

MSW Student Handbook

Academic Year: 2025–26

MSW program offered by [Bluffton University](https://www.bluffton.edu) and [Goshen College](https://www.goshen.edu)



Bluffton University



Goshen College

Mission: Shaped by Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition and the social work profession's core values of social justice, service, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, and the dignity and worth of every person, the Master of Social Work (MSW) program's mission is to prepare students for specialized practice in mental health with an emphasis on anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices, and integration of spirituality.

Land acknowledgement statement: We acknowledge that the territories on which Bluffton University and Goshen College stand are that of Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandot, Ojibwe, and many other Indigenous peoples. With gratitude, our MSW program honors these lands and the people who have stewarded them throughout the generations. We commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the lands we inhabit.

Webpages: [Bluffton University](https://www.bluffton.edu) and [Goshen College](https://www.goshen.edu)

10-21-2025

**Our MSW faculty welcome you to the MSW program
at Bluffton University and Goshen College!**

**MSW Program Director**

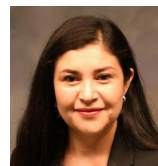
Jeanette Harder, Ph.D., MSW (she, her)
MSW Program Director | Professor of Social Work
jharder2@goshen.edu and msw@bluffton.edu | 574.535.7980 (call only)

MSW Field Education Director

Laurel Neufeld Weaver, MSW, LISW-S (she, her)
MSW Field Education Director | Assistant Professor of Social Work
weaverl@bluffton.edu

MSW Faculty

Courtney Cotter, DSW, LISW-S, LICDC (she, her)
Assistant Professor of Social Work
ccotter@goshen.edu

MSW Faculty

Anayeli Lopez, Ph.D., MSW (she, her)
Assistant Professor of Social Work
lopeza@bluffton.edu

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We hope you will find this *MSW Student Handbook* useful as you move through the program. Reach out to your academic advisor, an instructor, or the [MSW Program Director](#) with any questions or feedback or news.



We're in this together!

MSW Program: History and Overview



When **Dr. Rebecca Stoltzfus** became president of Goshen College in the fall of 2017, she named starting an MSW degree program as a goal for her administration to pursue. She connected with **Dr. Jane Wood**, then president of Bluffton University, about the possibility of collaboration, and together they launched this project. It became a part of both institutions' strategic plans and is supported by funding through a Lilly Foundation grant.

Initial program planning was led by academic deans (Dr. Lamar Nisly at Bluffton University and Dr. Ann Vendrely at Goshen College) and guided by undergraduate social work program directors (Dr. Walter Paquin at Bluffton University, and Dr. Jeanne Liechty at Goshen College). Dr. Alex Sider picked up the helm as academic dean at Bluffton University in July 2023, and then Dr. Gayle Trollinger in March 2025.

Dr. Jeanette Harder was appointed as the MSW Program Director in July 2022, and Ms. Laurel Neufeld Weaver as the MSW Field Education Director in July 2023. Dr. Courtney Cotter joined our faculty in July 2024, and Dr. Anayeli Lopez in July 2025.

The State and Higher Learning Commission approved the MSW program in October 2022. We immediately submitted our Letter of Institutional Intent and Eligibility Application, and they were approved in December 2022. We are now in the second year of candidacy for accreditation with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and look forward to initial accreditation in 2026. (See "[Accreditation](#)" section below.)

The missions of [Bluffton University](#) and [Goshen College](#) are provided below.



"Shaped by the historic peace church tradition and nourished by a desire for excellence in all phases of its programs, **Bluffton University** seeks to prepare students of all backgrounds for life as well as vocation, for responsible citizenship, for service to all peoples and, ultimately, for the purposes of God's universal kingdom.

Bluffton provides an educational experience that teaches Christian values in a global community—or put in another way—living out faith with purpose through the Mennonite values of peacemaking and service. Four values:

1. Discovery
2. Community
3. Respect
4. Service"



"**Goshen College** transforms local and global communities through courageous, creative and compassionate leaders. Shaped by Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, we integrate academic excellence and real-world experience with active love for God and neighbor.

At Goshen College we intend to create a community of faith and learning built on five core values:

1. Christ-centeredness
2. Passionate learning
3. Servant leadership
4. Compassionate peacemaking
5. Global citizenship”

The MSW program joins existing graduate programs at Bluffton University (business, education, and nutrition/dietetics) and Goshen College (nursing, business, and environmental education).

MSW Program Overview

The mission of the MSW program is grounded in the core values of social work and names mental health as our specialization, our emphasis on anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices, and our integration of spirituality. We aim to evidence these concepts in every aspect of our program and curriculum.

Mission: Shaped by Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition and the social work profession’s core values of social justice, service, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, and the dignity and worth of every person, the Master of Social Work (MSW) program’s mission is to prepare students for specialized practice in mental health with an emphasis on anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices, and integration of spirituality.

According to the [CSWE](#), “social workers share a commitment to

- promoting social welfare,
- helping people of all backgrounds overcome their unique challenges,
- advocating for social and economic justice for all members of the community, and
- embodying a professional code of ethics.”

“According to the [National Association of Social Workers](#), social work is ‘a profession devoted to helping people function the best they can in their environment’ and Bureau of Labor Statistics adds ‘Social workers help people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives.’ Social work professionals are found in a wide variety of environments, from hospitals and universities to communities of all types.”



Mental health

The MSW program with Bluffton University and Goshen College has “mental health” as our area of specialization. Mental illness has reached epidemic levels and is a priority concern in geographic areas around Bluffton University and Goshen College and around the U.S. and the world.

