

The background of the cover is a photograph of a college building with large windows and trees in front. A semi-transparent red rectangle is centered over the image, containing the title text in white.

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
STUDENT ACADEMIC MANUAL
2025-2026

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Preface

This manual contains the policies and procedures related to the Master of Social Work (MSW) Program. Students are expected to read through it, use it often, and depend on it for a thorough understanding of the program's rules. When you have questions, first speak to your assigned advisor (your SW500/SW600 seminar instructor. We wish you great success as you pursue the MSW degree. We welcome you and look forward to greeting you as an MSW Colleague at the end of your educational journey.

The Master of Social Work Program within the School of Social Work was fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 2018 and will be accredited until 2026. It is a program with a history of concern for social justice and a strong generalist perspective. Accreditation means that our program is fully recognized by its peer schools and the Council. The program's history means that you are entering a program that believes people can learn, grow, and change. It recognizes that people bring strengths and assets to their lives, and they bring challenges as well. Some of those challenges may stem from their environment, and the efforts of social work must be directed at both assisting individuals with their challenges and removing the environmental barriers that prevent them from realizing their potential.

Introduction

Mission and Goals of the MSW Program

The mission of the RIC MSW program, as part of a larger Hispanic Serving Institution, is to foster social, economic and environmental justice-minded social workers who have the expertise, critical reasoning skills, and passion to practice transformatively as clinicians, advocates, organizers, leaders, and scholars. Our program is uniquely positioned to address the needs of our community and to advance the profession by preparing social workers who are committed to ethical, inclusive, and justice-oriented practice in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics. The MSW program prepares students to recognize the critical importance of anti-racist, decolonizing, culturally sensitive, and structurally aware practice that honors the dignity and worth of the person. Graduates are committed to continuous reflection and life-long learning in service of these goals.

Vision Statement:

The Rhode Island College School of Social Work is a regional leader in making Rhode Island and the Northeast a place where racial, social, economic, and environmental justice for all is the norm. The faculty, staff, and students are diverse and reflective of the communities we serve, challenging ourselves to think critically and act justly. We work together with our community partners to educate and mentor developing social workers to use their social work practice to engage in technologically innovative, critically reflective, and anti-oppressive practice and leadership. We are accountable to local, national, and global communities. The school offers a high-quality education experience, with a curriculum focused on evidence-based clinical interventions, and social justice through bold action and advocacy.

MSW Program Goals

Graduates of the MSW program will:

- Engage in advanced-level social work practice that is informed by the best available evidence.
- Apply social work ethical principles to guide their professional practice.
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment to work with individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities.
- Understand the impacts of culture, oppression, and human diversity in a multicultural society.
- Advance social and economic well-being and deliver effective social work services through policy practice.
- Identify themselves as professional social workers and act accordingly.

Curriculum Structure of the MSW Program

To earn an MSW graduate degree, students must complete 62 credit hours of classroom and practicum instruction, which can be completed in two years as a full-time student or four years as

a part-time student (can be extended to 6 years). Students with a BSW degree from a CSWE-accredited undergraduate program who are granted Advanced Standing must complete 33 credit hours of classroom and practicum experience at the advanced level. Advanced standing students complete the program in one year, if full-time, and two years if part-time (can be extended to four years).

The curriculum is divided into generalist and specialized (Clinical or Macro) curriculum content. The MSW courses follow a sequence, and students must complete the first course in the sequence to enroll in the second course (i.e., SW523/SW524). All admitted MSW students will complete a preliminary plan of study during their admission orientation. The plan of study outlines the required and elective classes that students intend to take. In the fall semester of the student's generalist year, full-time students are expected to meet with their advisor for career advising and to update the plan of study, to indicate their specialization – clinical or macro. Advanced standing students develop a plan of study during their MSW admission orientation. Part-time students are to meet with Jim Ryczek, for academic and career advising and to review/update their plans of study.

Generalist Curriculum

The MSW program at the School of Social Work at Rhode Island College uses a generalist social work practice framework as its foundation. The generalist perspective stresses that the social worker focuses on social problems and human needs. The generalist approach recognizes the connection between individual problems and challenges and public issues, between the individual's well-being and the environmental conditions of their lives, and between personal and social change. The social worker should recognize that an individual client does not need to change simply because they have identified a problem and that the responsibility for social change is not relieved just by developing legitimate personal change objectives with a client. The generalist approach stresses that intervention should occur at the level of the system or systems that have caused or contributed to the problems. Social workers must be prepared to intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The social worker must be prepared to use a variety of theories, skills, and methods for client engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of the work. The curriculum of the MSW program introduces students to an understanding of basic knowledge, such as systems theory, and skills in problem-solving common to both macro (societal, community, organizational) and micro (individual, family, small group) levels of practice.

Thus, the mission of the School of Social Work and the perspective of generalist practice intersect as reflected in the following definition of social work practice: the process of responding to social needs to promote the achievement of the fullest human potential and to prevent or alleviate problems and disadvantages. Social work practice identifies the source(s) of the difficulty or potential for enhancement, develops professional helping relationships directed towards change, and builds upon the strengths and resources of those in need to intervene in ways that are consistent with social work values and ethics. The goals of helping are to more equitably distribute resources, empower those who are oppressed, and increase individual and societal well-being. Generalist foundation content includes social work values and ethics, diversity and oppression, advancement

of social and economic justice, theories of human behavior, social work practice, research, social policy, and practicum education.

