

**MSW  
Application  
Requirements and Instructions**

## MSW Program Options

### TWO-YEAR

(On-Campus and Online)

The Two-Year Program consists of two academic years (four semesters) of full-time enrollment. Students in the Two-Year Program complete 60 credits and 1200 hours of field work, spending two days per week in the classroom and three days per week in the field. In the first year, students take foundational courses in social work practice methods, social work research, and psychological and social theory. In the second year, students select a concentration area and field of practice for specialized courses and field work. Students complete field education hours during both years of the program. Throughout this program, students choose from a broad range of elective courses to best develop additional expertise in areas such as: family or group interventions, treatment of children, adolescents and young adults, responding to trauma, working with veterans and their families, and nonprofit management. Students leave the program fully prepared for entry into advanced social work practice in their area of choice.

### 16-MONTH

(On-Campus Only)

The full-time 16-Month Program starts in the spring term (January) and is *not* available for fall entry. Students in the 16-Month Program complete the MSW degree requirements in four consecutive terms by continuing full-time through the summer term. Requirements mirror those of the Two-Year Program: 60 credits, 1200 hours of field work, and four consecutive terms of full-time enrollment.

### ADVANCED STANDING

(On-Campus and Online)

The Advanced Standing Program is designed for individuals who have earned a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) accredited from the Council on Social Work Education. Eligible applicants *must* have received their BSW degree within the past five years; if the BSW was earned more than five years ago, the applicant may apply for another MSW program option. Advanced Standing students complete their specialization year at Columbia School of Social Work and earn their MSW in one academic year. The program begins with a summer intensive that prepares incoming students to enter CSSW in the fall as a second-year student with advanced courses and specialized field work.

### EXTENDED

(On-Campus and Online)

The Extended Program is a pathway for students who wish to combine part-time and full-time study. The program enables students to complete the course work and field education requirements in three or four academic years. In the first year, students take



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courses part-time and are not enrolled in field work. In the final two years, students complete 1200 hours of field education while completing their course load requirements. NOTE: Once students begin field education, they are considered full-time students, and must be at their placement site three days per week (21 hours total). Weekend and evening placements are not available.

## **REDUCED RESIDENCY**

(On-Campus and Online)

The Reduced Residency Program offers students who are currently employed in social services or nonprofit agencies the opportunity to earn the M. S. degree while counting a portion of their employment toward the field education requirement. Students in this program fulfill the same 60-credit degree requirement as other students enrolled in the School, and earn their Master of Science in Social Work degree through a combination of part-time and full-time study over a period of no fewer than four terms and no longer than four years.

However, in place of their foundation year field placement, students enroll in a field education seminar in which they integrate classroom learning with their employment experiences. In their final year, students complete a 28-hour per week field placement, usually at their place of employment, of which 14 hours of their usual employment activities may be counted. Most students complete their field education requirement in a four-day per week schedule.

The Reduced Residency Program is structured into two periods: the pre-residency period (usually two years of part-time enrollment while continuing to work full-time at a social services organization), and the residency period (a year of full-time enrollment).

NOTE: If you are working at an agency that has previously hosted a Columbia student for a field placement, you may be eligible for a 50% tuition discount.

## **TRANSFER**

(On-Campus and Online)

The Transfer Program is designed for individuals who have already completed a full year of field education and coursework at another CSWE-accredited graduate school of social work in the United States and Canada. Eligible applicants to the Transfer Program must have completed their credits within the past five years. Students who are accepted into the Transfer Program complete their studies within one year. Students enter the School as a second-year student and follow the second-year course of study in their chosen method area and field of practice.



## FIVE-TERM INTERNATIONAL

(On-Campus Only)

The International Students Program (ISP) is the pathway for international students who are unfamiliar with the U.S. social welfare system and who speak English as a second language. The program requires five terms of attendance; the “extra” term is in the summer between the first and second years. ISP students enroll in a Professional Immersion Seminar during the first (fall) term and begin field education and the corresponding practice courses in the subsequent spring term. Students continue with field education and courses during the summer term (late May through the end of July or early August).