The [National Institute of Mental Health](#) stated that “More than one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (59.3 million in 2022).” Unfortunately, over half of adults and youth with a mental illness do not receive treatment, and there may be only one mental health provider for every 340 individuals ([Mental Health America](#)). The U.S. will face a shortage of 195,000 social workers by 2030 ([NASW](#)).

The need for mental health providers extends to youth as well. In 2023, over 2.5 million youth in the U.S. have severe depression. Over 60% of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment ([Mental Health America](#)).

Our program’s specialization in mental health prepares students to be social work practitioners for people of all ages and backgrounds. It prepares students to provide evidence-informed, clinical services to individuals, families, and groups as well as to be leaders and supervisors in organizations, and change agents and policy advocates in communities.

Anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion

Studying diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality is fundamental to social work education. Our MSW program provides students with knowledge on how the historical institutionalization of privilege and oppression has permeated our systems and social fabric. Students are provided opportunities “to explore critical issues related to anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion; understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research; and advocate for change” ([CSWE EPAS 2022](#)).



Spirituality

Religion and spirituality are important and meaningful aspects of social work practice. Along with other types of diversity and intersectionality, social workers should attend to clients’ experiences with spirituality, and the influences of religion on their contexts. As part of the biopsychosocial, holistic approach to social work practice, the integration of mind, body, and spirit is important to consider in assessments and interventions with clients and client systems, especially when clients are experiencing trauma, grief and loss, and illness and disease.



Our MSW program invites students to explore how their personal values resonate with the values of the social work profession. Through professional “use of self,” social workers can internally acknowledge and hold their own faith while also honoring and meeting clients where they are at. In addition, spirituality can be useful in building resilience and support for social workers themselves.

The [National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics](#) and the [CSWE’s accreditation standards](#) (EPAS 2022) include religion and spirituality in their lists of cultural differences in which social workers should gain understanding.

Both Bluffton University and Goshen College are affiliated with [Mennonite Church USA](#), a historic Anabaptist peace church. Most Mennonites believe in nonviolent peacemaking, community, and service to others throughout the world. From worldwide relations to interpersonal relationships, Mennonites work for peace, justice, and reconciliation at every level. Learn more about Mennonites [here](#).



Program culture

Let's be an MSW program that seeks:

- **Hope** – We choose joy over despair. We believe the best in others and are strengths-based rather than deficit-based.
- **Connection** – We work together toward shared goals, check in with each other, and hold each other accountable.
- **Peace** – We handle differences and conflict with respect and kindness for ourselves and others.
- **Justice** – We have policies that are accessible. We recognize and acknowledge intersectionality and cultural humility.
- **Integrity** – We do our best work, always seeking to be growing and learning, giving credit to others when credit is due.



Advanced standing

Our program offers admission at the advanced standing level to students with a BSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program within the last 10 years and who earned a B- or higher in undergraduate social work courses. Students admitted at the advanced standing level have the generalist courses (the 500-level courses) waived for them and only take the specialized practice courses (the 600-level courses) to earn the MSW degree. Through offering advanced standing, we ensure that BSW graduates do not repeat generalist content.

Students whose BSW degree was from a CSWE-accredited program but the degree was awarded more than 10 years ago may request admission at the advanced standing level through documenting how they have stayed current with the social work profession (e.g. through employment or volunteering in a social work position) on a special request form. The MSW program may grant these students advanced standing or it may admit students at the foundation level and waive some generalist courses based on a review of the student's transcript, references, resume, and/or an interview.

The MSW program may admit students at the foundation level when students earned lower than a B- in social work courses as part of their BSW degree from a CSWE-accredited program. Based on a review of students' transcripts, references, resumes, and/or interviews, the MSW program may waive some generalist courses for these students so they do not repeat generalist content.

MSW student enrollment

We are pleased to have a growing and diverse student body in our MSW program. We admitted and enrolled 22 students the first year, then had 52 students enrolled the second year, and expect to have over 60 students enrolled this third year. We are proud that 12 students have finished the degree requirements and graduated with their MSW degree from our program. Students range broadly in age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and professional interests and live in about 10 states in the U.S.

Accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)



The MSW program at Bluffton University and Goshen College was approved by the states of Indiana and Ohio, and their respective regional councils of the Higher Learning Commission in fall 2022.

The MSW program offered through Bluffton University and Goshen College is working toward accreditation through the [CSWE](#), following the [2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards](#). The accreditation timetable stretches across more than 3 years and includes annual benchmark reports and commissioner site visits with the goal of reaching initial accreditation in 2026 (see the [CSWE Accreditation Policy Handbook](#), p. 79).

We were awarded a second year of accreditation candidacy by the CSWE in February 2025, and had our eligibility application accepted for initial accreditation. According to the [CSWE Accreditation Policy Handbook](#), (p. 7): **“Students admitted during or after the academic year in which the program is granted candidacy will be recognized as having graduated from an accredited program, once the program is fully accredited.”**

Wording directly from [CSWE’s Accreditation Policy Handbook](#), p. 7.

The [Bluffton University/Goshen College Collaborative] has achieved candidacy for accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) Board of Accreditation (BOA). Candidacy for a baccalaureate or master’s social work program by the BOA indicates that it has made progress toward meeting standards of program quality evaluated through a peer review accreditation process. A program that has attained candidacy status has demonstrated a commitment to meeting the standards set by the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) but has not yet demonstrated full compliance. Students that are admitted to candidate programs in the fall (or later) of the academic year in which the program is granted candidacy status will be retroactively recognized as graduates from a CSWE-BOA accredited program as long as the program attains initial accreditation. Candidacy is typically a 3-year process and attaining candidacy does not guarantee that a program will eventually attain initial accreditation....

Accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of the program and the competence of students graduating from the program.

