

# Social Work

## What is Social Work?

Social work is a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and their abilities to use their own resources and those of the community to resolve problems. There are two streams:

- The clinical stream focuses on helping individuals, families, and groups to identify and understand problem areas in their lives. Graduates often work in counselling, child welfare, and healthcare.
- The policy stream focuses on planning and programming for communities and organizations. Graduates typically go on to service coordination, program evaluation, advocacy and policy analysis.

There are 3 educational routes to this registered profession:

- Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) requiring 4 or 4+ years of study.
- Master of Social Work (MSW) requiring 1 year of graduate study for those with a BSW and 2 years for those with a non-BSW degree.
- Doctoral studies for those who wish to teach/research at a University, or be involved in research, social policy or high-level administration.

## What are the common academic requirements for MSW programs?

- 4-year bachelor's degree from a recognized university.
- Mid-B (3.0 GPA) average or better in your last 5-10 credits of study.
- Completion of a minimum of 3 full credits in the Social Sciences, including a course in Research Methodology – a mid-B in this required course is advantageous. Some universities require 0.5 credits in Statistics as well.
- Experience (voluntary and/or paid) in social services.
- Proficiency in the English language.

## What supporting documents may be required?

- Official transcripts from all previous post-secondary education
- Letters of reference (up to three) from professors and/or work/volunteer supervisors
- Statement of intent/personal statement
- Resume or CV

## What should I include in my personal statement?

- Your interest in social work (indicating clinical or policy)
- Your future goals and career path, as well as why their school fits your goals
- What you will contribute to the program
- Related knowledge, experience and skills, including community involvement
- Research interests (where applicable)

Looking for Related Experience? Review the *Volunteering* and *Internships* tip sheets, attend a *Work Search Strategies* workshop, or speak with a Career Counsellor or Career Strategist.

## Start Early!

Social work programs require a minimum B average. Many look for demonstrated interest in social work on your application.

## Improve your GPA:

Visit the AA&CC and the Centre for Teaching & Learning to improve your academic skills.

## Cultivate References:

Get to know your professors. Their research is interesting! Professors who know you fairly well are able to write strong reference letters for you.

## Get Involved:

Join volunteer and co-curricular activities that demonstrate your skills and ongoing interest in a career in social work.

## What other considerations are there?

- Students normally complete the MSW full-time, within 2 years. Part-time programs are available.
- The program of study consists mostly of courses; there may be a thesis option.
- Many programs require practicum experience and a criminal records check.
- Students are required to be on campus regularly to participate in program activities.
- To call oneself a Social Worker, which is a protected title, registration with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) is required.

## Where can I study Social Work?

There are 12 institutions in Ontario that offer MSW degrees. Schools requiring the completion of an undergraduate degree with a minimum B average (3.0 GPA) are:

- Carleton University
- Laurentian University
- University of Toronto
- University of Windsor
- Wilfrid Laurier University, and
- York University.

Schools requiring a BSW for MSW admission are:

- Lakehead University
- McMaster University
- Ryerson University
- University of Ottawa (French)
- University of Waterloo, and
- University of Western Ontario.

The following institutions have BSW programs, giving partial credit for undergraduate courses in another discipline:

- Algoma University, Carleton University, Lakehead University and Laurentian University offer advanced standing to their BSW program, and
- University of Waterloo and York University require a completed undergraduate degree prior to admission to their BSW program.

### Paying for a Social Work Program

Annual tuition for Ontario students ranges \$3,500–6,000. Remember to ask about scholarships and bursaries! You might also find financial support via tools like [www.esdc.gc.ca/en/student\\_financial\\_aid/scholarships.page](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/student_financial_aid/scholarships.page)

## Where can I find more information and resources?

Canadian Association of Social Workers

[www.casw-acts.ca](http://www.casw-acts.ca)

Ontario Association of Social Workers

[www.oasw.org](http://www.oasw.org)

Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

[www.ocswssw.org](http://www.ocswssw.org)



### Application & Personal Statement Resources

- Effective Admission Letters (U of T Writing Centre): [www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/admission-letters](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/admission-letters)
- Purdue University Online Writing Lab: [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/)
- CTL's Graduate School Application and Personal Statement Assignment Calculator: [ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal](http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/assignmentcal)

The AA&CC can help! Attend the Graduate & Professional Schools Fair (October), go to a *Preparing for Professional & Graduate School* workshop, meet professionals in the field through Extern, or speak with a Career Counsellor to learn how to get relevant experience!

Please note: While this tip sheet aims to ensure accuracy, requirements do change. Consider it a starting point for your further research. Visit individual Faculties of Social Work for detailed, up-to-date information about admission requirements and application procedures.