrative skills in social work are critical.

This program requires four continuous years of study and leads to an M.S.W. conferred by VCU and a Master of Divinity conferred by the chosen RTC school. Students need to apply and be accepted to both programs and may begin study at either institution following the approved curriculum plan. Alternately a student may begin at either VCU or the seminary and then, in accordance with application deadlines, apply for admission to the other school during the first year of study.

Application process
Prospective students apply to the VCU School of Social Work and one of the participating theological schools, must meet both sets of admission standards and must be accepted to both programs. For the M.S.W. program, refer to the Admission page (https://socialwork.vcu.edu/programs/msw/admission.html) of the M.S.W. website. For information about admission to an RTC Master of Divinity program, contact one of the following schools:

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond
3400 Brook Road
Richmond, VA 23286
Phone: (804) 345-2877

Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology
1500 N. Lombardy St.
Richmond, VA 23220

Phone: (804) 257-5715

Gender violence intervention certificate
The combined Master of Social Work and Certificate in Gender Violence Intervention (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-government-public-affairs/gender-violence-intervention-certificate) is a coordinated effort among the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, the School of Social Work and community advocates working in the area of sexual and domestic violence.

Application process
Apply online at VCU Graduate Admissions. For additional information, contact:

Elizabeth Cramer, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Social Work
ecramer@vcu.edu
Phone: (804) 828-9029

Sarah Jane Brubaker, Ph.D.
Director, Gender Violence Intervention Program
sbrubaker@vcu.edu
Phone: (804) 287-2400

Juris Doctor (J.D.)
Through a cooperative agreement with the University of Richmond T.C. Williams Law School (https://lawcatalog.richmond.edu/dual-degree), selected students in either school may pursue a combined four-year curriculum of graduate study leading to the degrees of Master of Social Work and Juris Doctor. This program is established in recognition of the role of public law in social and economic life. The dual-degree program prepares professionals to be well-versed in the values, knowledge and skills of both fields, bringing an integrated base of competency to the resolution of human and social problems. The time normally required for completion of the integrated four-year curriculum is one academic year less than if each degree were pursued separately. Elective courses will enable students to select areas in law and social work which meet their particular interests.

Application process
Applicants must successfully meet the admission requirements of both schools and, upon admission, are assigned an adviser in each school. Students may begin the course work in either school, with the sequence of courses being determined by the point of entry. For more information, contact:

Melissa Stewart, Ph.D.
M.S.W. Program Director
mdstewart2@vcu.edu
Phone: (804) 828-2007

James Gibson, J.D.
Professor of law
University of Richmond, T.C. Williams Law School
jgibson@richmond.edu
Phone: (804) 287-6398

Nonprofit management certificate
Through a cooperative arrangement with the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, M.S.W. students may simultaneously earn the post-baccalaureate graduate Certificate in
Nonprofit Management (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-government-public-affairs/nonprofit-management-certificate) offered by the Wilder School. Students gain knowledge and skills that they will need to become leaders and change agents in this rapidly growing sector.

**Application process**
To earn a Certificate in Nonprofit management in conjunction with the M.S.W., students will complete a graduate school application for the certificate program and pay the required fee to the university.

Melissa Stewart, Ph.D.  
M.S.W. Program Director  
mdstewart2@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 828-2007

Richard F. Huff, Ph.D.  
Program chair, Public Administration  
rhuff@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 828-9813

**School social work certificate**
In conjunction with the VCU School of Education, students may meet Virginia Department of Education standards for certification as school social workers in Virginia, while completing requirements for the M.S.W. degree. Students interested in a certification in school social work should contact their advisers during the first semester of the M.S.W. program.

Melissa Stewart, Ph.D.  
M.S.W. Program Director  
mdstewart2@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 828-2007

**Master of Public Health (M.P.H)**
Through a collaborative program between the VCU School of Social Work and the Division of Epidemiology in the VCU School of Medicine’s Department of Family Medicine and Population Health, students complete a three-year full-time program of study, including summer course work, to obtain the Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-medicine/public-health-mph) degrees. This dual-degree program prepares graduates to work with individuals, families, groups, communities and/or organizations; to advocate for social, health care and economic justice in a diverse and multicultural society; and to promote physical and mental health across the life course.

**Application process**
Prospective students are required to apply separately to both programs and meet both sets of admissions requirements. Once admitted, student and adviser will work together to develop a plan of study. It is preferable that students apply to both programs at the same time so that the structured dual-degree curriculum can be optimally planned. Students in one program may also apply to the second program during the first year of study. For more information, contact:

Sarah K. Price, Ph.D.  
Professor, School of Social Work  
skprice@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 828-0579

Saba Masho, M.D., Dr.P.H.  
Associate professor, Division of Epidemiology, Department of Family Medicine and Population Health  
saba.masho@vcuhealth.org  
Phone: (804) 628-2509

**Graduate program director**
Melissa D. Stewart, Ph.D.  
M.S.W. program director  
Email: mdstewart2@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 828-2007

**Additional contact:**
Caroline H. Shank  
M.S.W. Program Coordinator  
Email: chshank@vcu.edu  
Phone: (804) 827-3412

**Program website:** socialwork.vcu.edu (http://www.socialwork.vcu.edu)