



Q: Some students who work 40 hours a week need to keep working full time. How realistic is that?

It's entirely realistic and it happens all the time, often assisted by some adjustment in the student's work schedule.

You'll be required to complete some practicum during standard business hours, Monday through Friday. Agencies that are large enough, with multiple programs, can provide optimal learning opportunities for employed students.

Placements are intended to be strong, varied educational experiences. Some agencies hold limited evening and weekend hours, and placement during those times may not allow you to maximize your learning in areas involving the community. You must be present at times when meetings and activities are happening and staff, including the MSW Practicum Instructor, are present. The majority of agencies cannot provide this opportunity during evening and weekend hours.

Q: What is the role of the Practicum Planner?

Your planner is assigned to you based on your location. This person has developed relationships with organizations in your area and has knowledge of which organizations are accepting students. The process begins by the student completing a planning form. After the form is submitted, a Practicum Planner contacts the student to gather more information regarding the best fit for both student and organization, and sends out your resume on your behalf.

Q: What is the difference between the Practicum Planner, Practicum Advisor and MSW Practicum Instructor?

Practicum Planner:

- Member of the Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work Practicum Education faculty
- Assigned to you by the school to provide help and support around practicum planning
- Assists students prior to entering practicum placement; works with students to solidify and approve practicum placements

MSW Practicum Instructor:

- MSW social worker, identified in the community, who is responsible for your education in the practicum
- Meets with you for one hour a week for practicum instruction
- Works with you to develop the learning contract
- Attends two virtual practicum visits
- Provides feedback on process recordings
- Evaluates your performance based on the successful completion of all the learning competencies and objectives in the learning contract; recommends a grade to the seminar instructor
- Is your advocate/supporter at your practicum placement

Practicum Advisor:

- Member of the YU Wurzweiler School of Social Work faculty; may be an adjunct faculty member
- Is the instructor of the seminar class
- Acts as liaison between the school and the placements
- Conducts virtual (online) practicum visits with the placements
- Determines your final grade for practicum placement
- Is your additional advocate/supporter during the practicum placement

Q: Must the MSW Practicum Instructor be licensed?

The Wurzweiler School of Social Work requires that the MSW Practicum Instructor:



- Is a graduate of an accredited school of social work
- Has three years post-master's experience
- Holds an MSW-level social work license

If you live in the Tri-State area, your Practicum Instructor must also be Seminar in Practicum Instruction-certified. Some states, territories or countries may have additional requirements specific to Practicum Instructor credentialing. It is a required assignment in the Practicum Planning Orientation that students find out if their state, territory or country has additional requirements.

Q: When does practicum planning begin?

Planning officially begins by completing the practicum planning form. This occurs about four months before practicum starts. For more information regarding the process, reach out to the associate director of practicum education.

Q: What's involved in the practicum planning process? What are the requirements?

You'll begin this process by completing the practicum planning form sent to you by the practicum department. It is important that as soon as you receive this form in your email, you complete and submit it immediately. The sooner you do this, the sooner your Practicum Planner will be assigned to you and will begin the process of helping you search for an internship. You will be required to send your resume to your planner, who will help arrange an interview for you at the organization. Do not contact organizations on your own; your planner will assist you with every step of the process. You will complete this process two times: once for your generalist or foundation year internship and once for your clinical or advanced year internship. Both internships last for two consecutive semesters and are completed at the rate of 20-21 hours per week, for a total of 600 hours per each internship.

Q: How is grading done in practicum planning and in seminar classes?

While you're in practicum placement, you'll also be enrolled in practice courses and seminar courses, which are designed to support you while in placement. Practice courses earn a letter grade and seminar classes are pass/fail. To be in good standing, students are expected to earn a grade of B or better in practice courses and must also earn a P (pass) grade in seminar.

Practicum is not just about completing the required 600 hours; you must also pass the practice and seminar classes. If you begin to fall behind, it's essential that you communicate with your student support coordinator, Practicum Advisor or Practicum Instructor right away. We're all here to support you.

Q: As a student, may I select my own practicum placement and MSW Practicum Instructor?

The short answer is no. You will work closely with your Practicum Planner to select an appropriate practicum site. However, you certainly can collaborate with your planner and share your ideas about where you would like to be placed.

Q: How many agencies should I anticipate contacting before finding a placement?

Your planner will work with you by contacting one agency at a time. Once you interview and hear back from the agency, a decision will be made about whether this will be a suitable practicum site. If not, your planner will send out your resume to the next suitable organization.

Q: With how many agencies should I interview?

To make a sound educational decision that meets the expected learning goals, you must interview with at least two agencies so that you can compare settings.