Review our program's candidacy status in [CSWE's Directory of Accredited Programs](#). For more information about social work accreditation, contact [CSWE's Department of Social Work Accreditation](#).

Bluffton University and Goshen College are fully committed to achieving accreditation. CSWE is also committed to assisting programs in reaching accreditation.

[CSWE](#) requires that accredited social work programs adopt their outcomes-oriented approach to curriculum design using the following nine competencies. The academic courses offered by Bluffton University and Goshen College's MSW program is designed to cover these competencies from the dimensions of **knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes** and across all five system levels: **individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities**. (At the specialized practice level, we focus primarily on the individual and community system levels.)

Social Work Competencies (CSWE):

Competency 1: Demonstrate **ethical and professional behavior**.

Competency 2: Advance **human rights** and social, racial, economic, and environmental **justice**.

Competency 3: Engage **anti-racism**, diversity, equity, and inclusion in practice.

Competency 4: Engage practice-informed **research** and research-informed practice.

Competency 5: Engage in **policy**.

Competency 6: **Engage** with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Competency 7: **Assess** individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Competency 8: **Intervene** with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Competency 9: **Evaluate** practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Bluffton University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and its accreditation does not extend to Goshen College or its students. Bluffton University agrees to accept certain coursework from Goshen College to be applied toward degrees from Bluffton University. Coursework or credits may or

may not be accepted by institutions not a party to this agreement should a student seek to transfer such coursework or credits; the decision to accept coursework in transfer from any institution is made by the institution considering the acceptance of such coursework.

Goshen College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and its accreditation does not extend to Bluffton University or its students. Goshen College agrees to accept certain coursework from Bluffton University to be applied toward degrees from Goshen College. Coursework or credits may or may not be accepted by institutions not a party to this agreement should a student seek to transfer such coursework or credits; the decision to accept coursework in transfer from any institution is made by the institution considering the acceptance of such coursework.

Licensure

Students are responsible for researching the licensure requirements for the state (or other geographic location) in which they plan to practice and to discuss these requirements with their academic advisor. Learn about licensure on the [Association of Social Work Boards website](#).

Participating in MSW Courses

Bluffton University and Goshen College offer the MSW courses online with synchronous (Zoom) and asynchronous (self-directed) elements. Course content is provided through recorded micro lectures, podcasts, online resources, readings, and frequent group and individual Zoom classes with instructors and students. Course assignments invite students to engage in in-person exchanges with instructors, other students, community professionals, and organizations, as possible based on geographic location. Field education experiences are completed primarily in person.



The MSW program follows the [Goshen College academic calendar](#). The MSW academic calendar is available to all students on Moodle | MSW Resources. **MSW students will need to take courses in the fall, spring, and summer terms in order to meet degree requirements.**

Students should carefully read and follow the instructions provided in the **MSW Student Commitments form**. Included in this form are guidelines for participating in Zoom classes, submitting assignments, and engaging in professional relationships with others. **Students are invited to sign this form within the first month of each term (fall, spring, and summer).**

MSW instructors provide students with course syllabi which outline activities which lead to desired student outcomes. Students should read each syllabus carefully and keep it close at hand through the academic term, especially noting instructors' guidelines on attendance in Zoom classes and submission of draft and



Photo by Scopio from Noun Project

final assignments. Many MSW courses will be taught using service-learning which is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities to address human and community needs to achieve desired learning outcomes. MSW instructors are ready and eager to meet with students to answer questions and provide support to maximize the meeting of student learning outcomes.

Summary of professional behavior:

Students should:

1. Become familiar with the **MSW Student Handbook**, including helpful resources, academic policies, and expectations (see Moodle | MSW Resource Page | 2025-26 AY).
2. Sign the “**MSW Student Commitments**” form each semester which includes guidance for professional behavior in Zoom classes, engaging in learning activities, handling course materials, checking MSW program-related emails, interacting with others respectfully, and adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics.
3. **Ask for help.** Communicate with instructors and institutional resources (see information below) when help is needed.
4. **Arrive to Zoom classes on time and prepared.**
 - a. Whenever possible, students should have their cameras on and be prepared to unmute their microphones to enhance learning and contributing. Participate in class, including asking and responding to questions, listening to others, staying focused, and avoiding distractions. Stay in class the whole class period.
 - b. Make attendance in Zoom class a priority. Let the instructor know ahead of time if you must miss class. Students who miss Zoom class must take responsibility for listening to the recording, posing any questions to the instructor, and following up with classmates, when applicable. A student watching recordings of Zoom classes rather than attending Zoom classes cheats the student of valuable interactive learning experiences.
 - 1) Students who miss more than two or three Zoom classes: Instructors do not offer as much feedback or flexibility on must-do assignments at the end of the semester.
 - 2) Students who miss more than three Zoom classes: Instructors may initiate a student action plan which may include the student re-enrolling in the course at another time.
 - c. Likewise, make listening to micro lectures and doing course readings a priority. Instructors check Moodle data and may not offer as much feedback or flexibility on must-do assignments if a student is not regularly engaging with the course site and listening to the micro lectures.
5. **Interact respectfully** with classmates and the instructor online, in person, and through email. Congruent with the social work profession’s value of dignity and worth of the person, social workers strive to “treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity” ([NASW](#)). The diversity (gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture) that students bring to this course are resources and strengths which enhance our learning experience.