During the foundation year, all students participate in the following courses:

- **Human Behavior:** This sequence provides students with an understanding of human development and growth, considering structural and environmental factors that may enhance or impede functioning. It focuses on diversity and intersectionality, drawing attention to experiences of oppression, anti-racist practices, and injustice.
- **Social Work Research and Evaluation and Data Analysis:** these courses introduce students to the role and value of research in social work, the development and building of evidence to inform social work practice, the ability to evaluate practice, and the initial skills to do research in social work arenas. Students complete a research plan (quantitative or qualitative) and in the second course, explore statistical, and qualitative, data analysis.
- **Generalist Foundation and Skills: Policy and Organizing I and II;** The first social policy course familiarizes students with the history of social welfare and social work, and provides a critical understanding of social policy, major social issues confronting society, and the role of the social worker. In the second course, students plan for and participate in advocacy and organizing efforts to develop skills in addressing public policy issues.
- **Generalist Foundation and Skills: Direct Practice I and II:** The social work practice sequence establishes competencies in the problem-solving approach of generalist practice. It stimulates awareness of self as a professional social worker and teaches skills for working with individuals, families, and groups. Students learn skills and practice them.
- **Practicum education** offers an intensive social work practice experience in which students have opportunities for supervised direct service to client systems, as well as for involvement in advocacy and/or organizing. (Rhode Island College carries professional liability insurance that covers all students during their time in the program, including work in the field. However, we recommend but do not require that you consider obtaining your own individual liability insurance if you are concerned about specific protection.)
- **Students' practicum education/placement** is overseen by the Director of Practicum Education. Students are expected to read and follow all policies and procedures in the Practicum Education Manual

Foundation Courses

Students are required to take the following courses in the foundation year(s). Full-time students complete these courses in one year. Part-time students complete these courses in two years.

Human Behavior, Intersectionality & Oppression Sequence

SW 523	Social Work and Human Behavior	3
SW 524	Intersection of Oppression and Social Justice	3

Social Work Research and Evaluation

SW 541	Social Work Research and Evaluation I	3
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SW 542	Social Work Research and Evaluation II	2
Social Welfare Policy Sequence		
SW 530	Generalist Foundation and Skills: Policy and Organizing I	3
SW 531	Generalist Foundation and Skills: Policy and Organizing II	3
Social Work Practice Sequence		
SW 532	Generalist Foundation and Skills: Direct Practice I	3
SW 533	Generalist Foundation and Skills: Direct Practice II	3
Social Work Seminar and Field Placement		
SW 500	Field Experience and Seminar I	3
SW 501	Field Experience and Seminar II	3

Course Waiver Policy for Generalist Year Research Courses

Students who have received an A or A- in BSW program courses, or equivalent undergraduate or graduate courses, may request to take waiver examinations for the Social Work Research (SW541) course. Students should contact the Department Chair for approval to sit for, and subsequent administration of the waiver examination. Students who earn a passing score on the exam must take an elective course to replace the 3 credits.

Advanced Curriculum—Areas of Specialization

Once students complete all generalist (500 level) courses with a passing grade, there are two areas of specialization to choose from: Clinical and Macro (Policy and Administration).

Clinical Social Work Practice

The advanced clinical curriculum of the MSW program consists of two clinical practice courses (SWRK 602 and SWRK 603) and a required assessment and differential diagnosis course (SW 636). All students enroll in the professional development seminar and a clinical evaluation and case consultation course. Practicum placements must be related directly to the clinical specialization. Students must take two electives. There is a wide range of elective courses in both the generalist and specialized content for students to choose. Please refer to our catalog to get the most updated list.

The focus of these clinical courses is on developing and strengthening clinical social work skills, which include engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation with individuals, couples, families, or groups. Life transitions, populations at risk, and cognitive, affective, and behavioral issues are examined from a person-in-situation perspective by using current theory and

research. Each of the courses includes content on substance use and abuse, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders.

Macro (Policy and Administration) Social Work Practice

The macro practice curriculum consists of two required courses on macro practice and a required political economy course. Students enroll in SW 628: Macro Practice I: Leadership & Change and SW629: Macro Practice II: Managing People and Programs. Students also take a required course SWRK 621: Social Work and the Political Economy. All students enroll in the professional development seminar and a macro research course. Practicum placements must be related directly to the macro specialized.

These macro courses focus on developing knowledge and skills for management practice in organizations and for policy practice in communities using current theory and research. In the fall, students examine leadership styles, explore their own, and then identify the effect of leadership on large systems change efforts. Students learn about organizational practice through understanding human resources – hiring, supporting, and evaluating staff – and a manager’s role in those processes. Students design a program; they develop a proposal for funding that includes a budget for program delivery and identify potential funders for their projects. In the fall course, students assess an organization or community and in the second course, they develop a plan for bringing about change that improves or increases services to clients or client groups. The political economy course provides a contextual framework for organizational and governmental policy analysis and builds student skills in advocacy and persuasion. The curriculum is intended to advance human rights and social and economic justice in organizational and policy practice settings. Macro students also take three free electives.

Research Courses

All students are required to complete a two-semester research course in their advanced year. The clinical research course explores clinical measures and asks students to prepare a clinical assessment and evaluation of a client’s work and to explore varied instruments for measuring clinical progress. The macro research course focuses on needs assessment and program evaluation. In the fall, macro students develop two plans, one to create an asset map of a physical or social community and the other to evaluate the effectiveness of an existing program. In the spring, each student implements one of these plans. These courses meet twice a month, sharing a day and time with field seminars. Professional Development Seminar All students enroll in this four-credit course that explores advanced policy, ethics, and diversity content from the perspective of individual student interest. Various faculty members will present material related to each of the topics. Students will identify an area of interest and complete assignments related specifically to their area of interest.

