

# MSW Applicant Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What does a ‘good’ application look like?** Each applicant has individual strengths and weaknesses. Human services work/volunteer experience and a strong GPA are highly sought-after applicant attributes. Leadership experience, fluency in multiple languages, knowledge of diverse communities, and positive references are also taken into account by our admissions reviewers. Click here for an example of our [Application Review Sheet](#). Using this tool to conduct a self-inventory of your own strengths and weaknesses can help you determine if you are a ‘good’ candidate.

**Q. Can I apply to begin the MSW program in spring semester?** No, the curriculum is structured to begin in the fall and end in the spring, therefore we can only admit graduate students once a year in the fall.

**Q. How do I know if I have met the requirements for an acceptable Human Biology and/or Statistics class?** If you have compared the course description of the class you have taken (or plan to take) to the course content requirements above, and/or you have reviewed the SAMPLE classes from the link on the Application page, and if you are still not sure if it meets the requirement, email the course description to MSW Admissions [here](#). You will be notified of a decision via email. TAKE NOTE: Just because a course is CSU/UC transferable at the undergraduate level or meets the CSUS GE requirement does not mean that it will meet the MSW Human Biology requirement.

**Q. Can I apply for both the two-year and three-year programs?** No, you may only make one selection when deciding which program to apply for. If you are not accepted for the program you selected, you will not be considered for the other program. We accept a very limited number of students for the highly competitive three-year program. Consider your options and circumstances thoroughly before deciding which program to apply to.

**Q. Is a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work required in order to apply to the MSW program?** No, you are required only to hold a Bachelor's degree that is grounded in Liberal Arts from an accredited college or university. Most degrees that have, in addition to major coursework, a general education, liberal arts, or a 'width and breadth' requirement will be grounded in liberal arts.

**Q. What are considered cultural diversity courses?** Cultural Diversity content should be related to modern populations you may work with in your capacity as a social worker.

**Q. How can I increase my GPA?** To increase your GPA you may take courses at any accredited College or University. Any new collegiate level courses will be calculated into your last 60 unit GPA. Courses need not be CSU/UC transferable. When deciding how many additional courses to take, play it safe, applicants with higher GPAs will receive higher scores on their application review. Remember grades you receive after the application deadline will not be factored into

your GPA calculation for the current application cycle. This also applies to applicants completing the last year of their undergraduate studies.

**Q. How do I calculate my GPA if I have quarter units or a combination of semester and quarter units?** You will need to convert your quarter units to semester units then use the CSUS GPA calculator.

**Q. Do you make exceptions if my GPA is below a 2.80?** The GPA minimum is a University requirement. We do not make any GPA exceptions

**Q. Is Human Services/Social Work experience required?** A. Human services experience is not required, but lack of experience is a common reason an applicant would not be accepted into the MSW program. An applicant with a 3.0 GPA and several years of paid human services experience is more likely to be accepted than an applicant with a 4.0 GPA and no human services experience.

**Q. Can I meet individually with someone to discuss the MSW program and/or application process?** Unfortunately, because the program is highly competitive, and because we have limited resources, we do not meet individually with prospective applicants, however, we do offer group Info-Sessions starting in October. You may also email questions about the application process to MSW Admissions [here](#).

### **GRE FAQs (Waived for Fall 2025-2026)**

**Q. How is my GRE Analytical Writing Score reviewed by the Social Work department? Is there a minimum score?** You can earn up to six points towards your MSW Application score with your GRE Analytical Writing score. GRE Writing scores below a 3.0 do not receive any points. Because we do not require a minimum score, it is possible to be accepted into the program with scores below 3.0 on the GRE Analytical Writing portion if you score do well in other portions of the MSW application.

**Q. Do I need to take the entire GRE or just the Analytical Writing Portion? Can I sign up only for the Analytical Writing Portion?** Although you will have to register and pay to take the entire GRE General Exam, you will be given the opportunity during the exam to skip the math and verbal portions, if you choose. If you are applying or you think you may apply to other schools that require the GRE, you should then plan to take the entire exam.

**Q. What should I do if I cannot afford to take the GRE?** The GRE Analytical Writing score is a required part of your CSUS MSW application. We do not offer other alternatives to taking the GRE. Applicants who do not submit GRE scores will not be reviewed for admission. The ETS company offers a fee reduction program. You will need to contact the CSUS Financial Aid office to determine your eligibility. Here is the link to the [CSUS Financial Aid](#). If you qualify for a fee reduction, the cost of taking the GRE could be reduced by half. Please direct all questions about the fee reduction to the Financial Aid Office

and the ETS Company. The social work staff and faculty do not have information on fee reduction qualification requirements.

## **MSW Program FAQs**

**Q. Can I work full time and attend this program?** It is highly recommended that MSW students **not** work full-time while in the MSW program. The program requires a field placement of 16 hours a week in the first year and 24 hours a week in the second year in addition to coursework. It is very difficult to meet the rigorous standards of this program if you work full-time. The three-year programs provides some relief in the first year, but the same field requirements exist for the second and third years of the programs. We encourage students to make realistic plans for financial support during their time in the program.

**Q. What is the Three-Year Weekend Program?** Every three years we offer a three-year weekend program in which all courses are delivered on the weekends only. This is a Title IV-E for program for those who are currently working full-time in the social work field. Applicants are admitted as a cohort to this program and take all classes together throughout the three years. The next cohort will available in Fall 2024.

