

## LETTER TO CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Dear Current and Prospective Students,

We warmly welcome you to the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in the School of Social Work at Algoma University. You may be wondering whether or not this program is the right one for you. This letter will introduce the expectations for students in the BSW program to help you know if it is a good fit for you. We invite you to join in on the journey to explore the program in more detail.

The BSW program incorporates both mainstream and Indigenous approaches to social work practice. It is rooted in ethics and values of the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe way of life: *Nibwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagjidiwin* (Love), *Mnaadendamowin* (Respect), *Aakodewewin* (Bravery), *Gwekwaadiziwin* (Honesty), *Dibadenziwawin* (Humility), and *Debwewin* (Truth), as well as the [Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics](#), and the [Ethical Standards of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers](#). As a result, the program encourages students to walk with integrity, living in a “good way”—*Mino Bimaadiziwin*—each day in their academic work, field placement, and daily life.

Algoma University’s BSW program is different from other undergraduate programs because it is a professional program, meaning it is accredited by the [Canadian Association for Social Work Education](#) and must follow the Association’s standards. As a result, graduates of the Professional Years of the program are qualified to obtain Registration in the [Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers](#). The skills and experiences gained in courses and the field practicum will prepare students with the necessary skills to enter a Professional Social Work practice. The Expectations document further describes what is required to be successful in this program.

The School of Social Work acknowledges that sexism, racism, classism, ableism, ageism, sanism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression exist. Students in the BSW program examine how people have been systematically taught misinformation about their own group as well as about other groups. Discrimination can occur for members of both *dominant groups* (including but not limited to white, male, upper class, heterosexual, privileged) and *subordinate groups* (including but not limited to people of colour, people with disabilities, immigrant, female, poor, working class, LGBTQ, elderly). To be prepared for the types of scenarios and issues discussed in the program, ask yourself the following questions: Are you ready to explore issues of identity, intersectionality, and anti-oppression through readings and assignments? Can you have open, honest, respectful, and humble conversations on these topics? Are you accepting of feedback, willing to challenge assumptions, and ready to learn constructive ways to engage and respond?

Each person’s different life circumstances require learning how to monitor health and wellness in school and at work. In the BSW program, students learn how to critically self-reflect and receive feedback in ways that will enhance their learning. To be successful in the program, it is important to ask yourself: Do you have the support that you need to complete this program? Can you commit the time to make your BSW degree a priority (e.g., attend and participate in classes, invest 3-4 days per week of field practicum in the final year)? Has your growth in life, and your healing journey, brought you to a place where you are ready to address whatever personal issues through your lived experience that you may bring to your professional practice?

We wish you the best in deciding on the suitability of the BSW program for your goals and expectations and are ready to welcome you aboard! For additional questions or more information, please feel free to [contact us](#).

All the best,

School of Social Work, Algoma University

# EXPECTATIONS - BSW STUDENTS

## PREAMBLE

**WHEREAS** the School of Social Work at Algoma University is based upon Anishinaabe, structural, feminist, anti-racist and anti-oppressive principles, theories, and methods of practice, this Expectations Document employs an overarching framework of the Seven Sacred Teachings of *Nibwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagi'idiwin* (Love), *Minaadendimowin* (Respect), *Aakode'ewin* (Bravery), *Gwekwaaadiziwin* (Honesty), *Dabaadendiziwin* (Humility), and *Debwewin* (Truth), as well as mainstream Social Work Ethics. The School of Social Work acknowledges the intersections that race, culture/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, class, ability, and age have in relationship to power and inequality. The School of Social Work also acknowledges diversity of perspectives with respect to community participation and responsibility, and considers issues of social justice, equity, and marginalization. The School of Social Work abides by [Algoma University's policies](#) and has also established its own specific [policies for the Bachelor of Social Work Program](#) (BSW Program). These policies are specific to all students applying for or registered in the BSW Program at Algoma University.