Q: What happens if I can't find an agency?

You'll work closely with a Practicum Planner and receive support and direction every step of the way. If you cannot secure a placement in the allotted time, you'll work with your student support coordinator to modify your academic course plan. Then you'll continue practicum planning with the Practicum Planner and begin practicum internship the following semester.

Q: Why might a student be unable to find an agency?



Students who live near other large schools of social work sometimes have difficulty securing a placement because:

- Local universities have exclusive agreements with the agencies
- Agencies may only accept students during certain semester cycles
- Students may encounter competition with MSW students from other programs

If you live in an area with other local schools, we strongly recommend that you work even more closely with your Practicum Planner.

Students who live in very rural areas may also have limited options for practicum placements.

Q: May I get paid for my practicum placement?

A limited number of agencies do offer a stipend or a paid internship. We encourage you to ask about stipends during your interview.

You can also complete your placement at your place of employment if certain criteria are met. See Place of Employment (POE) criteria and Paid Internship Options in the Practicum Education Manual.

Q: How many hours per week am I expected to be at my placement?

A first-year (generalist) practicum placement lasts 30 weeks (two, 15-week semesters), completed at the rate of 20-22 hours per week. You'll need to complete a total of 600 hours over the duration of your two-semester placement. One hour of weekly practicum instruction (with an MSW with three years post-graduate experience) is included in your total time.

You'll spend at least 10-11 hours per week in direct practice with clients. The rest of the time includes one hour for practicum instruction, up to three hours for writing process recordings and agency documentation, and time for case conferences and staff meetings.

The same total of hours and practicum instruction is required during your second (specialization/advanced) year. If you live in the Tri-State area, your Practicum Instructor must also be Seminar in Practicum Instruction-certified.

Q: May I set my own schedule at my placement?

You and the agency will work together to identify a schedule that meets both of your needs. Internship hours must include program times when primary interventions occur and you're able to attend staff/team meetings. Residential programs typically use evenings and weekends as "downtime." An internship consisting only of evening and weekend hours would not be approved.

Q: Do I need to pay MSW Practicum Instructors for practicum instruction time?

Under no circumstances does a student ever pay for practicum instruction time.

Q: May my family member, close friend, former therapist or current supervisor be my MSW Practicum Instructor?

Under no circumstances will the School of Social Work approve a Practicum Instructor who has a personal, familial or prior therapeutic relationship with a student.

Q: When should I contact my Practicum Planner or Practicum Advisor?

- If you're currently practicum planning, contact your Practicum Planner
- If you're in practicum seminar, contact your Practicum Advisor
- If you have questions about practicum during a time when you're not actively practicum planning or in practicum placement, contact the associate director of practicum education

Q: How can I prepare for the placement interview?

Working closely with your Practicum Planner, you'll begin to prepare for your interviews during the practicum planning orientation.

Prepare by gathering as much information about the organization and its services as possible. Compile a list of questions to take to the interview. Several of the items further down in this list refer to topics that you should ask about.



Q: Should I bring a resume and references to the interview?

Yes. We recommend that you go to the interview with your resume and names of your references (in case they're requested). Be aware of the requirements of a generalist or advanced-year practicum. Your planner can help you with this.

Q: What can I expect in the placement interview?

The interview process varies from agency to agency. The university and agency are interested in making sure there's a good fit between you and the agency. As a result, each agency will ask questions to ensure that this is the right place for you. They'll also look to you to play an active role in the interview process, so it's important for you to be prepared and show an interest in the agency.

Q: What if the person with whom I interview cannot be the MSW Practicum Instructor?

The MSW Practicum Instructor plays such an essential role in your education that it's extremely important for you to meet with the person who will serve as your Practicum Instructor. If there's no opportunity during the interview, we strongly encourage you to ask to meet the person before making a final decision.

The Practicum Instructor will meet with you for one hour of weekly practicum instruction. S/he will also be responsible for evaluating your successful completion of all the learning objectives outlined in the learning contract. To maximize your learning experience, it's critical that you feel comfortable working with your Practicum Instructor.

Q: What if I really like an agency but it doesn't have an MSW available to be a Practicum Instructor?

There are situations in which an agency would provide an excellent education for a student but, for a variety of reasons, does not have an MSW on staff. In these cases, your Practicum Planner will work with the associate director of practicum education and provide one for you. You'll also receive day-to-day supervision from an on-site supervisor at the agency, who is not required to have any particular credential. Since both the off-site MSW Practicum Instructor and the on-site supervisor are responsible for your educational experience, good communication between them is essential. We expect that they'll collaborate—virtually, by phone or in person—monthly, at a minimum.

Q: What do I need to do after the interview?