NOTE: Depending on an individual’s English language proficiency, some applicants may be invited to attend a six-week course for non-native English speakers during the summer before entering ISP. This course, “English for Professional Purposes: Social Work”, includes English-language instruction (speaking, reading, writing and comprehension) and an introduction to key concepts in social work and social work institutions in the U.S. (e.g., self awareness, the U.S. social system, social welfare policy, and an overview of social services).

## General Application Requirements

Applicants must submit all materials directly to the Office of Admissions; items submitted through an agent or third-party vendor are not accepted. The following are exceptions to this policy: submissions by the U.S. Department of State’s Fulbright Program and its three partner agencies (IIE, LASPAU, and AMIDEAST); submissions by the Danish-American Fulbright Commission (DAF); submissions by Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). Additionally, the applicant will be required to attest to the accuracy and authenticity of all information and documents submitted to Columbia. Questions about this requirement may be directed to the Office of Admissions at [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu).

Failure to submit complete, accurate, and authentic application documents consistent with these instructions may result in denial or revocation of admission, cancellation of academic credit, suspension, expulsion, or eventual revocation of degree. Applicants may be required to assist admissions staff and faculty involved in admission reviews in the verification of all documents and statements made in documents submitted by students as part of the application review process.

All applicants to the Master of Science in Social Work program are required to submit the following:

### Application Fee

The \$75 application fee is required upon submission of the application. Application fee waivers are granted to alumni of AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America, McNair Scholars, Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), and to veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Fee waivers are also granted to applicants who are experiencing financial hardship. To request an application fee waiver, applicants may email their request to the Office of Admissions at [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu)



after creating an online application. Applicants should not submit an application fee if they fall into one of these categories. All submitted fees are non-refundable.

### **Resume**

Please submit a detailed current resume that lists paid work and volunteer experience separately, starting with the current or most recent position. Resumes should indicate whether each experience was full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, and the nature of the client population served, if applicable. Part-time experience should also indicate the weekly hours worked. Be sure to use month/year to indicate the beginning and end dates for all activities included. The resume may be longer than one page but should not exceed three pages.

The resume should include:

- complete professional, academic, and volunteer history,
- details about direct research experience and/or published papers or articles, if applicable,
- descriptions of community and leadership activities,
- awards, distinctions, honors, or other recognition received,
- other relevant life experiences, and
- all languages read/spoken in addition to English.

### **Essays**

Applicants are asked to respond to three essay prompts. These prompts must be addressed in three separate essays, and each essay should not exceed more than 500 words. The essays are an opportunity for applicants to tell the admissions committee about their professional interest(s) and experiences that have influenced their decision to pursue the MSW degree at CSSW. Please see the Admissions Essays section of this document for additional details.

### **Three Letters of Reference**

Students who have received a degree in the past five years are required to provide at least one academic reference from faculty at that institution, but are encouraged to provide at least two academic references. Students more than five years away from their most recent degree are encouraged to provide at least one academic reference.

Appropriate references include professors, the applicant's most recent employer or volunteer supervisor, or those who know the applicant in a professional context. Letters of recommendation may be submitted digitally via the online application system. If a reference is unable to submit their letter of reference using the application system, they may contact the Office of Admissions directly at [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu). **No personal references will be accepted, nor references from professionals with whom you have had a client or patient relationship.**

Please note that our online application system accommodates only three letters of reference. CSSW adheres to the provisions of the Educational Privacy Act of 1974 in respect to references.

## Transcript(s)

### **Transcript(s) for Application Review**

During the initial phase of the application process, applicants may upload unofficial transcripts for evaluation purposes. Uploaded transcripts should include the following information: Courses, Credits, and Grades - including transfer and study abroad coursework. Applicants must submit a transcript from each university attended for at least one term, regardless of the number of credits received. NOTE: Printouts of web-based course records will not be accepted for admission review.

### **Transcript Requirements For Admitted Students**

Once a student has accepted an offer of admission, they must submit an official electronic transcript from each university attended for at least one term, regardless of the number of credits received. Graduate students should provide an official transcript indicating bachelor's degree conferral prior to entering graduate studies. If the student received a bachelor's degree from a U.S. institution, that institution must be accredited by one of the regional accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. government.

#### **Domestic Institutions**

All admitted students who have attended a college or university in the United States must submit electronic transcripts directly from their school, delivered directly to the admissions office at Columbia School of Social Work.