6. **Demonstrate academic integrity** in course work and professional practice and do not plagiarize or cheat.
 - a. Plagiarism is “using someone else’s ideas and words without giving them proper credit” ([OWL](#)). Plagiarism includes repurposing an assignment or paper submitted for another class without the instructor’s permission. The instructor will check assignments for plagiarized material copied from the web, other student papers, online databases, and other sources. Students should learn how to paraphrase, take notes, use quotation marks, prepare citations and reference pages, and manage their time well. See “academic assistance” resources.
 - b. Cheating includes:
 - 1) Copying others’ answers or work without giving them attribution.
 - 2) Knowingly allowing others to use your answers or work and passing it off as their own.
 - 3) Completing work for others.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious breaches of academic expectations and social work ethics and may result in failing an assignment or the course, and/or dismissal from the program.
7. **Use course materials provided in Moodle (i.e., videos, assignments, exams) appropriately.** Course materials are for use in this course only. Do not upload them to external sites, share with any person outside this course, or post for public commentary without written permission from the instructor. Sharing materials outside of the course could lead to a copyright or FERPA violation. Do not duplicate or distribute class recordings to anyone outside of this course.

Academic and Professional Advising

MSW students receive **academic advising** each semester through individual Zoom sessions with their faculty academic advisor. In these sessions, a student’s academic plan of study is created, reviewed, or revised with a focus on the following semester and an eye towards field education courses. Newly admitted students meet with an academic advisor prior to enrolling to create an initial plan of study.

A student’s plan of study includes the course numbers, titles, and semester offered. During advising, MSW students indicate which year they plan to take each course and the number of courses they intend to take each semester. One focus will be on preparation for field education to maximize success in this “signature” pedagogical aspect of social work education.



In academic advising sessions, students can learn more, ask questions, and offer ideas about the MSW program. Academic advising also provides opportunities and support should a student experience a difficulty with an MSW course or a barrier to academic success in their personal or professional life.

The MSW program has a student plan of study database. Through this database, the MSW program tracks and monitors students' progression toward the degree as well as provides an invaluable planning tool for the program.

Students can initiate **professional advising** at any time during their MSW education. During these sessions and conversations, students can process the many employment destinations available for them in social work, and their unique constellation of interests and characteristics that makes some destinations a good match for them. Students are helped to consider the path they could take to various social work destinations, including education, field education placements, licensure, and lifelong learning. Students can also utilize professional advising to fine-tune their resumes and interviewing skills.

Professional advising is readily available to students through multiple formal and informal means as outlined in the table below. All of the professional advising listed is available to students at no cost and at the initiation of the student.

Professional Advising		
Source	MSW faculty member	Accessing professional advising
Academic advisor	Yes	Meet each semester to discuss academic progress and plans.
Faculty field liaison	Yes	Meet regularly, including field education seminar, while students is enrolled in field education.
Instructors	Yes	Meet each week for Zoom classes.
SOWK 680 (see below)	Yes	Required course in a student's last semester in the MSW program.
Institutional career offices (see below)	No	Email, phone, or in person by appointment.

Career-related topics are covered in a group setting in students' final course in the MSW program, SOWK 680 Integrative Seminar and Career Advancement. This course offers students the opportunity to process their possible career paths with their peers as well as to hear about the career paths and experiences from MSW professionals in the community who serve as guest speakers to the course.

The Center for Career & Vocation at Bluffton University helps students identify their passions and purpose, and learn more about their interests and strengths. They partner with Ohio Means Jobs of Allen County to "enhance the employment and training resources for Bluffton students." Students enrolled through Bluffton University can access these services by email, phone, or in person through the office's website.



The Career Networks office at Goshen College assists students with career preparation, including "self-assessment, leadership assessment, career decision-making." They

have an online job and internship bank that connects student with employment and service opportunities. Students enrolled through Goshen College can access the services of the Career Networks office by email, phone, or in person through the office's [website](#).

Academic Assistance

Writing assistance

Students may seek assistance in completing course work as well as with organization and time management through the centers listed below. As shown below, these services are available both in person and online. Other online resources include the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) and [Grammarly](#).



Students enrolled through Bluffton University	Students enrolled through Goshen College
Bluffton University Writing Center Musselman Library (ground floor, across from the Nord Room). Hours: Monday–Thursday, 4:00–9:00 p.m. Phone: (419) 358-3495 Email: writingcenter@bluffton.edu	Goshen College Academic Success Center Good Library (Rooms 111–113). Hours: Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday–Thursday 7:00–10:00 p.m. Chat, drop in, or book an appointment through the Ask Desk , staffed by the library. Email: library@goshen.edu

Disability and accessibility services

Bluffton University and Goshen College are committed to providing all students equal access to programs and facilities. To ensure that learning needs are met, contact the center listed below by the first week of class. In accordance with federal laws, students requesting accommodations must provide documentation of their disability to the center listed below.

Students enrolled through Bluffton University	Students enrolled through Goshen College
Jacqui Slinger Counselor for Disability Services College Hall, 3 rd floor (within the Learning Resource Center) Phone: (419) 358-3215 Email: slingerj@bluffton.edu	Michelle Blank Coordinator of Accessibility Services Academic Success Center (ASC) in the Good Library Phone: (574) 535-7560 Email: mblank@goshen.edu



Counseling services

Students may have or experience mental health issues while in the MSW program. Professional, short-term counseling services are available both

online and in person to students on a free and confidential basis through the centers listed below. Counseling requests and information from counseling sessions are not shared with any other person, including MSW faculty and staff, except in situations deemed to be life threatening.

Students enrolled through Bluffton University	Students enrolled through Goshen College
Confidential and free counseling services are available through the virtual portal. Current students may activate their account at www.thevirtualcaregroup.com/Bluffton. Once registered, follow the directions provided and call anytime to set up an appointment. Students can also access counseling through the myBluffton page Student Life Counseling Resources.	Counseling Services Office Complete a confidential counseling request form: https://www.goshen.edu/campuslife/counseling

Safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments

Bluffton University and Goshen College are committed to providing safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments. Students are encouraged to contact student life staff from their enrolling institution if they encounter circumstances that impact their learning or personal safety.