Before ending the interview, you and the agency should be clear about the next steps. Be sure to ask when you can expect to hear back from the agency. It's also professional behavior to send a follow-up email or thank-you note, expressing appreciation for their time.

Once you've found a practicum placement site, you must complete several documents and upload them to the course. You'll also need to hold a virtual meeting with the organization to finalize placement. All of this will be outlined in the Orientation to Practicum Planning course.

Once all of the forms have been submitted and approved, your placement will be officially approved during the final meeting. If the forms need to be edited after this meeting, the placement may be conditionally approved until all of the paperwork is completed and accepted.

Q: Will the agency require a criminal background check and/or fingerprints?

This is an important question to ask during the interview, as many agencies that provide practicum placement opportunities for students require a criminal background check. If your criminal background check indicates a conviction, it may:

- Prevent you from securing a practicum placement
- Deter your ability to obtain social work licensure

To get more information regarding licensing requirements, contact the Social Work Licensure Board in the state, territory or country where you plan to practice.

Q: Will the agency require me to be immunized, including against COVID-19?

Some agencies require certain immunizations/tests. This should be determined during the interview.



Q: If the agency requires a background check, fingerprinting, immunizations, etc., do I have to pay for them?

It depends on the agency. Some will assume the responsibility, while others will ask you to pay. It's important to ask about this during the interview.

Q: Will the placement expect me to transport clients? If so, will I have to use my own car?

This depends on the agency. It's important to ask these questions during the interview.

Q: If I work in a social service agency, can those hours count as practicum time?

Yes. The Counsel of Social Work Education (CSWE) recently adapted their policy on allowing employment to be counted as an internship. As long as the employment meets the criteria for either foundation or advanced year, you will be allowed to utilize your employment for internship. Please consult with your Practicum Planner if you're employed in the practicum. S/he may suggest that you also speak with your employer about including some additional activities in your employment so that it meets internship requirements. If you are utilizing your employment for an internship, it's called a Place of Employment (POE) internship.

Q: Will the agency require me to attend an orientation or training prior to working with clients?

This is an important question to ask during your interview. All agencies are asked to provide some type of orientation for their students. Orientation/training required by the agency is counted as practicum hours.

Q: How do I ask about safety training?

Safety is an important issue to be discussed in the practicum placement, and you must complete a safety contract at the beginning of each placement. It is entirely appropriate to ask about safety training at any point during the interview or practicum placement itself. If you feel the agency is dismissing the concern, notify the Practicum Planner and/or Seminar Instructor immediately.

Q: May I begin my practicum placement without having completed all of the required courses?

No. The coursework is designed to inform and support you in the practicum. In practicum placement, you're expected to put into practice that which you've learned in class.

- You must complete or be enrolled in required courses for the first (generalist) year before beginning your generalist year placement
- You must complete or be enrolled in your second (advanced/specialization) year courses before beginning your advanced/specialization year placement

Q: May I complete both placements at my place of employment?

To have an educationally diverse practicum experience, you're strongly discouraged from completing both placements at the same organization. You'll work closely with your Practicum Planner in order to find the best fit.

Q: May I complete practicum hours on nights and weekends at agencies that are open 24 hours a day?

Yes. You'll need to review the list of activities with your Practicum Planner to be sure they meet objectives for either a foundation-year or advanced-year placement. Plan to be at your placement for at least half of the required hours during regular business hours and plan on attending the agency's staff meeting. Final approval of any practicum placement rests with the Practicum Planner.

Q: May I complete the practicum placement during the summer?

You may enter practicum placement three times during the academic year: in January, May or September. Placements run for 30 weeks over the course of two semesters.



Q: May I complete my placements overseas?

Yes. No matter where a placement is located, however, it must meet all objectives.

Q: May I complete my placements on military bases?

Yes. No matter where a placement is located, however, it must meet all objectives.

Q: Does the required number of hours in practicum placement meet licensure requirements?

You'll complete an assignment in the seminar specific to the number of hours required by your state, territory, or country for licensure. Internship hours do not count toward licensure, but some licensing boards require that you complete a minimum number of hours in practicum in order to obtain initial credentialing as an MSW.

Q: How will practicum benefit me, regarding my specific interests within social work?

The goal of practicum is to integrate and apply what you've learned in academic courses in real-life scenarios. It's about honing skills and solidifying knowledge, both of which are applicable to any client population you choose. It is also required by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE).

Q: Are there certificates I can attain while earning my MSW?

Yes. The Wurzweiler School of Social Work offers two:

- Gerontology and Palliative Care
- Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC)

You can speak with your student support specialist to learn more about these certifications.

Good luck with your search!