Advanced Professional Development (capstone course)

All students enroll in this four-credit course that explores advanced policy, ethics, and diversity content from the perspective of individual student interest. The principal purpose of this capstone course is to provide advanced-year MSW students with an opportunity to explore and apply, at an

advanced level, core concepts related to (1) social welfare policy, (2) social work ethics, and (3) cultural and social diversity. Various faculty members will present material related to each of the topics. Throughout the course, students will have an opportunity to identify core concepts, explore their relevance to students' primary area of social work practice, and share insights with fellow students and the instructors.

American Racism & Social Work Practice:

Institutional racism is a deep and pervasive part of the American experience in the United States. It influences the daily experience of African Americans, other persons of color, and minoritized communities. This course supports and builds upon concepts of privilege, power, and oppression explored in SW 524. All students enrolled in this required course are expected to learn and integrate anti-racist perspectives and critical race theory as a framework for students to explore their cultural identity development, integrate experiences in practice settings, and refine their philosophy of practice.

Field Education and Seminar

Students enroll in the practicum for a 20-hour/week at the advanced level. The seminar class meets every other week, on opposite weeks from sessions for advanced research. Field seminar explores many issues regarding practice and internship, use of supervision, and professional use of self.

Elective Courses

Students in both concentrations have two electives from which they can choose. Included are several 500- and 600-level courses. Students should check schedules before registration to determine the specific courses offered in the upcoming semester.

Credit for Academic or Life Experience

The MSW program does not accept academic credit for life experience or previous work experience per the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards.

Full-Time

Students must complete two years of the required courses and elected courses, along with field education. To be considered a full-time student, one must be enrolled in courses totaling nine credit hours. To complete the current 62-credit hour curriculum within a two-year period, students will need to plan on taking at least one summer or early spring course.

Student's Name: _____ Year Accepted: _____ YOG: _____

Email: _____

You must complete ALL generalist courses before moving on to the advanced courses
Advanced Standing students completed the Generalist Curriculum in the BSW program.
Summer courses are not guaranteed.

GENERALIST CURRICULUM

COURSE	Semester
SW523: Social Work and Human Behavior	
SW524: Intersection of Oppression and Social Justice	
SW530: Policy and Organizing I	
SW531: Policy and Organizing II	
SW541: Research I	
SW542: Research II	
SW532: Generalist Practice I	
SW533: Generalist Practice II	
SW500: Field & Seminar I	
SW501: Field & Seminar II	

ADVANCED CURRICULUM

Please select either the Clinical or Macro program

<u>Clinical Course</u>	<u>Macro Courses</u>	Semester
SW636 Differential Diagnosis	SW621 Political Economy	
SW644 Clinical Eval & Case Consult	SW645 Needs Assessment/Program Eval	
SW646 Clinical Eval & Case Consult	SW647 Needs Assessment/Program Eval	
SW602 Clinical Practice	SW628 Leadership & Change	
SW603 Clinical Practice II	SW629 Managing People & Programs	
SW600 Field & Seminar III	SW600 Practicum & Seminar III	
SW601 Field & Seminar IV	SW601 Practicum & Seminar IV	
Required - SW559 American Racism & Social Work Practice		
Capstone - SW609 Advanced Professional Development		
Elective 1		
Elective 2		

Part-time

The part-time track can be completed in four years (can take up to 6 years). Students enroll in Social Work and Human Behavior course and in the research sequence in their first year in the program. During their second year, they take the policy and direct practice foundation courses and the foundation year field education seminar and placement. Students may take up to two additional years to complete their advanced or concentration year. In the third year we recommend that students enroll in advanced practice courses and advanced field seminar and placement. Finally, in the fourth-year students finish their required courses and/or their electives. By taking electives during summer sessions or in early spring semesters, part-time students can complete the program in three and one-half years.

Advanced Standing

The Advanced Standing track is available to students who have earned a BSW degree from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The program must have been accredited at the awarding of the student's degree. Students begin the program at the start of the advanced year, although the MSW program requires students to enroll in and successfully complete summer bridge workshops before students begin the program. Students must complete 33 credits in practicum and academic courses to meet graduation requirements.

Advanced Year Courses, Credits, and Semester Offered

Full-Time Track (Clinical Specialization)

Third Semester (Clinical Specialization Full-Time Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 602	Clinical Social Work Practice I	3	Fall
SW 636	Differential Diagnosis	3	Summer/Fall
SW 644	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation I	1.5	Fall
SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Summer/Fall

Fourth Semester (Clinical Specialization Full-Time Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 603	Clinical Social Work Practice II	3	Spring
SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Spring
SW 646	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation II	1.5	Spring
+	One Elective	3	
Total Credit Hours		62	

Full-Time Track (Macro Specialization)

Third Semester (Macro Specialization Full-Time Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 628	Macro Practice I: Leadership & Change	3	Fall
SW 621	Social Work & The Political Economy	3	Fall
SW 645	Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation	1.5	Fall
SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Summer/Fall

Fourth Semester (Macro Specialization Full-Time Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 629	Macro Practice II: Managing People & Programs	3	Spring
SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Spring
SW 647	Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation II	1.5	Spring
+	One Elective	3	
Total Credit Hours		62	

Advanced Standing Track (Clinical Specialization)

