

Frequently Asked Questions

There is one intake in September of every year. The deadline for application is February 15. All program and application details can be found at:

<http://www.unbc.ca/graduateprograms/socialwork.html>.

What happens if my Bachelor's degree is in another discipline?

We have an entry route into our MSW for applicants with a Baccalaureate other than a BSW. Students without a BSW, but with a related Bachelor's degree and two years (twenty-four months full-time equivalent) documented paid or volunteer social service work, enter into an MSW Foundation Year taken over three semesters (full-time equivalent), with substantial, graduate-level foundational coursework and a foundational practicum. Another two semesters (full-time equivalent) of MSW courses are then completed, followed by either a thesis or practicum with related report.

What are related Bachelor's degrees?

Although this generally means degrees in related disciplines such as Psychology or Sociology, we find that applicants may have relevant coursework or electives in other areas further afield. Additionally, the amount and quality of social service experience which applicants bring certainly influence the eligibility of an application.

How long does it take?

Foundation Year students require a minimum of five semesters (full-time equivalent) to complete all coursework. Further time is then required for students who select the practicum option to complete the second practicum and write the practicum report, while remaining students must research and write their theses.

Regular MSW students studying full-time could complete all coursework in a minimum of two semesters, then select the practicum or thesis option. Many regular students take six or eight semesters or longer to complete all degree requirements.

As the length of time is not prescribed by either the program or the Office of Graduate Programs, it is difficult to say exactly how long the degree takes. Each student requires a different amount of time, depending on which courses and options are selected and the time commitment which she/he can afford. While all students are expected to complete degree requirements within five years, it is anticipated that full-time students will finish within three years. Full-time students enroll in a minimum of six credit hours (normally two courses) per semester.

Can I study part-time?

Yes, our students have the option of studying full- or part-time.

Can I do it online?

Although students can do some of our MSW courses by distance (currently four courses are available online - SOCW 609, 605, 635, and HHSC 703 - plus they could do a Directed Readings by distance and possibly take two electives at another university under the Western Deans Agreement if appropriate courses are available), the remainder of the courses, with the exception of the thesis or practicum, would need to be completed in Prince George.

How much does it cost?

Full-time MSW students currently pay \$2184 CAD per semester in student fees and are required to register for a minimum of six terms. Part-time students pay \$1386 CAD per semester at present and must enroll for a minimum of twelve terms. Fees generally increase by approximately two percent each year and are due on the first day of class in each semester. Fees/Tuition current as of Fall 2011.

For further details on tuition and other student fees, please go to <http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/graduate/general/fees.html>

Is funding available?

Private, corporate, and public scholarships and bursaries are available as well as UNBC awards and teaching assistantships for graduate students. A detailed list can be found at <http://www.unbc.ca/finaid/graduate/index.html>. Please go to the Financial Aid webpage for further details or contact Gloria Benazic at gloria@unbc.ca or on 960-6319.

Should I find my own advisor?

Successful applicants are assigned an Academic Supervisor, by the program. An effort is made to match student and faculty interests, so it is important to be as precise and detailed as possible in the study plan. For many students this Academic Supervisor will see them through to the completion of their degree. However, if your thesis/practicum interests change as you progress through the program, then it is possible to switch to another more suitable Academic Supervisor.

What should I do if I don't have all the required admission documents, such as enough references?

Applicants are expected to meet all admission requirements. If it is simply not possible to meet a certain requirement, then a letter of explanation regarding the reason(s) can be included as part of the application package. Applicants who are not able to provide two academic references are strongly advised to enroll in a course and request a reference from that instructor.

Do I have to get a Criminal Records Check done before applying?

Yes, all applicants are required to undergo a criminal records search in the country in which they are currently residing and provide evidence of this prior to being considered for admission to the program. Please download and complete the Criminal Record Check form at <http://www.unbc.ca/assets/graduateprograms/forms/crc.pdf> and take it to the nearest branch of the RCMP, or visit your local police authority if you live abroad.

Can I take some Social Work courses without being in the program?