If an institution based in the U.S. does not offer electronic delivery, the admitted student must write to the Office of Admissions with the link to their prior institution's web page concerning transcript orders to confirm that paper is the only option and obtain permission to submit a paper transcript.

If a paper transcript is the only option, it must be sent directly from the other institution to Columbia School of Social Work. It may not be delivered or forwarded via the student.

#### **International Institutions**

International institutions outside of the People's Republic of China (PRC): Admitted students who attended international institutions must submit an electronic transcript if their school offers secure online delivery. If the school cannot send transcripts electronically through a secure online system, the student must contact World Education Services (WES) and order a course-by-course evaluation and International Credential Advantage Package to be sent directly to Columbia School of Social Work. Students for whom this imposes a financial burden may contact the Office of Admissions directly at <[cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu)>.

International institutions in the PRC: Admitted students who attended institutions in the PRC can access a unique resource through [CHESICC](#), the credentials verification service affiliated with the PRC's Ministry of Education, to arrange for submission of a "Verification Report of



China Higher Education Student's Academic Transcripts" AND a "Verification Report of China Higher Education Qualification Certificate". These should be delivered electronically to the appropriate admissions office at Columbia.

## Admissions Essays

Applicants are required to provide a response to three essay questions, which are subject to change from year to year. Admissions essay questions will be available in August for admission to the following spring and fall terms. Please create an account on our online application to view the current essay questions.

In general, applicants should use the essays as an opportunity to articulate their motivations for pursuing social work and explain why they wish to study at CSSW. Applicants are encouraged to discuss professional goals, the role(s) they intend to fulfill, their commitment to social justice, and what community or population they desire to serve in their career as a social worker.

## Additional Requirements by Program

Applicants to the Advanced Standing, Reduced Residency, and Transfer programs must submit all the required materials mentioned on page 2 and 3, and will have the following additional requirements:

### ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM

1. **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Advanced Standing Program instructions in the Admission Essays section, answering essay questions 1, 2, and 3B.
2. **Field Work Evaluation Form:** Applicants must have an Undergraduate Field Evaluation Form completed by a field instructor or appropriate person at your BSW program. The form can be found in the references section of the application. The form can be submitted by mail or as an email attachment to [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu).
3. **List of BSW Courses:** A list of all of your BSW program courses with course descriptions must be submitted for review. Please list the courses when prompted on the application. The course descriptions should be taken directly from the school's course catalog or website. Applicants in the process of completing their BSW courses should include a list of classes you will be taking in your final semester(s).

Applicants in the process of completing their BSW program must include a list of classes taken in their final semester(s). Course descriptions should be uploaded in the "Admissions Essays" section of the application. The list may also be sent by email.

## REDUCED RESIDENCY PROGRAM

1. **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Reduced Residency Program instructions in the Admission Essays section, answering questions 1, 2, and 3C.
2. **Supervisor Recommendation:** One of the three required letters of recommendation must come from your current supervisor.

## TRANSFER STUDENTS

1. **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Transfer Student instructions in the Admissions Essays section, answering questions 1, 2, and 3B.
2. **Academic Reference:** A minimum of one of the three required letters of recommendation must be an academic reference from your current/former MSW program.
3. **Field Work Evaluation Form:** Transfer student applicants must have a Graduate Field Evaluation Form completed by a field instructor or appropriate person at your current/former MSW program. The form is located in the Reference section of the application. The form may be submitted by mail or as an email attachment to [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu).
4. **List of MSW Courses:** A list of all of your MSW program courses with descriptions must be submitted for review. Please list the courses when prompted on the application. The course descriptions should be taken directly from the school's course catalog or website. Applicants in the process of completing their MSW courses should include a list of classes you will be taking in your final semester(s).

Note: Transfer students are admitted for a maximum of one year of full-time study at CSSW.

## International Applicants

### English Language Proficiency

To be considered for admission to a graduate program at the Columbia School of Social Work, students must be comfortable with rapid and idiomatic spoken English. If the language of the applicant's undergraduate degree was English and they are a citizen or permanent resident of a country whose official national language is English, they need not take further steps to prove fluency. However, their undergraduate education was not conducted in English, the applicant must satisfy one of the following criteria:

1. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Please visit [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org) for more information on this examination. A minimum score of 600 (paper-based test) or 100 (Internet-based test) is necessary for admission to Columbia.
2. IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Please visit [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org) for more information on this examination. A minimum score of 7.0 is necessary for admission to Columbia.



