



**Admission and Application Procedures
Academic Year 2016-2017**

Admissions Deadline:
Priority Deadline: February 1, 2016
MSW Admissions Deadline: April 1, 2016

Mandatory Orientation Date for New Students:

Traditional & Advanced Standing Program and Field Orientation:
Friday, August 19th, 2016

Orientation Fee: \$30.00 (Non-refundable)

Application Process

Application to the MSW program is a two-step process and should be started several months before the admissions deadlines. Each applicant must directly apply to the Office of Graduate Studies and to the Department of Social Work. *Only applications that have fulfilled all of the application requirements for the MSW Program and the Graduate School will be considered complete and ready for admission review.*

- [The Graduate School Application](#) may be completed online or by mail using the application available on the The Graduate School website. **Applicants must make arrangements to have official copies of undergraduate transcripts from all previous universities attended.**
- [MSW Application](#) - should be downloaded from the Program's MSW Admissions website. The MSW application includes:
 - ___ the MSW basic application,
 - ___ a personal statement responding to specific questions within the application,
 - ___ a writing sample specific to requirements listed in the application packet,
 - ___ a current resume, and
 - ___ three letters of recommendation from individuals who know the applicant well in both academic and employment environments. ***Recommendations must be submitted on our recommendation form***, which is posted online. Three recommendations including at least one academic and one professional. (If you have not been employed, provide additional academic recommendation.)
- Any MSW program applicant with a BSW earned within the last 7 years MUST include at least 1 letter of recommendation from their previous Field Instructor or Field Liaison, one academic reference, and one reference that is either professional or academic. IF, due to faculty relocation and/or retirement, no such faculty member is available, a letter to this effect from the current BSW program director must accompany the application.
- Any MSW Traditional Program applicant will include one academic reference and two additional references that are either professional or academic.
- Any program applicant, with or without a BSW, who is currently or previously employed in a social or human services capacity/agency MUST include at least 1 letter of recommendation from a current or previous supervisor, preferably one with an MSW.
- For applicants that have been out of school for 7 years or more it is acceptable to replace an academic recommendation with a work recommendation. At least one academic recommendation is preferred in this scenario.

Three recommendations are required including at least one academic and one professional. Do NOT include relatives. The references will become part of your admissions file. They will be used only for admissions consideration and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized individual without your consent. You have the right to review references in your file unless you voluntarily waive your right of access by signing in the space below.

These references should be sent directly to: Western Kentucky University, Master of Social Work Program, 1906 College Height Blvd., #11039, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1039. There is no MSW program application fee.

MSW Application materials must be sent to the MSW Program E-mail mswadmissions@wku.edu as a complete packet containing all materials except recommendation forms. The applicant can also submit the complete packet in hard copy to the MSW office, minus the recommendation forms. Recommendation forms should be sent directly to the program from the recommender. Recommenders may submit this form by mail or email:

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Master of Social Work Program
1906 College Height Blvd., #11039
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1039**

mswadmissions@wku.edu. If the recommendation is emailed, the email must originate from the recommenders email address only.

General MSW Program Admission Standards

1. Undergraduate degree from an accredited university.
2. 60-Hour Traditional Program
2.75 or greater GPA based on the last 60 hours of undergraduate and/or graduate semester credit hours prior to admission. Students below a 2.75 GPA may be considered for Alternate Admissions. Students with a lower GPA must take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and achieve minimum scores of 139 on each of the sections (verbal and quantitative) and apply for Alternate Admissions (See Alternate Admissions and Admissions Appeal Process below). Students testing before August 1, 2011 must achieve GRE scores of a total score (verbal and quantitative) of 800 or better and apply for Alternate Admissions. All GRE scores must have been taken within 5 years of the application date.
3. 33-Hour Advanced Standing Program
Completion of a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree at a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited institution within the previous seven years with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher based on the last 60 hours of undergraduate and/or graduate credit hours. Alternate Admissions is not an option for the Advanced Standing Program.
4. Liberal arts background – at least 30 hours in liberal arts coursework (social sciences, humanities, natural science, communication, mathematics, etc) including:
___ at least one course in sociology, psychology, or anthropology, and
___ at least one course in American government, political science, economics or other course that can be shown to provide a foundation for beginning policy analysis.

All courses counted towards the liberal arts requirement must have been completed with a final grade of “C” or higher. Applicants may be enrolled in liberal arts prerequisite

courses while their MSW applications are being evaluated, but all of these courses **must** have been successfully completed before admission to the program. Offers of admission will be contingent upon the successful completion of all required courses.

5. Enrollment Prerequisite: Statistics* Course

A college statistics course which includes substantial content on descriptive and inferential statistics with a minimum grade of “C” must be completed within 7 years of entry into the MSW program. We recommend SWRK 344 taught in summer term. (A research methods course is not sufficient.) A test-out option is available and must be completed by April 1st, 2016. Please contact Emily Gouvas (270) 745-2088 or emily.gouvas@wku.edu to arrange for testing.