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students of their enrolling institution for support.

Bluffton University and Goshen College do not condone and will not tolerate inappropriate conduct toward any individual based on the individual's sex, sexual orientation, national origin, race, ethnicity, documentation status or gender identity. Issues related to gender and racial discrimination or harassment can be reported online through the Dean of Students or Title IX Coordinator of their enrolling institution.

Students enrolled through Bluffton University	Students enrolled through Goshen College
Title IX Coordinator: Megan Coffman, College Hall, 1 University Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817, 419-358-3217, coffmanm@bluffton.edu.	Title IX Coordinator: Patty Hartshorn, Wyse 118, 574-535-7484, phartshorn@goshen.edu, Information

Deputy Title IX Coordinator: Mark
Bourassa, College Hall, 1 University
Drive, Bluffton, OH 45817,
419-358-3217,
bourassam@bluffton.edu

Textbooks

Students may purchase or rent textbooks through their institutional online bookstore ([Bluffton University](#) | [Goshen College](#)) or through another source. The program seeks to save students money on textbooks through numerous means when possible:

1. Using free [Open Education Resource](#) textbooks.
2. Using free, online resources.
3. Using the same textbook in numerous courses.
4. Inviting students to purchase older editions of textbooks.
5. Notifying students of textbooks in advance of the start of the semester.

Also, the Bluffton University and Goshen College libraries may have course textbooks on reserve should students living near campus wish to access textbooks in this manner.

Academic Policies

Full-time enrollment

An MSW student taking 6 or more credit hours in a fall or spring semester is considered full-time. Summer enrollment is necessary to complete the MSW program, but does not impact a student's full-time status.

Time limits

The MSW degree is to be completed within 6 years from the date of the student's first semester enrolled in the program. To request an extension of the time limit, the student submits a written request to the MSW Program Director specifying the amount of time needed and the reasons an extension is necessary. The MSW Program Director notifies the student by email of the decision on an extension request.



Course assignments, grades, and GPA

Students must earn a cumulative GPA of 3.00 to remain in good standing and to graduate with the MSW degree.

Our courses feature both required (must-do) and optional (can-do) assignments. We typically offer two to three must-do assignments in each course.

Must-do assignments are typically large in scope, cover all competencies and student learning outcomes for the course, and may be completed incrementally.

Instructors set assignment deadlines to ensure timely completion within the semester. Must-do assignments have a first version deadline, followed by a final version deadline

typically 3–4 weeks later. While instructors may grant extensions at their discretion, late submissions may result in a lower course grade.

Instructors assess students' must-do assignments after the final version is submitted, using a four-level scale:

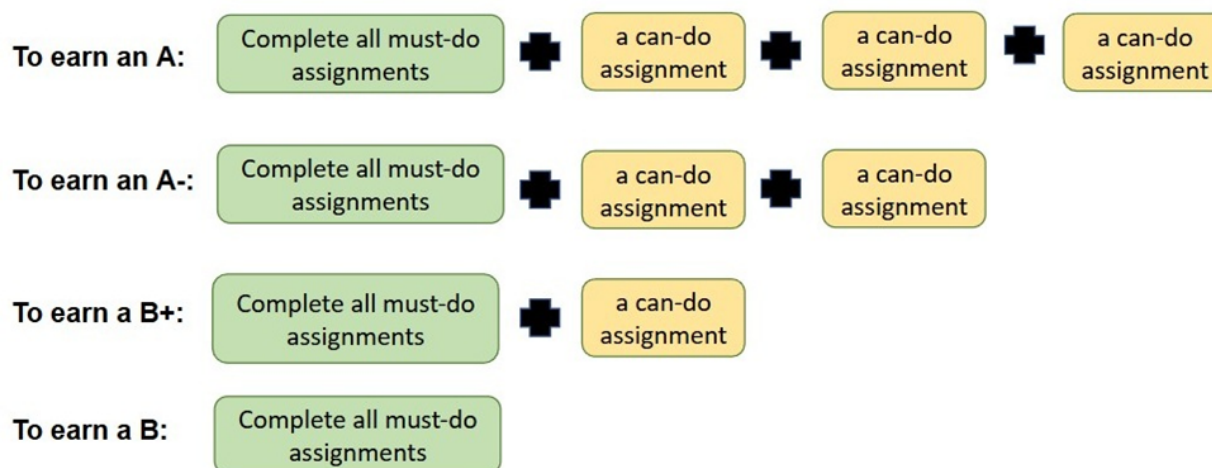
1. Exceeds expectations (E)
2. Meets expectations (M)
3. Revision needed (R)
4. Not yet assessable (N)

To be considered complete, an assignment must earn an E or M.

Students who complete all must-do assignments at the E or M level and do not complete any can-do assignments will receive a course grade of B. Students' course grades drop one letter (e.g., from a B to a C) for each must-do assignment that does not reach the E or M level by its final due date.

Each can-do assignment completed at the E or M level raises students' course grades one step (e.g., from a B to a B+). Can-do assignments only contribute to students' final course grades if they have reached the E or M level for all must-do assignments.

MSW students must earn a B or higher in all courses and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher to remain in good standing. Students can still be in good standing if they earn a B- or C+ in a course as long as their cumulative GPA remains at 3.0 or higher.



Not completing all must-do assignments results in a grade lower than a B.
An overall GPA of 3.0 (B) is required to stay in good standing in the MSW program.

Must-do and can-do assignments must earn "meets expectations" or "exceeds expectations" to be complete. The instructor may lower the student's course grade based on late submission(s). See the course syllabus and talk with the instructor for more information.