It is possible to register for a maximum of two graduate courses at UNBC as a “non-degree” graduate student, before applying and being accepted into the MSW Program. Students who are later admitted to the program can request that that coursework be applied to their program, subject to the recommendation of their supervisory committee and approval of the Dean of Graduate Programs. For further details or to apply for non-degree coursework, please contact the Registrar’s Office directly at registrar-info@unbc.ca or on 960-6300.

What career paths are available to someone with an MSW? Can I work as a clinician?

Yes, it is certainly possible to work as a clinician. Our students also go into policy development, program consultation, management, planning, advanced social work, and research. Once students have a career focus, they can craft their courses and options toward that goal. We recommend that students register with the BC College of Social Workers upon graduation.

Please visit the website of our professional association and have a look at some of the information available there. The website of the Canadian Association of Social Workers is: <http://www.casw-acts.ca/>. The website for the branch in British Columbia is: <http://www.bcasw.org>.

What if I am an international student?

The GRE is not required to enter the MSW program. Applicants whose first language is not English must submit evidence of English language proficiency prior to admission though. Please see <http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/graduate/general/admissions.html> for further details about English language requirements at UNBC.

Important information for international students can be found at <http://www.unbc.ca/whyunbc/international/index.html>
<http://www.unbc.ca/international/admissions.html>
<http://www.unbc.ca/internationaladmissions/>

A bridging program is available for international students. Please go to English Language Studies at <http://www.unbc.ca/els/> or contact Asuka King at els@unbc.ca or on 960-6780.

An International Student Advisor, Annick Pereira, is also available at pereira@unbc.ca or on 960-5725 to answer queries.

How much is accommodation?

Accommodation costs vary. The semester fee for a basic room on campus is currently \$2048 CAD. A modest, non-furnished apartment off campus might cost \$500 or \$600 CAD per month. Current as of Fall 2011. Costs will change over time.

Please see <http://www.unbc.ca/housing/> for details about student residences and an off-campus housing registry.

Can international students work while studying?

Work opportunities are available on and off campus. International students holding valid study permits may work on campus. International students in good academic standing who have studied full-time at UNBC for six months are eligible to apply to work off campus for a maximum of twenty hours per week during semesters and forty hours per week during holidays.

What kind of work experience counts for the 2 years of work experience required for entry into the MSW Foundation Year?

Direct Practice Skills we want MSW Foundation Year students to enter our program with:

- Knowledge of and experience using the following communication and other social work skills in a practice setting:
 - Understanding of stages of practice: Recognition of and experience moving through the stages of practice with individuals, communities, or groups. Stages broadly include: screening or intake; assessment; action or intervention planning; following through on the action plan; evaluation of the process; termination.
 - Interviewing and questioning skills: using open versus closed ended questions; how and when to use probing questions; creating a comfortable environment; encouraging groups, communities or individuals to open up; using and conveying empathy; understanding and addressing barriers to communication; etc
 - Listening and summarizing skills: active and passive listening, questions of clarification, summarizing and paraphrasing, etc
 - Problem-solving skills: appropriate questioning; negotiating; assisting communities, groups or individuals in developing their own solutions (not imposing your ideas); determining goals; setting up contracts; monitoring progress; etc
 - Working with resistant communities, groups or individuals: developing rapport; negotiating; bargaining; challenging communities, groups and individuals without being intimidating; etc
 - Working with strengths: identifying community, group or individual strengths; empowering communities, groups or individuals; etc
 - Ending contact appropriately: building up to termination; talking about it ahead of time; ensuring communities, groups or individuals have support networks in place
 - Understanding of oppression: understanding oppression and the role of power in oppression; identifying and challenging oppression with groups, communities or individuals at a novice level
- Direct practice experience does not occur only in one-on-one clinical sessions, but may also take place in community meetings, community development settings,

- policy meetings, group settings or in work with individuals in informal situations (such as youth work in casual settings including social and recreational activities).
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly demonstrate (in the application package or an application cover letter) how their work experience has allowed them to develop and practice some or all of these skills and any other skills the applicant believes to be relevant.

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