### Mental

- Caring
- Joining theory and practice in acts of *Praxis*
- Understanding the social, political, cultural, legal and economic *critical analysis* of institutional structures & social contexts
- Use Wisdom to join knowledge with understanding in work for justice
- Action to maintain wellness of self, community, and the world

### Physical

- Practicing alert attentiveness and participation in classes and field placement
- Apply professional and marginalized knowledge
- Caring for self in the physical realm - healthy food, healthy actions, healthy relationships



### Spiritual

- Values
- Vision
- Ethics
- Meaning
- Purpose
- Culture
- Integrity

### Emotional / Relationships

- Effective and respectful communication
- Understanding and validating others' perspectives
- Accept feedback and respond constructively
- Self-regulation; professional judgement & relationships
- When in difficult situations: seek support, look at the other perspective, challenging own assumptions and perspectives
- Reflexive examination of the *Self in Context*
- Balanced connections -- commitment to growth

*The Medicine Wheel concepts are drawn from Anishinaabeg and Cree teachings, incorporating mainstream approaches.*

## MISSION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

The Social Work Program's mission is to deliver an Honours Bachelor of Social Work Program which prepares students for generalist practices in anti-racist, anti-colonial, Indigenous, structural, critical feminist, and anti-oppressive social work practice. Upon completion, graduates will be able to perform ethical, competent, and innovative critical social work practice directed toward advancing equity, equality, and social justice with a focus on social work in and with Indigenous, Northern, Francophone, and remote communities. Collaborative research, community initiatives, and engagement undertaken by the faculty and students in collaboration with people with diverse identities and cultures continually enrich the program.

**The Social Work Program's mission statement and program delivery is embedded in the University's strategic objectives, and is committed to promoting:**

- Social justice, social equity, reconciliation, community healing, and social change based on humanitarianism and egalitarianism.
- Anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive practice that values diversity, respect, and the dignity and worth of all people.
- A commitment to highlighting Indigenous knowledge and approaches, and to affirming history that has been neglected or silenced, inclusive of problematizing colonialism in its historic and ongoing guises.
- Development of a professional culture that brings together teaching faculty, field instructors, students, alumni, and social workers in the field from geographical locations, including South Porcupine (Timmins) and Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie, as partners in the realization of the HBSW program's mission within the mission of the University.
- The [CASW Code of Ethics](#), and the Seven Grandfather Teachings in social work professional practice: *Nibwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagjidiwin* (Love), *Mnaadendimowin* (Respect), *Aakodewewin* (Bravery), *Gwekwaadiziwin* (Honesty), *Dibadenziwawin* (Humility), and *Debwewin* (Truth).
- Multiple pedagogical approaches that employ inclusive and interactive lectures; learning circles and circle work; small group work; small group exercises; hands-on skills-based practice learning in areas of individual, couple, group work, family and community practice; video; podcasts; case studies; simulated experience; community visits; engagement with community activism guest presentations; student presentations; both culture and land-based instruction; and other forms of experiential learning.
- Developing partnerships with other colleges and organizations.
- The accreditation standards of the [Canadian Association of Social Work Education](#) at the HBSW level.

## JURISDICTION AND APPLICATION

**Scope.** This Expectations Document applies to all students applying to or currently registered in the BSW program.

## POLICIES

**Standards of Accreditation.** In professional programs such as the BSW Program, academic standards pertain to both professional and scholastic performance. The CASWE requires that all [Schools of Social Work have policies](#) that meet the following [CASWE Accreditation Standards](#):

- SB/M 2.4.1 The academic unit clearly states the academic and professional requirements and admission policies policy for its programs, including any equity provisions consistent with the mission of the school and to the mission of CASWE-ACFTS.
- SB/M 2.4.4 The academic unit has a policy requiring that the performance of professional responsibilities of social work students be in accordance with the relevant social work code of ethics; and
- SB/M 2.4.5 The academic unit has a policy regarding the professional suitability of the student for the profession of social work. Students are made aware that serious or repeated violations of the Code of Ethics puts them at risk of exclusion from the program based on professional unsuitability.

## Purpose of this Expectations Document is to:

- I. Comply with the CASWE Accreditation Standards and any other social work professional regulatory body;
- II. Define the essential requirements necessary to provide reasonable assurance that students can complete the BSW program and participate in all aspects of social work education and practice.

## ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to be able to meet specific standards in the classroom and in the practicum. Students who intend to enroll in the BSW program at Algoma University are advised to review the outline of essential requirements listed in this Expectations Document.

**Rationale.** Essential requirements are necessary to provide reasonable assurance that students can complete the BSW program and participate in all aspects of social work education and practice. The BSW provides eligibility for membership in the [Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers](#) and to practice as a social worker.