**Q. What is the Three-Year Part-Time Program?** Each year Title IV-E admits a **limited** number of students into their Three-Year Part-Time Program. During the first year, students take only two courses per semester and are not required to enroll in a field component. The second and third years are heavier, with only a slightly lessened course load and a full field component requirement.

**Q. Do you have an Advanced Standing Program?** We currently offer an Advanced Standing Program. Students must have a BSW degree to qualify. The department will contact applicants that meet the initial criteria.

**Q. What is the Title IV-E Stipend Program?** The Title IV-E Stipend Program is a competency based program designed to prepare MSW students for a Social Work career in Public Child Welfare Services. Title IV-E students receive monetary compensation in return for a two (or three) year commitment to work for a CA county or CA Native American Reservation Child Welfare Service. The Title IV-E Stipend Program application is separate from the MSW application packet and is due usually a month after the MSW packet. More information can be found on the Title IV-E web site [HERE](#).

**Q. How are courses scheduled?** Our courses are offered for 2 hours 50 minutes and meet once per week. The exception is weekend courses that meet five 8 hour days—either Saturday or Sunday, throughout the semester. Students enrolling in weekend courses must be available for every class session. Weekend class dates are in the schedule and on our web site. We also offer at least one section of every required course in the evenings from 6:30-9:20 pm. You may view the current [class schedule](#) for more detailed information.

**Q. Can I use my social work job as a field placement?** Possibly, if approved by the field director. We have a job conversion alternative that allows students to use their paid employment for field placement under certain conditions.

**Q. How much is tuition per semester?** Current fees may be found by clicking here: [Tuition fees](#). The full time MSW Program is four semesters. The three year and weekend intensive programs are six semesters.

# School of Social Work - Rating Instructions/Rating Sheet

Applicant's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Rater \_\_\_\_\_

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## OVERALL MAXIMUM POINTS = 37

- I. **ACADEMIC WORK (5.60 - 12 pts.) -- To be calculated by Social Work office**  
II. **GRE ANALYTICAL WRITING SCORE (0 – 6 pts.) – To be calculated by Social Work office**

III. **LENGTH AND TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT (0-5 pts.)**

1. Employment in human services field with socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

- ☐ **5 pts.** Five or more years of full time employment in the human services field, supported by letters of reference.
- ☐ **4 pts.** Four years of full time employment in the human services field, supported by letters of reference.
- ☐ **3 pts.** Three years of full time employment in the human services field, supported by letters of reference.
- ☐ **2 pts.** Two years of full time employment in the human services field, supported by letters of reference.
- ☐ **1 pt.** Six months to a year of full time employment in the human service field, supported by letters of reference.
- ☐ **0 pts.** No employment experience

IV. **LENGTH AND TYPE OF FIELD WORK/UNPAID HUMAN SERVICES EXPERIENCE (0-4 pts.)**

**Note:** Current BSW degree is credited to next June. Only community service experience completed by December 2017 will be considered.

- ☐ **4 pts.** *BSW degree* and community service experience of *at least 120* hours.
- ☐ **3 pts.** a. *BSW degree* and community service experience *less than 120* hours  
**OR**  
b. Community service experience in social work or related human services field\* of *480 hours* within *the last 7 years*. Must include identification of areas of responsibility and be supported by references.
- ☐ **2 pts.** Community service in social work or related human services field of *240* hours within *the last 7 years* and be supported by references.
- ☐ **1 pt.** Community service in social work or related human services field of *120* hours within *the last 7 years* and be supported by references.
- ☐ **0 pts.** Community service in social work of *less than 120 hours*

*\*Related human services field includes educational, health, legal or other settings but applicant must have engaged in social services functions.*

**V. SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (0-4 pts.)**

1. The possession of special knowledge about socially and economically disadvantaged groups such as underrepresented ethnic groups, rural communities, veterans, the disabled, children/youth, gays and lesbians, transgender people, the aged, and women with unique problems. **(0-3 pts.)**

- ☐ **3 pts.** Extensive knowledge of socially and economically disadvantaged groups demonstrated by *having taken* 3 or more cultural diversity courses AND having worked in one of the above communities.
- ☐ **1 pt.** Some knowledge of socially and economically disadvantaged groups demonstrated by having taken 3 cultural diversity courses OR having worked in one of the above communities.
- ☐ **0 pts.** Minimal or no knowledge

2. Proficiency in a second language. **(0 or 1 pts.)**

- ☐ **1 pt.** Indicates proficiency in one or more languages that are used by populations in particular need of social services.
- ☐ **0 pts.** Minimum or no demonstrated ability.

**VI. LEADERSHIP SKILLS (0-3 pts)**

1. Potential for leadership in professional roles **(0-3 pts.)**

- ☐ **3 pts.** Demonstrated leadership capability in sustained activities such as those listed below. (1 year or more)
- a. Initiating the development and implementation of a project or program response to a specific problem or need;
- b. Initiating the development and implementation of a project or program;
- c. Carrying responsibility for the supervision of an operational unit within an agency or organization
- ☐ **2 pts.** Some evidence of above.
- ☐ **0 pts.** No evidence of above.

**VII. LETTERS OF REFERENCE (0-3 pts.)**

Overall assessment based on letters of reference (0-3 points will be given based on the average score applicant receives on letters of reference). In evaluating the letters of reference, a) make a determination whether the letter writers have the experience and/or professional background to assess the applicant, b) length of time the reference has known the applicant, c) quality of the rating and evaluative statements. Only three letters will be reviewed.

- ☐ **3pts**      ☐ **2 pts**      ☐ **1 pt**      ☐ **0 pts**

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_