***Students who believe they have mastered the equivalent of a college statistics course may opt to take a waiver examination. Students must complete waiver exams by April 1st, 2016. Students who have not completed all prerequisites or testing equivalents may not start the MSW program.**

6. International students for whom English is not a first language:

Fluency in English is critical to learning and applying social work skills. A TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score is required for all international applicants whose first language is other than English. The TOEFL may be waived for WKU ESLI or Navitas students.

TOEFL requirements are as follows: A minimum of 550 on the paper based TOEFL, a minimum of 79 on the iBT TOEFL, or a minimum of 6.5 on the IELTS)

If a student chooses to enroll in an ESL (i.e. ESLI or Navitas) program, acceptance to the MSW program is not automatic. Students must complete all application materials. Two semesters before completion of the ESL program, he/she must make an appointment with the MSW Admissions Coordinator via phone or email. This meeting will assist the student in planning for socialization to the culture of the social work profession, clients, and social contexts.

Specific Advanced Standing Admission Requirements:

The Advanced Standing Program at WKU is available only to students who have graduated within the last seven years from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited BSW program. Accreditation standards do not allow students to count work experience as a substitute for the accredited BSW. Students must also have a 3.0 GPA for the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework. Students considering the Advanced Standing Program must complete all other requirements for admission including pre-requisites, and complete the application process.

The Advanced Standing Program is designed for students who have mastered basic social work practice. The Advanced Standing Program is **highly intense and rigorous**. Students considering the advanced track should weigh several factors. First, students will be joining the educational process at the equivalent of the end of one year of graduate school. Therefore, it is the **student's responsibility** to internalize the expectations of the graduate education process. Students who

enter the Advanced Standing Program and find that they may not have mastered concepts at the same level as the foundation curriculum are expected to overcome those deficits by experience, reading, and personal perseverance. Secondly, the successful Advanced Standing student **must have graduate-level critical thinking and writing skills** including strong analytical ability. Students are expected to use *APA 6th edition* format when writing papers in this course of study.

Once the applicant's application file is complete (Graduate Studies and MSW Program), faculty members serving on the MSW Admissions Committee review the application to determine suitability for advanced standing. At the conclusion of this process, the faculty may recommend one of the three options: the student receives full admission to the Advanced Standing Program on a full time or part time status; the student may receive full admission to the traditional two year program, or that the student not be admitted to WKU's MSW Program. The student may also self-select to attend the two-year program option at the conclusion of the pre-qualifying process.

Criteria Used in Reviewing MSW Applications

- Academic potential for graduate study (transcripts, recommendation forms, and GPA)
- Professional experience in human service settings (resume, personal statement, and recommendation letters)
- Preparedness for competent multicultural social work practice (personal statement, resume, and recommendation letters)
- Written communication skills (personal statement and recommendation letters)
- Congruence of personal values and ethics with the values of the social work profession (personal statement, recommendation letters)
- Congruence of personal and professional goals with the MSW Program's mission
- Writing sample (see writing sample guidelines)

Alternate Admission

Both WKU and the Department of Social Work allow for alternate (exceptional) admissions. If an individual does not meet the basic requirements for the MSW program or The Graduate School, he or she may petition the MSW program for alternative admission for the Traditional Program only and clearly describe his/her demonstrated capacity for success in an academically rigorous MSW program. This applicant must take the GRE.

Admissions Appeal Process

Any student who is denied admission into the graduate social work program may appeal the decision. The student will notify in writing the MSW Program Director that he or she wishes a second consideration. All appeals must be received within 10 days after receiving the notice evidenced by a postmark. A second consideration does not guarantee admissions into the program. The MSW program will initiate the reconsideration process. This process involves two more independent reviews of the student's application materials. The MSW program in conjunction with MSW Program Director will review all five reviews and determine the admission's status of the student. A decision will be issued to the student within 14 days of the Departments' decision.

Transfer Students

Students transferring from CSWE-accredited MSW Programs must complete all application material and processes. Students transferring must have at least a 3.0 GPA and be in good standing with the originating school as established by the *Verification of Good Standing Form* completed by the MSW Program Director at the original institution. Transfer students are highly encouraged to meet with the WKU MSW Program Director and MSW Admissions Coordinator prior to application.

The transfer of credits from an accredited institution of higher learning toward the MSW requirements will be examined on a case-by-case basis. If transfer is granted by the program, all University requirements for transferring credits must be met. Depending on the program, a maximum of 9 hours of electives may be transferred.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Some scholarships, graduate assistantships, and work-study positions are available through the University and the Department of Social Work. Admitted students are encouraged to research and apply for these, along with pursuing all other financial aid available to them through other sources.

For information about the Minority Assistance Program, Graduate Assistantships, or Graduate Studies Financial Aid please contact the Office of Graduate Studies:

<http://www.wku.edu/graduate/>

The MSW program offers a variety of scholarships annually to eligible, admitted MSW students. Scholarship information through the Department of Social Work is included with student's acceptance letter. Additionally the University's Scholarship information can be found at:

<http://www.wku.edu/scholarship/>

MSW Student Orientation

All students who are admitted into the MSW Program MUST attend program orientation. The purpose of this orientation is to familiarize students with University, College, and Department policies as well as to assist students with skills necessary for the successful completion of the MSW Program.