While working with vulnerable people, groups, and communities, social work students will often be exposed to highly complex human situations. As a result, students will be required to engage and respond responsibly in a manner that centers the well-being of clients, while also attending to the student's own needs. This also requires the capacity to seek supervision and support when needed. In addition, written communication, including record-keeping, written reports, policy briefs, and case notes are vital in the field placement context. The ability to read, decode, interpret, and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for safe and effective assessment, intervention, and professional support in the field.

Social work also requires being able to undertake critical reflection about inequality, one's own biases and assumptions, and the nature of people's issues and needs. This involves the dual challenge of assisting people's functioning and identifying and responding to systemic issues that create inequity and injustice. Social work requires an ability to appreciate and reflect on one's social locations and the social, economic, cultural, and situational contexts of people's lives and the implications these have for practice. An ability to communicate across cultures and respect diversity is essential to social work education across all fields of practice.

### 1. Professional Commitment: Ethical Standards and the Seven Grandfather Teachings

Social work students need to possess a commitment to the values and ethical standards of professional social work and the Seven Grandfather Teachings in social work professional practice: *Nibwaakaawin* (Wisdom), *Zaagiidiwin* (Love), *Mnaadendimowin* (Respect), *Aakodewewin* (Bravery), *Gwekwaadiziwin* (Honesty), *Dibadenziwawin* (Humility), and *Debwewin* (Truth).

Students are expected to:

- Display appropriate behaviour with confidential information in the classroom and in field placement settings;
- Be aware and reflect on ethical considerations and issues and take responsibility for ensuring own awareness of ethical behaviour;
- Apply ethical principles and processes to decision making in 4<sup>th</sup> year field placement settings;
- Promptly notify instructors or field instructors when a possible conflict exists between the student's cultural or religious beliefs and the academic or practice expectations that would make it difficult to uphold a generally accepted ethical standard of practice;
- Adhere to academic integrity policies;
- Read and adhere to the [School of Social Work's Student Handbook](#) and the academic [policy on student conduct](#) and understand that professional unsuitability may be grounds for not being admitted into the Professional Years of the program and/or a Suitability Review as per the [Social Work Specific Suitability for the Profession Policy](#).

### 2. Communication Skills

Social work students need to communicate effectively and respectfully with other students, faculty and instructors, staff, clients, and other professionals across diverse cultures. Students must be able to express their ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to listen to others. Students will also recognize the power of non-verbal communication and reflect on its impact within these relationships. The academic and field education components of the programs require communication in English.

Students are expected to:

- Be sensitive to individual and/or cultural differences in their communication;
- Communicate coherently, understand verbal and written communication accurately, and respond verbally and in writing in an appropriate and timely manner;
- Recognize, interpret, and respond appropriately to what is being communicated by others and maintain appropriate awareness of their own behaviours and their impact on others.

### 3. Judgement, Self-Regulation, and Relationship Skills

Social work students must demonstrate an ability to observe and examine complex situations. Students must possess the insight needed to appreciate persons and situations, including self, and demonstrate an awareness of and responsibility to the impact of one's actions on self and on others. Students must be willing to examine and change their attitudes and behaviours that fall outside the standards for professional social work practice or that unduly interfere with clients and other collaborative professional relationships.

Students are expected to:

- Critically reflect on the social, political, cultural, legal, and economic contexts of people's situations and experiences, and the implications of these for practice;
- Accept feedback on their professional practice and respond constructively;
- Be open to learning about scope of practice and respecting it in practicum settings;
- Establish respectful relationships with peers, clients, academic staff, faculty, instructors, field instructors, and supervisors and are open to learning from tensions and challenges in these relationships;
- Be willing to develop appropriate professional relationships consistent with the practice setting and social work standards;
- Be aware of how one's personal actions (including use of social media) impact their professional life and to manage their behaviour accordingly.

### 4. Linking Knowledge to Practice

Social work students need to recognize various social work practice methods and be open to using this knowledge in conjunction with alternative and marginalized knowledges when making informed decisions to engage clients, client systems, and other professionals. The School of Social Work aims to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion and learning. Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to stretch themselves, to learn new information, and to consider alternate perspectives. While sharing of members' life and field experiences can sometimes enhance learning, students are encouraged to share *but only to the extent that they are comfortable*. Self-disclosure is *not* a requirement for the program and is not a pathway to higher grades.