Applicants may submit a English Proficiency Waiver Form if they wish to be considered from exemption.

#### **Admissions Interview**

An online interview is required for applicants who are not U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents and who are citizens of non-English speaking countries. The admissions office will contact applicants to set up interviews following receipt of the online application.

## **Essential Abilities and Attributes for Admission and Continuance**

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In general, successful applicants will demonstrate the "Essential Abilities and Attributes for Admission and Continuance in the School of Social Work" outlined below.

The following standards, distinguished from academic standards, describe the physical, cognitive, emotional, and character requirements to provide reasonable assurance that students can complete the entire course of study and participate fully in all aspects of social work education and practice.

Acquisition of competence as a social worker is a lengthy and complex process that will be undermined by significant limitations of the student's ability to participate in the full spectrum of the experiences and the requirements of the curriculum.

Students in the Columbia School of Social Work are expected to possess the following abilities and attributes at a level appropriate to their year in the program. They are expected to meet these standards in the classroom, in their practice, and elsewhere. Attention to these standards will be part of evaluations made by faculty responsible for evaluating applications for admission as well as by faculty responsible for evaluating students' classroom and practicum performance.

#### **Motor Abilities**

The social work student must have sufficient motor abilities to attend class and practicum placement. Reasonable accommodation through technology for limitations in motor abilities will be allowed. The Office of Disability Services may be consulted regarding reasonable accommodations. For more information, please visit [www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services](http://www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services)

#### **Sensory Abilities**

Social work students must have the ability through their senses to participate in classes and practicum placement. Students must acquire and integrate data through the use of their senses. Reasonable accommodation through technology for limitations in sensory abilities will be allowed. The Office of Disability Services may be consulted regarding reasonable accommodations. For more information, please visit [www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services](http://www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services)

**Communication Skills**

The social work student must communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals. Students must express their ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to listen to others. They must have sufficient skills in spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program.

**Professional Commitment**

The social work student must have a strong commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession. The student must be committed to the essential values of social work, which are the dignity and worth of every individual and one's right to a just share of society's resources.

**Self-Awareness**

The social work student must know how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect one's thinking, behavior and relationships. The student must be willing to examine and change one's behavior when it interferes with working with clients and other professionals and must be able to work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as with those in authority.

**Knowledge Base for Social Work Practice**

The professional activities of social work students must be grounded in relevant social, behavioral and biological science knowledge and research. This includes knowledge and skills in relationship-building, data-gathering, assessment, interventions and evaluation of practice.

**Objectivity**

The social work student must be able to objectively and systematically evaluate clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way.

**Empathy**

The social work student must endeavor to seek to comprehend another individual's way of life and values. The social work student must be able to communicate this empathy and support to the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.

**Energy**

The social work student must be resilient to the undesirable effects of stress, exercising appropriate self-care and developing cooperative and facilitative relationships with colleagues and peers.

**Acceptance of Diversity**

The social work student must appreciate the value of human diversity. The social work student must serve in an appropriate manner all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation (or lack thereof), gender, ability, sexual orientation and value system.

**Interpersonal Skills**

The social work student must demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals. These include compassion, altruism, integrity, and the demonstration of respect for and consideration of others.

**Professional Behavior**

The social work student must behave professionally by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, adhering to the profession's code of ethics, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, and completing assignments on time.

## Statistics Requirement

Proficiency in statistics is not a requirement for admission. However, all Master of Science in Social Work candidates at the Columbia School of Social Work must demonstrate proficiency in statistics and quantitative methods in order to graduate. Admitted students will be required to complete an introductory statistics course at CSSW during the first semester of their enrollment. The statistics course will be graded on a pass/fail scale. Students who fail the statistics course during their first term will have another chance to complete the course in the following semester. All admitted students also will have an opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in statistics via a waiver exam that, if passed, would exempt a student from this required statistics course.

Click [here](#) to find out more about the waiver exam.