2016 Traditional and Advanced Standing Program Student Orientation: Friday, August 19, 2016

MSW Field Orientation

All students who are admitted into the MSW Program are required to attend field orientation. The orientation includes socialization to the profession, historical perspectives, ethics and values of the profession, HIPAA training, general field materials, site choices, and field structure.

2016 Field Orientation is scheduled for August 19, 2016.

*New part-time MSW students will not attend the Field portion of the 2016 MSW Orientation. Those students will attend the Field Orientation the year of their first field placement.

MSW APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Immediately

_____ **1. Carefully review the program information in MSW Application Booklet.** Do you have any questions? If so, don't hesitate to contact us! Email: mswadmissions@wku.edu (Bowling Green campus), and/or phone (270) 745-2088.

_____ **2. Map out a workable application timeline for yourself, using the information included in this checklist.** You should count on the process taking anywhere *between 3 and 6 months*, so give yourself plenty of time to put together a high quality application.

Note: Admissions are “rolling” in the WKU MSW Program. This means that applications for admission are accepted and reviewed as long as there are program openings available. Applications submitted early – by the priority admissions deadlines - have a better chance of admission. When all program openings are filled, new applicants who meet requirements must be placed on the program waiting list and admission is not guaranteed.

A planned application process and subsequent timely admission also generally mean less stress for the applicant.

****Note that application materials are submitted to two separate offices. Details below****

Right Away: The Graduate School Application Materials

_____ **3. Apply to The Graduate School at WKU**

_____ **4. If necessary, arrange to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test.** This test is given every day except for Sunday. Please call 1-800-967-1100 for test locations near you. Please be aware that reporting GRE scores can take 4-6 weeks. You should plan to take the GRE no later in January for the Traditional Program Alternate Admission. Registration materials for the GRE are available by logging on to www.gre.org.

Note: If you take the GRE, have your scores sent to WKU, school code 1901.

_____ **5. Arrange to have official transcripts from all colleges and universities you have attended sent to The Graduate School at:**

The Graduate School
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11010
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1010

The Graduate School Checklist:

- ☐ Application completed and fee paid
- ☐ GRE taken and scores sent to WKU (if necessary)
- ☐ Official transcripts of ALL institutions attended sent to WKU

Please feel free to contact The Graduate School via email or phone. graduate.school@wku.edu or 270-745-2446

Two Months before Application Deadline: MSW Application Materials

_____ **6. Complete the MSW Application.**

_____ **7. Arrange for recommendations:** Three recommendations including at least one academic and one professional. (If you have not been employed, provide additional academic recommendation.)

- Any MSW program applicant with a BSW earned within the last 7 years **MUST** include at least 1 letter of recommendation from their previous Field Instructor or Field Liaison, one academic reference, and one reference that is either professional or academic. IF, due to faculty relocation and/or retirement, no such faculty member is available, a letter to this effect from the current BSW program director must accompany the application.
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Recommendation forms should be sent directly to the program from the recommender. Recommenders may submit this form by mail or email:

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_____ **8. Write your personal statement.** This is a very important piece of your application and you should take time to respond clearly and thoughtfully to each topic included in the personal statement outline. Write a draft statement, edit carefully for grammar, spelling and content, then consider having a respected colleague, family member or friend read it for clarity and evidence of critical thinking. Admissions readers look to your personal statement to get a sense of a “fit” between your vocational and life goals and the goals of the social work profession and WKU’s MSW program. They also carefully

note writing and critical thinking skills used in this piece of your total application. See the personal statement outline instructions within the MSW application.

_____ **9. Writing sample.** Write a two to three page (double-spaced) essay about the possible difficulties advanced level social workers might encounter when working with a particular population. This population (identified by the applicant) would challenge personal beliefs, values or ideals in a social work setting. Discuss strategies for maintaining professionalism in working with this client group. This writing sample should demonstrate proper use of two scholarly sources and appropriate referencing, citations, and formatting per APA 6th edition

_____ **10. Write (or update) your resume.** See MSW application for a resume outline. Important: include inclusive dates for each work or volunteer experience (e.g. Jan. 1, 1999 - June 1, 2000). Highlight all experiences, skills, and abilities that have helped prepare you for professional social work practice.

_____ **11. If you anticipate needing alternate admission (your GPA does not meet admission standards), write a letter requesting this, giving strong evidence of your capacity for success in the MSW program.** This letter should be included in the application packet you send to the MSW program.

Two – Three Weeks before Application Deadline: Compiling and Sending in Your MSW Application

_____ **12. Compile all application materials to be sent to the MSW program:** application, resume, personal statement, letter requesting alternate admission (if applicable). Have you completed, signed, and dated all documents? Have you made copies for your own files?

_____ **13. Follow up on your letters/forms of recommendation.** Have your recommenders completed the forms and sent them to the MSW program?

_____ **14. All applications must be submitted electronically:** early enough so that it will reach the MSW program office by the standard admission deadlines. Send to: mawadmissions@wku.edu.

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