First Semester (Clinical Specialization Advanced Standing Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 602	Clinical Social Work Practice I	3	Fall
SW 636	Differential Diagnosis	3	Summer/Fall
SW 644	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation I	1.5	Fall
SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Summer/Fall

Second Semester (Clinical Specialization Advanced Standing Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 603	Clinical Social Work Practice II	3	Spring
SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Spring
SW 646	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation II	1.5	Spring
+	One Elective	3	Spring
Total Credit Hours		33	

Advanced Standing Program (Macro Specialization)

First Semester (Macro Specialization Advanced Standing Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 628	Macro Practice I: Leadership & Change	3	Fall
SW 621	Social Work & The Political Economy	3	Fall
SW 645	Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation	1.5	Fall
SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Summer/Fall

Second Semester (Macro Specialization Advanced Standing Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 629	Macro Practice II: Managing People & Programs	3	Spring
SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Spring
SW 647	Needs Assessment & Program Evaluation II	1.5	Spring
+	One Elective	3	Spring
Total Credit Hours		33	

Part Time Students (Clinical Specialization)

Fifth Semester (Clinical Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 602	Clinical Social Work Practice I	3	Fall
SW 636	Assessment & Differential Diagnosis	3	Summer/Fall
SW 644	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation I	1.5	Fall

Sixth Semester (Clinical Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 603	Clinical Social Work Practice II	3	Spring
SW 646	Clinical Evaluation and Case Consultation II	1.5	Spring

Seventh Semester (Clinical Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Summer/Spring
+	One Elective	3	Fall

Eighth Semester (Clinical Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Spring
Total Credit Hours		62	

Part Time Students (Macro: Policy/Administration Specialization)

Fifth Semester (Macro Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 600	Field Education and Seminar III	4	Fall
SW 628	Macro Practice I: Leadership and Change	3	Fall
SW 621	Social Work and the Political Economy	3	Fall
SW 645	Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation I	1.5	Fall

Sixth Semester (Macro Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 601	Field Education and Seminar IV	4	Spring
SW 629	Macro Practice II: Managing People and Programs	3	Spring
SW 647	Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation II	1.5	Spring

Seventh Semester (Macro Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW 609	Advanced Professional Development	4	Summer/Spring
+	One Elective	3	Fall

Eighth Semester (Macro Specialization Part-Time Students)

SW559	American Racism & Social Work Practice	3	Fall/Spring/Summer
+	One Elective	3	Spring
Total Credit Hours		62	

Academic Policies and Procedures

MSW Program Policies

Academic Advisement

All matriculated students are assigned to an academic advisor. The field seminar instructor/advisor for all students who are engaged in practicum education also serve as the field liaison to the agency in which the student is placed. Part-time students, (not in practicum placement) are assigned to advisor Jim Ryczek. The assignment of advisors for students in practicum education is for one year and may change in the second year. Advisors are to meet with students periodically outside of course instruction time to provide career advising, discuss course registration, and update students' plan of study as needed. Advisors are to complete degree audits for their advisees at the end of the fall and spring semesters to ensure students are making progress towards degree completion. Advisors will place a copy of the degree audits and updated plans of study in the students' folder.

Completing the MSW Program

Six-year limit. Students must complete all requirements for the MSW degree within six years of initial matriculation in the program. While a student may request a leave of absence, time on leave

counts toward the six-year time limit to finish the program. At the end of six years, the candidacy will be terminated, and the Records Office notified by the MSW Chair. An appeal for an extension would require the approval of the academic advisor, MSW Chair, and the Dean of the School of Social Work.

Credits earned at Rhode Island College and elsewhere. Credits seven years or older may not be counted toward graduation. This applies to both Rhode Island College credits and transfer credits from other institutions. Thus, students must graduate prior to any of these credits reaching the six-year anniversary.

Retention in the MSW Program

Any student who does not have a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) at the completion of the foundation year will be dismissed from the MSW program. Any student who has a GPA below 3.0 in any semester will be placed on academic probation. Any student who receives a grade below a B- in ANY course must repeat the course. Students dismissed due to a GPA below 3.0 who are reinstated by appeal must repeat all required courses in which they have received a grade below B.

Grade of F or U. A student who receives a grade of F or U in a course is automatically dismissed from the MSW program. Such a dismissal is effective at the end of the appeal process. However, a student may not continue in classes until the outcome of a grade appeal is decided. Any grade below a C minus is equivalent to a grade of F.

Graduation requirements. To graduate from the MSW program, a student must have a cumulative 3.0 (B) grade point average.

Performance in the Practicum Placement. Students who receive a grade of U for a field education course (SW 500, 501, 600, 601) are immediately dismissed from the MSW program. The faculty of the MSW program reserves the right to dismiss from the program students who give evidence (as defined by the College Handbook, the MSW program learning contracts, and/or the NASW *Code of Ethics*, and the school's professional code of conduct) of an inability to secure and/or maintain a field placement and carry out field responsibilities at the master's level. Such dismissal may be appealed to the Academic Standing Committee.

Transfer of Credits

Transfer of non-social work credits. A student may transfer a maximum of six non-social work but related graduate credits from Rhode Island College or another regionally accredited institution. These credits must have been: (a) taken within five years preceding the transfer request; (b) a graduate-level only course; (c) a course for which a grade of B or better was received; (d) not applied toward receipt of another degree; and (e) in a related discipline. All credits must meet the 7-year rule to apply for graduation. Transfer credits must be approved by the Chair and the Dean.