The letter grades and quality points used in the MSW program are shown below:

Letter grade	Quality points
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
E or F	0.0

Conditional admission

Students may receive conditional admission to the MSW program if their undergraduate GPA was less than 3.0. With the assistance of their academic advisor, these students prepare a student support plan which is in effect for the student's first 9 credit hours. (A student support plan template can be found on Moodle.)

Any student may request a student support plan at any time and the MSW program may also offer a support plan for a student. The goal is always to promote student learning and academic success. During the first 9 semester hours, conditional students must demonstrate an ability to maintain a 3.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) to be considered for regular admission. A conditionally admitted student who fails to achieve a GPA of 3.0 during their first 9 semester hours of coursework will be placed on academic probation.

Students also receive conditional admission to the MSW program when they have not yet completed their undergraduate degree. They are required to complete their undergraduate degree prior to beginning the MSW program, and are moved to full admission when they have completed their undergraduate degree.

Academic probation

The table below shows the reasons a student may be placed on academic probation and how they can return to being a student in good standing.

Situations that put students on academic probation	How to return to being a student in good standing
The student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 (after completing their first 9 credit hours).	The student raises their cumulative GPA above 3.0.

The student receives a course grade lower than a C.	The student repeats the course until they have raised their course grade to a C or higher. Students must pay for courses each time they are taken.
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The MSW Program Director emails a student when they begin or end probationary status. Academic assistance is available through instructors, the academic advisor, and [resources](#) listed below. A student on probation works with their academic advisor to develop a [student action plan](#) to maximize their future academic success.

Graduation and commencement

Students who complete the MSW degree requirements in the spring or summer semester are eligible (and encouraged!) to walk in their institution's commencement ceremonies. Students who complete MSW degree requirements in the fall semester may walk in their institution's commencement ceremonies the following spring.

Students should watch their email for information on filing for graduation, ordering graduation regalia, commencement rehearsals and ceremonies, and other graduation-related activities and festivities.

All graduating MSW students are listed in both Bluffton University's and Goshen College's printed commencement programs.

Dismissal

An MSW student may be dismissed from the MSW program upon receiving a grade of C or below on 9 hours of graded work, receiving a second grade of F, or exhibiting professional behavior not in alignment with social work values and ethics. Written notification is provided by the MSW Program Director in consultation with the academic dean of the student's enrolling institution.

An MSW student who is dismissed from the MSW program may not be admitted or enrolled in the MSW program through the other institution—see section below.

Transfer credits

The MSW program may transfer in up to 9 credit hours for courses that meet the following criteria:

1. Content is comparable to courses in the Bluffton/Goshen MSW curriculum. See MSW course titles and descriptions ([Bluffton University](#) | [Goshen College](#)).
2. Completed within 10 years of the student's first semester enrolled in the Bluffton/Goshen MSW program.
3. Earned a grade of B or higher in the courses.

We are most open to transfer credit requests of generalist practice courses the student completed in an accredited MSW program.

To request transfer credits, a student should submit a *Transfer Credit Request Form* at the time of their application to the Bluffton/Goshen program. The student must provide

the syllabus for each course completed, including the course description, course learning outcomes, number of (semester) credit hours, topics covered, and a detailed description of assignments. Courses must appear in an official transcript submitted as part of the student's application to the MSW program.

In some circumstances, the MSW program may consider the transfer of additional graduate credits. The MSW program does not grant social work course credit for life experience, previous work experience, undergraduate courses, or non-academic courses or workshops. Final decisions are made by the MSW Program Director and the academic dean of the student's enrolling institution.

Incomplete grades

A student may request a grade of incomplete due to illness, death in the immediate family, or other extenuating circumstances. The student must be earning a B or higher and have completed at least 75% of the course at the time of their request for an incomplete grade.

The student will work with their instructor to establish a plan and document the plan on an Incomplete Grade Contract. The Incomplete Grade Contract must be signed by the student and instructor, the MSW Program Director, and the academic dean of the student's enrolling institution.

Work must be completed by the end of the following semester (see the Incomplete Grade Contract for specifics), at which time a grade will be assigned based on the work completed up to that point. A plan for completion that extends beyond this date must be approved by the instructor, the MSW Program Director, and the academic dean of the student's enrolling institution. The new grade is used to compute the grade point average (the new grade and the incomplete grade remains on the student's permanent record for students enrolled through Goshen College; only the new grade shows on the student's permanent record for students enrolled through Bluffton University).

Leave of absence

A student whose plan of study is interrupted by one or more semesters (fall, spring, or summer) must apply for a leave of absence at the time of their withdrawal. Justifiable reasons for a leave include medical, financial, or personal difficulties. There must be sufficient evidence that medical, financial, or personal circumstances exist which make it impossible or difficult for the student to continue with a program of study; and there must be evidence that once these circumstances are resolved, the student would be able and committed to continuing the program of study.

A student contemplating a leave of absence should consult with their academic advisor and with financial aid of their enrolling institution. Specific refund information may be found on the financial aid website of the student's enrolling institution. Formal requests for leaves should be made by completing a leave of absence form prior to the end of the term and be submitted to the MSW Program Director for approval.

Regardless of the reason for absence, if the leave extends for more than one calendar year from the date of withdrawal, the student will need to reapply for admission to the MSW program. A student who takes courses elsewhere during their leave must apply for readmission.

A student who must interrupt study temporarily because of mental or physical illness or injury may be granted a medical leave of absence based on the written recommendation of a qualified, licensed healthcare provider. The MSW Program Director reserves the right to place a student on medical leave of absence when it is determined that the student is a danger to themselves or others.

Beyond these policies, students follow the academic policies and practices of the institution through which they were admitted and enrolled ([Bluffton University](#) or [Goshen College](#)). Students can take questions to their academic advisor.

