FAQs: Academic Advising for MSW Students (Frequently Asked Questions)

Why do I have an academic advisor?

Academic advisors are expected to help students design their programs of study. Each semester, your advisor will review with you your proposed program of study to ensure you are staying on track toward degree completion. Your advisor will also help you make sure you are enrolling in the appropriate courses based on your prior course work; for example, having completed the prerequisites for advanced practice courses. Your academic advisor may also serve as a resource if you experience academic difficulties in the program.

How do I find out who my advisor is?

Your Academic Advisor is listed within My UAlbany. (Go to My UAlbany, http://www.albany.edu/myualbany/, and enter the “Academics” section of MyUAlbany. Scroll down to “Academic Summary” where your Class Schedule is listed. Next to the class schedule tab is the tab to click on for “Advisor Information”).

How was my advisor assigned to me?

All academic advisors are members of the faculty at the School of Social Welfare. Most faculty serve as advisors for full-time students but several provide advising for part-time students or students in dual degree programs. When you matriculate into the MSW program, one of the advisors members was assigned to you based on your particular type of program.

How do I get in touch with my advisor?

You may contact your advisor at any time by phone or e-mail. If you want to meet with your advisor, it is best to sign up for one of the advisor’s scheduled advising times during preregistration or to request an appointment. Phone numbers and e-mails for all faculty are available on the School’s web pages. When contacting your advisor, please be sure to include your full name, and use your Albany.edu e-mail address.
When should I be in contact with my advisor?

At a minimum, you will need to contact your advisor each semester during preregistration to review your courses for the upcoming semester. Registration occurs around mid-semester (see Academic Calendar for specific date). Preregistration/advising time begins approximately two weeks before registration for courses. It is a good idea to contact your advisor at the beginning of the preregistration period to allow adequate time for you and your advisor to review your program of study.

You may contact your advisor other times if you wish help in long-term planning for your academic program or if you are having any academic difficulties in your courses.

How soon can I expect to hear from my advisor after I contact them?

Your advisor should return your phone call or e-mail within 2 to 3 business days. During preregistration, it is a good idea to contact your advisor early in the process if you want to be able to register on the first day of registration.

What information do I need when I contact my advisor about registering for future semesters?

Each semester, you will need to contact your advisor about the courses you plan to take in the next semester. At that time, you should provide your advisor with information about a) the course work you have already completed in the program and b) the courses you plan to take in the next semester. As you near the end of your MSW program, it is also a good idea for your review what you have taken against the program requirements to be sure you have fulfilled all the requirements for graduation. Please note:

Graduate students are personally responsible for completing all requirements established for their degree by the University, college and department. It is the students’ responsibility to inform themselves of these requirements. Students’ advisors may not assume these responsibilities, and the advisors may not substitute, waive, or exempt students from any established requirement or academic standard. (Graduate Bulletin)

The School of Social Welfare has additional policies that supplement the University regulations, and these are outlined in the Graduate Faculty and Student Handbook, and the Field Education Handbook.

Where do I find information about courses, model programs, and course prerequisites?

This information may be found in a number of places—and referring to it early and often is a good idea. You will find information about model programs in your Graduate Faculty and Student Handbook. Another great source of information is the Registration Packet prepared by the Assistant Dean for Academic Programs. This material includes
model programs, the class schedule which identifies each course by its “type,” that is, whether it is advanced practice, advanced policy, advanced MACRO, or an elective. The material also provides a listing of course prerequisites. The Registration Packet is available in hard copy as well as online. These materials and more can all be found online on the SSW website, in the MSW Academic Advising Resources Center.

**Is my advisor also my field liaison?**

No, your advisor is not likely to also be your field liaison. Field liaison functions are separate from advising ones.

**May I change advisors?**

You may change advisors at any point. However, you must identify another faculty member at the School who agrees to serve as your advisor. A ‘Permission to Change Academic Advisor’ form, which is available on-line or from the Help Desk, must be signed by the new advisor. The completed form is then submitted to the Help Desk. That’s all you need to do.

**If I experience academic difficulties, can my advisor help me?**

If you experience difficulties keeping up with your courses or your grades are below a “B,” you should contact your advisor. Your advisor may have ideas and strategies to assist you in managing the workload or improving your performance. The advisor may also be able to refer you to other University supports such as the Writing Center.

If you are in academic difficulty in any of your courses at mid-term, you and your advisor will receive a copy of the “Mid-Semester Report” which the course instructor may complete. In conjunction with the course instructor, you and your advisor are expected to develop a plan for you to address the difficulty. Advisors are expected to contact students in academic difficulty if the student does not contact them.

If you are in serious academic difficulty, the Assistant Dean for Academic Programs will contact you and your advisor. You and your advisor are expected to jointly develop a written plan designed to restore you to satisfactory academic standing. Such a plan may include regular meetings with your advisor, restrictions on the number of courses you may take each semester, or referrals to support services. This situation occurs infrequently.

**Who helps me with career planning and job hunting?**

Your advisor will be able to explore with you various courses offered in the MSW curriculum that may serve your long-term career needs. Each fall semester, students receive a short questionnaire seeking input for planning of future career development
opportunities. Various career related workshops (e.g. - resume writing, job interviewing, social work licensing, etc.) and panel presentations are offered each fall and spring by the Assistant Director of Field and the Assistant Dean for Student Services, based on input from students. In addition, written resource materials on these and other topics are available in the SSW Student lounge (RI 003).