Students transfer from other schools of social work. A limited number of students who have successfully completed one or two semesters of work in an accredited MSW program at another

institution may be accepted into the MSW program at Rhode Island College. Transfer students may receive up to 12 transfer credits and must complete at least 50 credits in the RIC MSW Program as full- or part-time students. Field placement/seminar credits and hours are not transferable. All courses taken at another accredited MSW program will be evaluated on a course-by-course basis to determine the fit with the program at Rhode Island College. Transfer credits must be approved by the Chair and the Dean.

Changes in Student Status

Normally, a full-time student will remain in full-time or part-time status throughout the program and may not change from one status to another. However, if a student wishes to be considered for a change in status for the remainder of their enrollment, they must submit a written request to the chair of the MSW program to change status. The chair determines whether or not a change in status will be permitted.

Leave of Absence

Students who plan not to register for courses in a given semester must request a leave of absence to maintain their status as a matriculated student in the MSW program. Requests for a leave of absence must be submitted to the Chair of the MSW program, giving a specific reason for the request with a tentative date for return and a plan for completion of the program prior to the beginning of the requested semester. The maximum request is for a one-year leave.

Independent Study

Students registering for an Independent Study must complete the Independent Study Form found on the RIC Graduate Studies web page. The form must contain a full description of the subject to be pursued as well as a description of the outcome and method of evaluation. The form must be signed by the dean and the instructor who will supervise the project.

Report of Incomplete

A report of Incomplete shall be given in place of a grade when the work for the semester has been passing but has not been completed because of illness or some other reason that, in the opinion of the instructor, justifies such a report.

- The student must initiate the request prior to the last week of the class, unless the instructor has specified an earlier deadline in the course syllabus, in which case, the instructor's earlier deadline supersedes the last week of class.
- Normally the student must initiate a request for an *I* grade; however, in extreme circumstances, faculty members may assign this grade at their discretion (*i.e.*, without discussing it with the student).
- Incompletes are appropriate only if some or most of the work has already been completed and the student is able to complete the remaining requirements with a minimum of faculty supervision by the beginning of the next semester or by its end, depending on the course.

- The student and faculty member will reach an agreement regarding the work that the student should complete to obtain a final grade, including the following:
 - The contents of the work that needs to be completed;
 - The date that the work will be completed (College policy requires that all Incompletes be completed by the end of the *next* semester; in the MSW program, this policy applies except where successful completion of one course is a prerequisite to enrollment in the next semester, e.g., enrolling in SW 523 requires successful completion of SW 524.
 - The grade that will be assigned if the work is not completed.
- Contracts for approved Incompletes must be completed and signed by the student, the instructor, and the department chair, and placed in the student's folder prior to assigning a grade of *I*.

Grade Grievances

Students who believe they have received a grade that does not represent their efforts or results and wish to obtain a change of grade must first contact the faculty member within 14 days of receiving the notice of the grade, to discuss their rationale for requesting a change of grade. The students and faculty members should meet in person for this discussion.

If, after such a meeting, the matter of the grade is unresolved, the student should write a letter to the MSW program chair requesting re-consideration of the grade. The letter should contain relevant information about the students' rationale, understanding of the faculty members' response, and an indication of the change the student is requesting.

Following the meeting, the chair will respond to the student in writing within seven days. The letter will state the chair's decision. If the student is still dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Dean of the School of Social Work.

Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words of another as your own without quotation marks and/or the use of another person's ideas without citation. Use of material from the web or online sources without citation is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and is grounds for dismissal from the MSW program.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is the foundation of the academic community. Students who violate College rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure of, or removal from, a course; disciplinary probation; and/or dismissal from the College. Individual schools may have additional standards and policies related to academic honesty.

(a) Examples of Academic Dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- Plagiarism: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. The following are examples of plagiarism:
 - Word-for-word plagiarism: This includes (a) the submission of another student's work as one's own; (b) the submission of work from any source whatever (print or electronic) without proper acknowledgement by footnote or reference within the text of the paper; (c) the submission of any part of another's work without proper use of quotation marks.
 - Patchwork plagiarism: This consists of piecing together unacknowledged phrases and sentences quoted verbatim (or nearly verbatim) from a variety of sources. The mere reshuffling of other people's words does not constitute original work.
 - Unacknowledged paraphrase: It is perfectly legitimate to set forth another author's facts or ideas in one's own words, but if one is genuinely indebted to the other author for these facts or ideas, the debt must be acknowledged by footnote or reference within the text of the paper (e.g., the above paragraphs are based largely on Sears, Harbrace *Guide to the Library and Research Paper*, p. 39).

Many facts, ideas and expressions are considered to be in the public domain or general knowledge and need not be acknowledged (e.g., the fact that the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776; the idea that universal public education is essential to the survival of democratic institutions; such proverbial expressions as "A rolling stone gathers no moss", or "New York is a great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there"), but as a general rule, when one is in doubt, it is best to acknowledge the source.

- Collusion: facilitating academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
- Deception: providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise, e.g., giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work.
- Sabotage: acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others.
- Multiple Submissions: Submitting for credit, when a student has not been given permission to do so, any work that is the same or substantially the same as work that has been submitted for credit in another course. Many professors allow reworking or building on prior work; however, multiple submissions are permitted only with the prior permission of the instructor(s), and only when the student acknowledges the multiple submission in the work itself.

(b) Faculty Role

The faculty member has two clearly defined roles: first, to establish preventative measures; and, second, to ensure that detected instances of academic dishonesty are dealt with appropriately and reported.

Preventative measures should include a statement to each class by the faculty member outlining expected standards of intellectual honesty and the necessity for such standards. The faculty member should also maintain reasonable security of all examination materials and procedures. Generally, the faculty member should employ any reasonable methods to discourage acts of academic dishonesty.