Students are expected to:

- Recognize that sexism, racism, classism, ableism, ageism, sanism, homophobia, xeno-racism, and other forms of oppression exist and understand that people have been systematically taught misinformation about their own group as well as about other groups. Discrimination can occur for members of both *dominant groups* (including but not limited to white, male, upper class, heterosexual, privileged) and *subordinate groups* (including but not limited to people of colour, people with disabilities, immigrant, female, poor, working class, LGBTQ, elderly);
- Understand that while people cannot be blamed for the misinformation that they have learned, students will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after they have learned otherwise. Students will assume that people are always doing the best that they can and will not blame people or groups for their positions;

- Treat others' shared life experiences with compassion, care, and respect, and maintain the confidentiality of clients and other students at all times;
- Locate appropriate and relevant information for social work practice;
- Process information relevant to practice and seek out alternative ways of knowing;
- Integrate and implement professional and marginalized knowledge in practice;
- Locate, conceptualize, and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items;
- Apply professional and marginalized knowledge of policy and procedures in the field placement.

## **5. Attendance, Participation, and Timely Completion**

Students must cover course content as specified by instructors and attend practicum settings consistently and reliably in order to respect the continuity of their learning (and that of others), the value of multiple contexts of learning, and the commitment to reliable service provision in the field. When experiencing difficulties, students must advise appropriate contacts (academic or placement supervisor) and follow expectations as articulated in course outlines. Students must demonstrate an ability to sustain physical and socio-emotional performance and alertness in both the classroom and practicum settings in order to actively participate in the activities of the environment (e.g., stay awake during classes or client interviews).

Students are expected to:

- Participate regularly and consistently in tutorials, lectures, group projects, experiential learning, and other such skill development opportunities;
- Attend field placement regularly and predictably;
- Engage consistently in activities required as part of field placement experience before, during, and following the field experience time period;
- Complete tasks or program requirements within specified time frames, meeting all stated deadlines or negotiated extensions when these have been established between student and instructor/supervisor.

## **6. Empathy**

Social work students need to comprehend another individual's way of life and values and also question their own biases and assumptions. They must be able to communicate empathy and support to the client or client group as a basis for a productive professional relationship.

Students are expected to:

- Recognize situations from another person's perspective and, when this is difficult, to have the capacity to seek support and information about another person's perspective while remaining open to having their assumptions about others challenged;
- Demonstrate an understanding to the feelings of others and relate to them;
- Validate another person's perspective.

## **7. Wellness and Management of Personal Needs**

Due to the high psychological and emotional demands of social work practice, work-related stress and burnout are possible. Where clients remain the central focus of our work, social work students need to learn to recognize their own individual signs of stress or risks to their health and wellness and then work with the appropriate support people to develop strategies to address and maintain emotional/psychological wellness. Importantly, this requires an ability to recognize, identify, and seek supportive resources, and articulate their needs for accommodation when necessary.

Students are expected to:

- Learn how to recognize their signs of stress and/or declining health and wellness;
- Work with support people to develop strategies to address and maintain emotional/ psychological wellness;
- Seek supportive resources and/or health care support, if necessary;
- Articulate accommodation requirements and to negotiate their provision in the setting (classroom or field

- placement);
- Rearticulate and renegotiate accommodation requirements at the earliest possible convenience, should these change at any time.

## 8. Considerations: Global Pandemic

As all members of the Algoma University community adjust to the new realities and the impacts of the global pandemic, students, faculty, and staff strive to conduct their work and learning activities in a manner that is considerate, respectful, and constructive. While recognizing the challenges with teaching and learning that is partially or entirely online, it is important to confirm and emphasize that interactions with one another still need to be respectful at all times.

Faculty may use varied technological platforms (such as Zoom, Google Meet and Google Hangouts) to teach the courses. It is important to confirm and emphasize that class attendance and participation continue to be essential for authentic professional learning regardless of the teaching platform. Attendance in an online environment is as important as it is with in-person learning. Therefore, regardless of the teaching method, **students are expected to attend classes on time, and to remain for the duration of the class.** In an online setting, students are encouraged to be present with their cameras on as much as possible and microphones muted when they are not speaking. Students are expected to attend virtual sessions appropriately and professionally presentable (e.g., dressed as you would when working in a practice setting). Unplanned absences to respond to dependents (human, fur or feather bearing, young or old) is reasonable and will be accommodated. We are aware that occasionally there are internet issues that interrupt connections. The instructor should be notified as soon as possible.

