MSW Advanced Concentrations

Students in the MSW program at the School of Social Welfare, University at Albany, select an advanced concentration in either MACRO or Clinical. Your concentration determines your courses and the type of field placement for the advanced year (last 29 credits). You must decide on your concentration by the time you register for the Fall semester. This handout describes the concentrations, suggests some guidelines for thinking about your choice, and poses some questions you can ask yourself to help make a choice.

Principles about selecting your concentration:

- Your concentration will give you in-depth, advanced knowledge and skills for either MACRO or clinical practice. However, it does not lock you into a single career path. Most clinical graduates eventually do some supervision and macro practice. Many MACRO graduates do some clinical work. The MSW is a widely recognized credential and a flexible degree. You will have many career options regardless of the concentration you choose.

- You already have a strong base in both macro and micro practice. The generalist curriculum is designed to give everyone the basic knowledge and skills they need to perform social work tasks and to work at many levels (and to pass the licensing exam!). The concentrations give you advanced preparation in either clinical practice or macro practice, but already you can work flexibly in either area.

So, here are some questions that may help you think about your choice of MACRO or Clinical:

By what means do I want to influence service delivery?

- Helping starts with each individual, family, and group you see (Clinical).

- But, decisions about who gets the service, how well it is done, and whether it is the right type at the right time are made by social service managers, community builders, and policy advocates (MACRO).

How much paid experience in human services do I have?

- If you have experience you will be in an excellent position to start in macro practice straight out of the MSW program.

- If you have no experience, you may find it harder to start in macro practice. Most social work agencies prefer their macro practice staff to have some experience in direct services. However, if you chose MACRO, you can start in clinical practice and move into macro practice later.

Upon graduation, will I be able to obtain an immediate job in macro practice?

- This depends on the area of macro practice. Currently there is a great demand for staff development, financial resource development, program outcome measurements and evaluation. Positions in agency management usually require prior experience in the social services. Positions in community work are available to individuals with a range of backgrounds including social work.
What do I want to be doing in five or ten years?

- You can work with individuals, families and groups indefinitely, maybe switching agencies or types of clientele from time to time (Clinical).

- You can try to balance clinical and supervisory tasks (MACRO, or Clinical with some MACRO courses as electives or after graduation).

- You can create new programs where they're needed, make funding decisions, run an agency, help a community develop, or implement social policies (MACRO)

What type of careers could I have in the MACRO practice arena?

Jobs:
- Program Planner
- Clinical Manager/Program Director
- Researcher/Program Evaluator
- Staff Development and Training
- Resource Developer (fundraising, grantwriting, and marketing)
- Community Organizer/Community Development
- Policy advocate or legislative specialist

If I opt for the MACRO concentration, will I still be eligible for the licensing examination?

- Yes, so long as you have an MSW, you may take the licensing exam

Can a MACRO Concentration student take Clinical courses and can a Clinical student take MACRO Concentration courses?

- Yes, your electives allow you the opportunity to integrate courses from either concentration providing you meet the course prerequisites.
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MACRO Concentration

The MACRO Concentration is a new program concentration in the School of Social Welfare curriculum. It provides students with courses and related experiences which disseminate and develop the knowledge, values, sensitivities, and skills for macro practice. The School of Social Welfare faculty developed this new concentration because employers, alumni and students encouraged them to do so. It is needed because today’s human service environment presents new demands which require new and integrative competencies. For example, in today’s information age environment, human services management is increasingly multi-dimensional and data-driven. Additionally, with rapid, dramatic policy change, effective management must include collaborative leadership.

The new MACRO concentration intends to prepare managers, leaders, and expert practitioners who are able to meet and anticipate changing demands. Graduates will assume positions such as program planners, clinical manager/program director, researcher/program evaluator, staff development and training, resource developer (fundraising, grantwriting, and marketing), and community organizer/community developer.

The MACRO Concentration requires students to complete four core courses and one of several courses designed as advanced MACRO. Students must also complete an Advanced Policy course of their choice and an elective course. Students in the MACRO concentration may take an elective from any of the following: Advanced MACRO courses, Advanced Practice courses, Advanced Policy courses, electives, or graduate courses in another department.

Clinical Concentration

In the Clinical concentration, students acquire advanced and specialized knowledge of human behavior, social systems, and intervention processes that will aid them in assisting clients at the individual, group, family, or community levels. Students may focus their study in such fields as child and family services, mental health, health care, or aging or they may take courses in diverse fields. All clinical practice students must take three Advanced Practice courses, one Advanced Policy course, one course in evaluation of clinical practice, and an advanced field practicum in clinical practice.

Graduate social workers who specialized in clinical social work are employed in many types of settings. The majority have jobs in mental health, health care, family service, and child welfare agencies, although substantial numbers work in school systems, services to the aged, and alcohol/substance abuse programs. Their primary function is to help people identify and resolve psychosocial problems, principally difficulties in family and interpersonal relations, emotional distress, abuse of alcohol and drugs, dysfunctional performance at school or work, and concerns relating to physical and mental illness.

Clinical social workers use a wide variety of helping methods, including almost the entire range of approaches to individual, family, and group counseling and various methods of bringing about change in clients' environments. However their special focus is on helping people to effect change in both themselves and in their situations.

Clinical social workers frequently take on supervisory responsibilities within a few years of graduation, often in combination with continued clinical practice. Many eventually assume managerial positions in service programs and agencies.