Academic Concerns

Any person who has a concern involving academic or professional behaviors within the MSW program should first seek an informal resolution with the other person(s).

Student Action Plans

If a student is not making satisfactory academic progress or is struggling with professional behavior and additional support is needed, a student, instructor, academic advisor, or the MSW Program Director may initiate a Student Action Plan. The academic advisor works with the student and the person with a concern to prepare a Student Action Plan. The first part of the plan is completed by the student and includes a summary of what happened, and their needs and recommendations. The second part of the plan is completed by the person with the concern and includes a summary of what happened, and their needs and recommendations for the student.

The academic advisor then works with all parties and the MSW Program Director to develop and sign a satisfactory plan to resolve the situation and reach agreement on next steps. In addition to steps the student may take voluntarily (such as reducing employment hours or seeking assistance with childcare), next steps may include the student meeting more frequently with their academic advisor or their institution's writing center, the student enrolling in fewer credit hours or taking a one-semester leave of absence, or other steps to support the student in being successful in the program. The student's academic performance or professional behavior may also result in their being placed on academic probation or administratively withdrawn from the program.

The completed Student Action Plan is shared with all involved and is retained in the student's academic file in the MSW program. A copy may be shared with the academic dean of the institution where the student is enrolled (Bluffton University or Goshen College).

If a student action plan is not able to be reached in a manner that is satisfactory to all parties, the grievance policy of the institution where the student is enrolled (Bluffton University or Goshen College) may be invoked. Bluffton University's grade appeal process can be located [here](#). Goshen College's academic grievance policy can be located in their [graduate programs catalog](#), pages 24–25.

Reinstatement

An MSW student who has been dismissed from the program may request reinstatement. The student must submit a written reinstatement request to the MSW Program Director within 1 month of receiving notice of the dismissal.

Reinstatement is considered by the MSW Program Director based on the following criteria:

1. What happened.
2. The student's GPA and academic history with the MSW program.
3. Input from the student, the student's academic advisor, and/or the instructor(s).

In dialogue with the academic dean of the institution where the student is enrolled (Bluffton University or Goshen College), the MSW Program Director may initiate a Student Action Plan process or may deny the student's request for reinstatement. Reinstatement decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

The student will need to cease enrollment for one semester to allow time for the above procedures.

A student who is not reinstated may re-apply to the program after a 2-year waiting period. When re-applying, the student will need to submit all materials and meet all deadlines as a new applicant. The student can expect to submit evidence that whatever impeded academic success earlier has been resolved. The decision to accept a student who has been previously dismissed is made in consultation with the MSW Program Director and cannot be appealed.

Other Helpful Information

MSW Program Governance

The MSW program is offered through Bluffton University and Goshen College. The MSW Program Director works closely with the academic deans and the graduate program directors of each institution. The MSW Program Director oversees the MSW program, supervises the MSW Field Education Director and all MSW faculty, and is responsible for program accreditation. The Field Education Director oversees the field education program, including related assessment and accreditation activities. All MSW faculty serve as academic advisors, beginning in their second year in the program.

Board/ Committee	Membership	Responsibilities
Executive Oversight Board	Academic deans of each institution, MSW Program Director (facilitator), MSW Field Education Director, department chairs of each institution	Appointment and supervision of MSW Program Director, program budget, general program oversight. Meets fall and spring.
Operational Oversight Board	(same as above), plus MSW faculty	Curriculum, academic policies, program assessment, and accreditation. Meets fall and spring.
MSW faculty	MSW Program Director (chair), MSW faculty	Implementation, review, and recommendations for explicit and implicit curriculum, and academic policies. Review and act on program assessment results. Program and student activities and celebrations. Meets weekly.
MSW Community Builders	MSW student representatives*, MSW faculty advisor	Build community within the MSW student body and with the MSW program. Host events. Meets at least once in fall, spring, and summer.
Admissions Committee	MSW Program Director (chair) and an MSW faculty member at Bluffton University	Review and admit new students, new student orientation. Meets as needed.
Community Advisory	MSW Program Director, MSW faculty, community professionals (field education instructors, alumni, and social service staff are invited), MSW student representatives.	Reviews curriculum, academic policies, program assessment, and accreditation, and offers feedback/input. Discusses current trends and program implications. Meets fall and spring.

*MSW students are nominated to the MSW faculty and serve 1-year terms, which are renewable.

Student participation in the MSW Program

Students have multiple avenues for offering input into the MSW program. A student satisfaction survey includes items on the MSW program as well as on the quality and accessibility of institutional services like admissions, financial aid, and the library, and students' sense of belongingness to the institution. The course evaluation survey includes items on the quality of instructors' teaching and the technology tools used in courses.

Students help shape the MSW program through their participation in the *MSW Community Builders*, a group of MSW students who volunteer and are chosen by MSW faculty to be representative of the program based on enrolling institution, geographic location, admission level, and demographic characteristics. The *MSW Community Builders* group meets at least once each semester based on the time zone and availability of its members.

The *MSW Community Builders* group reviews and offers feedback on the *MSW Student Handbook* each year. Members also represent the student body by participating in new student orientations and community advisory meetings. Members assist in planning commencement celebrations. The *MSW Community Builders* group is invited to offer input into our curriculum through discussion in their meetings.

Students meet one-on-one at least once each semester with their academic advisor who is an MSW faculty member. As part of these advising sessions, academic advisors inquire into what the students are learning, how they are learning, and what they look forward to learning. This provides important feedback to the advisor who passes information about our explicit curriculum to the MSW Program Director and other faculty (protecting students' anonymity, if necessary).