A faculty member may take action up to and including failing a student accused of academic dishonesty. Some often-used penalties include:

- i. A low or failing grade on an assignment in which the offense occurred.
- ii. An additional assignment.
- iii. Reduction of the final grade up to and including failure.
- iv. Any combination of the above.

In all cases, a report describing the nature of the dishonesty and the subsequent action taken by the faculty member shall be filed with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. If this is a first violation, unless egregious, the complaint will simply remain in a file in the VPAA's office. However, if a student has more than one reported incident (either in the same course or in different courses), the student will have a hearing from the Academic Standing Committee at the School of Social Work. Additionally, the faculty member may recommend that the student have a hearing in front of the Academic Integrity Board (<https://www.ric.edu/departments-directory/academic-integrity-board>).

(c) Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs Role

The Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs shall maintain a file of any and all reports of academic dishonesty. At the discretion of the VP for Academic Affairs and depending upon the severity of the infraction, the student may be informed in writing about possible consequences of further infractions.

In the case of multiple infractions, the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs will refer the student's name to the Academic Integrity Board for review and possible action.

(d) Academic Integrity Board's Role

The Board shall consider cases referred to it by a faculty member or the vice president for academic affairs and has the option to recommend any of the penalties ranging from those available to the faculty member to placing the student on academic probation or expelling the student from the College.

- i. Appeal: Any student accused of academic dishonesty may appeal action taken by the instructor in a case to the Board.
- ii. Appeals Procedure
 - a. Appeals or referrals to the Board will follow the standard procedure of the Board.
 - b. The Board shall inform the student, the faculty member, and Vice President for Academic Affairs of its decision.

- c. A record of the cases concerning academic dishonesty will be kept in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- d. A student may appeal the decision of the Board (concerning academic dishonesty) to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Appeals may be considered on the basis of new information or procedural errors.

Freedom of Expression

The faculty of the School of Social Work MSW Department recognizes the right of all members of the academic community—including students, faculty and staff—to express their opinions. The MSW Department faculty has a commitment to engage students in critical examination of diverse views, particularly with respect to their relationship to social work values. Discussion and debate about diverse views should be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of others, consistent with the values, ethical principles and ethical standards contained in the National Association of Social Workers *Code of Ethics*.

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Work

- A. Written Work:** Writing is an essential skill for social work practice. Students must carefully proofread their papers for typographical, grammatical, sentence structure, and spelling errors. Most papers begin with an introductory statement of purpose and an overview of the ideas to be presented. The ideas must be discussed in a coherent, logical, well-organized manner and must be supported by one's own arguments, by research findings and theoretical discussions from relevant literature, when appropriate. Each aspect of the assignment must be thoroughly addressed. Citations and a reference list in proper form must be included. These aspects of the paper are stressed in addition to the substantive content because it is important that social workers know how to communicate with clients and other professionals in writing that is concise, clear, organized and properly documented.
- B. Class Presentations:** The purposes of the presentation are made clear at the beginning. The presentation is well organized and articulately delivered. The presenter's manner is engaging. The presentation shows self-awareness, practice insights and skills, ample integration of theoretical material from the readings and class discussions. The presenter skillfully manages group discussion, by effectively eliciting it, focusing it, summarizing it, and explicitly connecting it to the presentation's stated purposes. Handouts are written clearly, articulately, concisely and are germane to the topic.
- C. Attendance and Class Participation:** The student is expected to behave in a way that demonstrates that they have integrated the core values and skills of the profession. Students are to attend each class session, arriving on time. Students who must be late or absent (because of illness, for example), are expected to contact their instructor to inform them of the absence and plan to complete the work they have missed. The following policy applies in the MSW program:

Attendance is crucial to all students' learning experiences. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Students who miss more than three hours of class time may not earn a passing grade for the course.

The student's oral expressions should show an ability to make conscious, purposeful use of self in interactions within the classroom; awareness of their own feelings, behaviors, and motivations; receptiveness to feedback and an ability to integrate feedback into behavioral change; an ability to make appropriate use of "airtime" in class, i.e., willingness to both use it and to limit one's use of it; a respect for difference and for other's feelings, including a nonjudgmental attitude, sensitivity to ethnic diversity and oppressed groups, respect for confidentiality and client self-determination; an ability to contribute comments that are clearly stated and immediately germane to the focal issues under discussion; and an ability to use the group to meet one's own needs, while respecting the needs of others. The students' comments should show that assigned readings were completed on time and were understood, that opinions are supported with data and/or logical argument and that class content is integrated with field experiences.

For additional criteria for evaluating student performance, see the School of Social Work policies below regarding (1) confidentiality in the classroom and (2) professional behavior.

Disability

The School of Social Work is committed to removing learning barriers and facilitating inclusion throughout its curricula, specifically in the classroom learning environment and in field education. We wish to offer an integrative, accepting, and facilitating environment that is conducive to learning and professional growth for all students, including those with disabilities. Students who have disabling conditions are entitled to reasonable accommodation. We strongly encourage students to self-identify with the [Center for Disability Access. Call the Center for Disability Access at 401-456-2776](#). Students must be registered with the Center to request accommodations in the field.

The Center for Disability Access is the central resource for students with disabilities on campus. Staff make every effort to verify and coordinate learning needs with faculty and to advocate for changes in policies and procedures. By contacting this office and registering, students will learn about the special services and equipment available to them. Moreover, registration assures students' compliance with guidelines requiring reasonable accommodation.