As the profession of social work adapts to the impacts of the global pandemic, using online platforms is an emerging trend in the field. The full implications of this trend are not known at this time so it is important that social work students prepare for the variety of ways that social work may be performed in a post-pandemic world. As part of this preparation, students are expected to contribute positively to a collaborative and respectful learning environment, which includes clarifying expectations, and resolving miscommunications in a way that promotes a culture of respect for human diversity and collegiality among faculty, students, and staff. Specifically, students are expected to work towards resolving disagreements in a respectful and transparent manner. Students are expected to consult with their course instructors directly if they have difficulties, or through appropriate channels if they require accommodations to support their working and learning efforts.

Physical attendance alone is insufficient for full and rich learning, so students are expected to be engaged and participate fully and respectfully in the activities set out by the instructor of the course. As per Academic Regulations in the Algoma University's Calendar, *absence from 20% or more* of synchronous class sessions, be they online or in-person, may prevent the student from being granted credit for the course.

It is the responsibility of the student to advise the instructor of issues or circumstances that prevent a student from full, regular, and punctual attendance. In situations where technical difficulties such as computer failure, poor Internet availability or intermittent connections, or inclement weather, students are responsible for advising the course instructor in a timely manner.

Students who require accommodations of any kind will discuss with their instructors how they can best demonstrate attendance and participation in accordance with their accommodated learning plans.

The health and well-being of all Algoma University students and faculty is very important. Part of acceptable health and safety standards is to plan for regular breaks, usually approximately 10-15 minutes of break per 60 minutes of work. Recognizing the challenges of conducting most work in a virtual or digital realm, regular health and wellness breaks are encouraged. As a general guideline, it is reasonable for students to either individually or collectively take regular breaks as needed.

## 9. Reasonable Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations. All Algoma University policies and procedures, including the [Accessibility Policy and Procedure](#), are available on the [Algoma University Website](#). Please review the [Algoma](#)



[University Academic Calendar](#) for more information and follow the following processes:

- Pregnancy obligation: Write to faculty or instructors with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.
- Religious obligation: Write to faculty or instructors with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.
- Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations must register with [Accessibility Services](#).
- Bereavement leave, accidents, illnesses, family disruptions, precarious life circumstances: Please be in communication early with all of your instructors.

## DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this Expectations Document have the following meanings:

- I. **Professional Suitability** means:
  - A. Adherence to the core social work values, as set out in the Canadian Association of Social Workers ("CASW") Code of Ethics, including:
    - i. Respect for the inherent Dignity and Worth of People
    - ii. Pursuit of Social Justice
    - iii. Service to Humanity
    - iv. Integrity in Professional Practice
    - v. Confidentiality in Professional Practice
    - vi. Competence in Professional Practice
  - B. Adherence to the Guidelines for Ethical Practice as set out by the CASW;
  - C. Adherence to the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) Ethics and Standards for Practice; and
  - D. Adherence to the Seven Sacred Teachings.
- II. **Professional Unsuitability** means acting in a manner which violates the core social work values of the CASW and/or the CASW's Guidelines for Ethical Practice and/or the OCSWSSW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and/or the Seven Sacred Teachings. Unsuitable behaviours may be grounds for a Suitability Review as per the [Social Work Specific Suitability for the Profession Policy](#) and/or not being admitted to the Professional Years of the program. Examples include: disrespectful to an Elder, refusing to speak to your professor, violating confidentiality of a student or client, etc.
- III. **Director** means the Director of the School of Social Work, or designate.
- IV. **Faculty** means the Faculty members in the School of Social Work.
- V. **Instructors** means full-time faculty, part-time faculty or field instructors/supervisors.
- VI. **Staff** means staff employed in the School of Social Work.
- VII. **Elders** means an Indigenous Elder who is recognized by their community. They are knowledge keepers who serve as teachers, healers, advisors and counsellors based in culture.

## References

Carleton School of Social Work. (2019). *Essential Requirements*. Retrieved from <https://carleton.ca/socialwork/wp-content/uploads/Essential-Requirements-BSW-Program-April-4-2019.pdf>