MSW instructors are readily available to dialogue with their students after synchronous classes each week, and during individual consultations.

Students complete an anonymous course evaluation survey after each course. We use multiple methods to communicate the links to these evaluation forms, including email, weekly newsletters, and time in Zoom class.

Students participate in the MSW program through submitting contributions to the *MSW Connections* email which is sent to all MSW faculty and students each week. Their contributions include what they are learning and experiencing in field education and their capstones projects.

MSW Program Assessment

Program assessment is critical for program development and renewal, and for accountability to stakeholders. This brief MSW program assessment plan shows:

1. Explicit curriculum evaluation plan (as required by CSWE)
2. Implicit curriculum evaluation plan (as required by CSWE)
3. Other evaluation plans

Explicit curriculum assessment plan

MSW graduates will demonstrate the level of competence needed to enter professional social work practice. Competence for professional practice is assessed using the competencies articulated by the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2022 provided by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). For explicit curriculum evaluation, EPAS 2022 requires that:

The program assesses each competency, using at least two instruments, at least one of which is based in real or simulated demonstration of student achievement in field education. The instruments, the expected level of achievement for each instrument, and the expected level of achievement for each competency are determined by the program. Student competence must be assessed by program faculty or field personnel.

The MSW program uses a field education evaluation tool for the “real practice” measure at both the generalist and specialized levels. In addition, the MSW program uses course-embedded measures at the generalist level and a capstone paper at the specialized level.

EPAS 2022 also requires that:

The program monitors its program outcomes through graduation rates and at least one additional outcome (i.e., employment rates, higher education acceptance rates, licensing exam pass rates, time to program completion). The annual collection period and benchmarks for graduation rates and the chosen outcome(s) are determined by the program.

The MSW program will monitor its program outcomes through graduation and time to degree. We may also utilize employment rates, licensure pass rates, and salaries.

EPAS 2022 requires that:

The program posts its assessment plan and summary outcomes publicly on its webpage using Form AS 5.01(d). The findings are updated every two years, at minimum.

The MSW program will comply.

Implicit curriculum assessment plan

EPAS 2022 requires that:

The program has a systematic plan to assess anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) efforts within the program’s implicit curriculum.

The MSW program evaluates its implicit curriculum and ADEI efforts through online surveys and focus groups with students.

Other program assessment plans

In addition, the MSW program assesses students' experiences in field education placements, with field education instructors, and with faculty field liaisons through online surveys. The MSW program assesses field education instructors' experiences with the program through online surveys.

The MSW program also assesses its overall program through activities such as annual surveys and focus groups with students. Student input is also heard through advising, a student association, and committee involvement. In addition, feedback is sought from community advisory participants. In the long term, online surveys will be administered to alumni.

Other Information

Many files, forms, and links can be found on our "MSW Resources" Moodle site including:

- *MSW Field Education Manual*
- Course offerings
- Generalist and specialized practice competencies
- Syllabus templates
- Information on student scholarships
- Links to professional associations

Technology resources

Resource	Bluffton University	Goshen College
Moodle (through Goshen College)	http://moodle.goshen.edu	
Zoom account (personal accounts have unlimited time for 2 participants, 40-minute limit for more than 2 participants)	https://zoom.us/	
Google (e.g. mail, drive, docs, sheets, slides)	https://www.google.com/drive/ http://mail.google.com http://docs.google.com http://sheets.google.com http://docs.google.com/presentation	
Microsoft Office	Microsoft Office is available at no charge, including Microsoft Word. Contact the Help Desk at your enrolling institution.	
Help Desk (e.g., email accounts, passwords, problem-solving)	Email: helpdesk@bluffton.edu	Request form Phone: 574.535.7700 or email helpdesk@goshen.edu
Online web portal (e.g., grades, course schedules)	myBluffton	MyGC

Career services

The MSW degree is a portal to a vast array of career options! Students can discuss possibilities with their academic advisor, instructors, and classmates. Online resources for career exploration include:

- [National Association of Social Workers](#)
- [Social Work Licensure](#)
- [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

[Bluffton University](#) and [Goshen College](#) also have career offices that are ready to assist you.

Campus/institutional life

We hope MSW students will feel an affinity to our enrolling institutions, Bluffton University and Goshen College. Here are some organizations and activities to consider:

Links to Bluffton University's calendar, activities, and resources:

- [Get involved!](#)
- [Campus events](#)
- [Student life office](#)
- [Student organizations](#)
- [Spiritual life opportunities](#)
- [Multicultural student development](#)
- [Addressing sexual harassment and assault \(Title IX\)](#)



If you are near Bluffton University campus, here are some more opportunities:

- [Dining services](#)
- [Intercollegiate athletics](#) and [intramural sports](#)
- [Student performance opportunities](#)

Bluffton University communication channels:

- [Website](#)
- [The Witmarsum](#), student led online news, radio, video features, sports broadcasts and podcasts
- [Media, including the Wit \(96.1 FM\)](#)
- [Bluffton University Facebook page](#)

Links to Goshen College calendar, activities, and resources:

- [Events calendar](#)
- [Campus life](#)
- [Student clubs and activities](#)
- [Convocation and chapel](#)
- [Diversity, equity, and inclusion](#)
- [Addressing sexual harassment and assault \(Title IX\)](#)
- [Theatre productions and events](#)
- [Music events](#)



If you are near Goshen College campus, here are some more opportunities:

- [Dining services](#)
- [Intercollegiate athletics](#)
- [Intramural sports](#)
- [Musical ensembles](#)

Goshen College communication channels:

- [Website](#)
- [The Record](#), student newspaper (weekly during in fall and spring semesters)
- [The Globe](#) (91.1 FM)
- [Goshen College Facebook page](#)