Confidentiality

The faculty and the administration of the School of Social Work recognize the value and importance of each student's right to confidentiality. The School of Social Work regards faculty, faculty advisors, field instructors, and school administrators as members of each student's educational team who may be consulted periodically to discuss student progress. There are routine reviews of student progress at monthly MSW faculty meetings. Discussions will include those individuals directly concerned with the issue, such as the dean of the School of Social Work, the chair of the department, the faculty concerned, the student's advisor, and/or the director of Field Education.

If a faculty member is unable to notify a student ahead of time, in person, the faculty member will attempt to reach the student by email or phone. If contact is still not made, the faculty member will

send a written notice, return receipt requested, to the student's address on file with the MSW program. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the student.

The faculty of the School of Social Work recognizes the value and importance of free and open classroom discussion. Students are encouraged to express opinions and offer observations relevant to course content. In sharing information about others (e.g., clients in their practice), students are expected to protect the confidentiality of those individuals. Other students in the classroom are expected to treat classmates' comments with respect and courtesy, and to protect the confidentiality of comments and observations offered in the classroom, to the extent possible under law and college/school policy. Students are expected to refrain from divulging content of classroom discussion to others outside of the classroom. The confidentiality of classroom discussion cannot be guaranteed because of "duty to protect" and "mandatory reporting" laws and/or other policies that may require disclosure.

In writing papers and in class discussions, it is important for students to disguise any potentially identifying information about clients.

Professional Behavior

Students matriculating at the School of Social Work are preparing for entry into the profession of social work. The behavior of professional social workers is outlined by the *NASW Code of Ethics* and students are required to act in accordance with that professional code throughout their period of matriculation, including but not limited to both field and classroom related learning. Failure to adhere to the *Code of Ethics* or the Professional Code of Conduct described below may result in review and action by the School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee.

Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward colleagues, faculty, or staff (at school or field placement) will be the basis for nonacademic termination.

Please read the [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Code of Ethics](#).

The following framework further outlines the policy on professional conduct:

Ethical Obligations

Students are ethically and professionally bound to:

- Adhere to the *NASW Code of Ethics*
- Appreciate the value of diversity by demonstrating effective and nonjudgmental relationships in working with others who are different from oneself; and
- Adhere to all laws and policies of confidentiality as they relate to human services, classroom activities, and field placement

Students are required to meet all of the following requirements to maintain good standing:

Professional Commitment

- A commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession, as specified in the *NASW Code of Ethics*. Behavior judged to be in violation of the current *NASW Code of Ethics* may result in review and/or administrative action by the Academic Standing Committee
- A demonstrated commitment to the values of social work, which include respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and the right of all people to a just share of society's resources (social justice)

Professional Behavior

- Compliance with the MSW program policies, college policies, the NASW professional ethics standards, and societal laws in the classroom, field and community
- Appearance and personal demeanor reflective of a professional manner
- Sound judgment in decision making
- Responsible and accountable behavior including, but not limited to, practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and critiques in a positive manner
- Work and communicate with others to resolve issues in a manner that is direct, professional, and geared toward problem resolution while avoiding triangulation
- Advocacy for oneself undertaken in an appropriate and responsible manner using proper channels for conflict resolution
- Willingness to receive classroom feedback and field supervision in a positive manner to enhance professional development
- Professional and respectful interpersonal behavior with colleagues, faculty, and staff in class, field, and the college community

Personal Behavior

Stress Management

- Use of appropriate self-care, resources, and supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others to deal with current life stress that may affect scholastic and professional performance
- Recognition of the need to seek support and appropriate coping mechanisms if personal problems, psychosocial distress, and/or substance or mental health difficulties compromise scholastic performance or interfere with professional judgment or behavior

Oppression and Discrimination

In accordance with the *NASW Code of Ethics*, the faculty of the School of Social Work condemns any and all oppression of individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, veteran status, or disability. In

addition, we reaffirm the Code's receipts that social workers have a duty to fight discrimination and other forms of injustice.

Statement of Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action

Pursuant to the philosophy of the Board of Education and Council on Postsecondary Education, Rhode Island College prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, on the basis of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, citizenship status or status as a special disabled veteran, recently separated veteran, Vietnam era veteran, or any other veteran who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized. Rhode Island College also prohibits all forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Should you encounter any type of discrimination and/or harassment, you are encouraged to contact a member of the social work faculty/staff, a responsible college employee or the coordinator of the [Title IX Office](#). Below is information on the Rhode Island College policies regarding Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action. Complaints of discrimination and/or harassment may be filed with the College's [Title IX Office](#). Allegations of violations of the Statement of Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action are adjudicated through the Office of Institutional Equity. If a person is found to be responsible for violating the Statement of Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, they may be subject to additional sanctions according to this policy.

Rhode Island College School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee

Description and Procedures Composition of the Committee

The School of Social Work maintains an ongoing Academic Standing Committee.

Committee Responsibility

The Academic Standing Committee is charged with:

- Hearing all appeals/grievances, with the exception of grade disputes,
- Hearing cases of alleged unethical behavior involving students, and
- Recommending resolution of appeals/grievances to the appropriate program chair

The Academic Standing Committee may review any student's performance in relation to the application of the above policies. Dismissals from the MSW program and other consequences resulting from violation of the policies stated in this manual may be appealed to the School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee.

The Committee shall consist of up to eight members:

Two (2) BSW Faculty

Up to Two (2) BSW Students

Two (2) MSW Faculty

Up to Two (2) MSW Students

The faculty members are elected by the School of Social Work faculty and serve two-year terms. The chair of the committee is elected from among the faculty representatives who are in their second year of the committee. The chairs of the BSW and MSW departments cannot serve on the Academic Standing Committee. The student representatives will be selected by the respective student organization.

Procedures of the Committee

- Students have the right to due process in disciplinary action and can appeal any adverse action.
- If students believe that the Committee's recommendation provides no support for their concern, they may appeal the recommendation to the appropriate program/department chair in the School of Social Work.
- An appeal of the decision of the chair can be made to the Dean. Appeals to the decision of the Dean can be made to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

Appeals/Grievances to the Committee

- Appeals/grievances to the Committee must be submitted in writing to the chair of the Committee with all documentation.
- The appeals/grievance statement must include a summary of not more than one written page stating the specific policy or policies violated or the exact nature of the grievance, the specific actions upon which the appeal is based, and the remedy being sought. Supplementary materials may be presented to support the grievance.
- Types of student grievances are as follows:
 - Violation of established academic policies and regulations (e.g., examination policies, advisement policies, and registration policies).
 - Violation to students' academic freedom.
 - Grievances related to violation of the *NASW Code of Ethics*, the school's professional code of conduct, or the Rhode Island College policies on academic integrity. This includes behavior that intimidates, threatens, or endangers the health and safety of any person as well as behavior that, intentionally or negligently, causes physical, financial or emotional harm.
 - Appeal of dismissal from the program.

The student will discuss the grievance with the faculty or staff member involved in the complaint who will attempt to resolve the grievance and render a written decision to the student within five working days of the faculty member's receipt of the grievance. Copies also will be forwarded to the chair of the appropriate department in the School of Social Work and the Academic Standing Committee of the School of Social Work.

The grievance should be presented in person to the faculty member involved as soon as possible after the grievant feels that an abridgement of the grievant's rights has occurred, but in no case

shall it be later than ten working days following the grievant's knowledge of the act, event, or commencement of the conditions which are the basis for the grievance.

If the grievance is not resolved, the student may submit the grievance in writing, within five working days of the receipt of the decision of the faculty member involved, to the Academic Standing Committee. Within five working days of receipt of the appeal, the Academic Standing Committee will schedule a hearing, notifying the student and the faculty member(s) of the time and place of the hearing (see Hearing Procedure).

In the case of a dismissal from either the BSW program or the MSW program, the student must submit written appeal outlining the reasons for the appeal to the chair of the Academic Standing Committee within five working days of the receipt of notification of dismissal. Within five working days of receipt of the appeal, the Academic Standing Committee will schedule a hearing, notifying the student and the faculty member(s) of the time and place of the hearing (see Hearing Procedure). Reasonable efforts, including certified mail, non-certified mail, email, and attempted phone contact will be made to notify the student.

If a student is dismissed from the program, they cannot enroll in or attend classes pending the results of the appeal.

Hearing Procedure

- Prior to the hearing, the chair of the Committee shall notify the affected parties in writing by certified mail, outlining the concerns before the committee. All written materials must be submitted to the Committee members and affected parties 48 hours before the hearing. The student shall notify the chairperson 48 hours before the hearing who their advocate(s) will be (see advocate bullet below).
- Prior to the hearing, the student and involved parties have the right to access all information that will be used by the Committee in the hearing.
- All material(s) distributed at the hearing will be returned to the chair of the Committee at the conclusion of the hearing. This material will be stamped confidential and is not for distribution. The material will be placed in a file in the dean's office.
- The chair of the Academic Standing Committee will ensure that materials prepared for Committee members and others contain all necessary copies of pertinent information.
- Hearings will be conducted in an informal manner, with both the student and members of the Committee having the right to question all participants on relevant matters.
- The student has the right to be present throughout the entire hearing, except during the deliberation and final voting of the Committee. They have the right not to testify or appear, though the Committee will proceed with its deliberations and recommendations. However, any committee member may request an executive session at any time; in that case, all non-committee members will be asked to leave.
- Students may select an advocate to appear with them at the hearing. The advocate may be a School of Social Work faculty member, field instructor, staff member, or another student. The advocate does not have voting privileges. Under no circumstances will legal counsel be permitted.

- Witnesses may elect not to make verbal presentations, but rather submit a written statement, which must be submitted to the chair 48 hours prior to the hearing.
- Once people are finished presenting collateral information, they will leave the hearing room.
- Recommendations of the Committee will be approved by majority vote of the faculty representatives, though consensus will be sought.
- The chair of the Committee will send the student written notification of the Committee's recommendation by certified and regular mail within five working days. A copy of the decision will be forwarded to the MSW Department Chair and the student's faculty field advisor.
- Appeals of the recommendation(s) made by the Academic Standing Committee must be instituted in writing within five working days of the receipt of the recommendation(s) to the chair of the MSW Department of the School of Social Work. All appeals must be based upon existing documentation, and no new materials may be presented.

The Chair of the MSW Department of the School of Social Work will either accept or reject the decision of the committee. The Chair will notify the students in writing of their acceptance or rejection within five working days of the receipt of the decision from the committee.

Appeal of the Chair's decision may be made to the Dean of the School of Social Work. Appeals must be instituted within five working days of the receipt of the Chair's decision. The appeal must be in writing and must explicitly identify the basis for the appeal. All appeals must be based upon existing documentation, and no new material may be presented.

Appeal of the Dean can be made to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (see [Manual of Academic Policies and Procedures](#)).