

UNBC School of Social Work

Master of Social Work

Clinical Content

BSW graduates and others often say they want a Master's degree that prepares them for a counselling career and they aren't sure an MSW will provide this. In fact, an MSW can provide grounding in counseling skills and knowledge and prepare people for counseling practice after graduation.

This brochure outlines how to tailor your MSW studies to have a focus on clinical content, while still coming from the holistic perspective of seeing people in their contexts, which is the social work tradition.

Keep in mind: **Teaching social work courses** (as a number of practitioners want to do) **REQUIRES A GRADUATE DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.**

Please note: BSW graduates are no longer required to complete a year of social work practice before applying to the MSW program. You can apply at any time.

There are several steps you can take to bring a clinical and practice lens to your MSW degree.

First: Gear your social work electives and semi-required course choices to those with clinical content.

There is a growing selection of MSW courses with substantial clinical content, as listed in summary here (full course descriptions are in the Graduate Calendar and courses cover more than what is written below):

SOCW 601: Issues in Northern/Remote Social Work:

Issues in northern and remote social work practice are explored. There is a focus on Aboriginal populations and a goal to formulate change in social work practice.

SOCW 602: First Nations: Advanced Social Work Practice:

Social work practice within indigenous cultures is explored. Issues covered include racism, gender, movement between rural and urban, and the transfer of social services to First Nations.

SOCW 603: Women: Policy/Practice Issues:

The course includes social work practice with (and policy about) women's issues with particular focus on the role of women in northern, remote and First Nation communities. Also included: feminist perspectives and practice; counselling and direct service; connections to race, class, ability, sexual orientation, aging, etc.

SOCW 610: Wellness: Alternate Approaches:

The course explores a variety of techniques in expressive arts, movement and process-oriented therapeutic approaches in working with individuals, couples, families and groups. Exercises are interwoven throughout the course.

SOCW 613: Clinical Social Work Practice:

Students explore various psychotherapy and counselling theories and their use in practice. These are explored in the context of: current developments in the counselling field; gender, race, class, northern and rural, etc; and various fields of work such as health care, education and social services. New therapeutic approaches, strengths-based, are also explored.

SOCW 615: Multicultural Social Work Practice:

Students are prepared for work with various ethnic and racial minority clientele. The course includes an examination of the relationship between cultural norms and social work practice.

SOCW 640: Supervision and Leadership:

This course examines leadership and supervision from a social work perspective. Components of supervision and leadership such as administration, support, education, clinical supervision, performance management, recruitment and retention of employees, organizational context, interdisciplinary practices, and problem solving are addressed in this course.

SOCW 672-3 Social Work/Counselling Skills with Child/Youth:

This course examines practice and intervention skills for working with Aboriginal children and youth including specific therapeutic assessments and interventions. The importance of balancing the relationship between western and traditional treatment is also explored.

SOCW 673-3 Mental Health and Addictions among Children/Youth:

This course focuses on common types of mental illness with an overview of substance misuse and addictions. Students are introduced to structural elements impacting mental health such as poverty, racism, and isolation, as well as biological, traumatic, attachment, and familial factors.

SOCW 674-3 Crisis Work With Children/Youth: Restoring Balance:

This course examines the nature and types of crisis situations faced by children and youth, with special attention to Aboriginal children and youth. Basic crisis intervention skills are identified and aimed at the restoration of balance. There is a particular focus on suicide.

SOCW 698: Special Topics:

We regularly offer **Special Topics** courses of interest to students including Substance Abuse; Disability Issues; Issues in Aging; Group Work. All have substantial clinical components. Special topics courses in other areas of interest can also be requested.

SOCW 701: Research Practicum:

Work 2 days a week for one semester to participate in research related to your thesis or practicum such as research into practice issues. Conducting research into practice is increasingly a requirement for all practitioners. For example, if your interest is child and youth mental health, we could seek out a research placement that focuses on the development and evaluation of interventions with children and youth.

Second: Consider taking specific clinical electives on topics of interest from outside social work.

You can take two electives outside social work as part of your MSW. For example, you could include two clinical or counselling courses of particular interest to you from First Nations Studies or from Educational Counselling, or even from another university (if the course transfers back to UNBC).

Third: Develop your own elective course specific to your learning interests.

You can take one Social Work Directed Readings course (which counts as an elective) by working with a faculty member to develop a self-directed course on a topic not covered by any course offerings. For example, if you would like to get a more in-depth course focused on mental health issues/practice among the elderly, you could approach Nancy Jokinen or Dawn Hemingway to request a one-on-one Directed Readings course with them. Faculty members do such courses gratis and so are not required to teach this; they will do so only if they have time. Plan ahead and ask faculty early if they are available to do this.

Fourth: Tailor your practicum or thesis to clinical content.

Many students with clinical interests choose the practicum route as an opportunity to hone their clinical skills. Placements are available in several fields such as adult or child/youth mental health, addictions, violence against women, community development practice, etc. Talk with your supervisor and/or the Field Director about options. Alternatively, complete a thesis with a research focus on a clinical topic, such as evaluating a clinical program or interviewing people about experiences in a clinical or therapeutic setting

Registration: MSW practitioners are eligible for registration through the BC College of Social Workers. Registration is recognized by a number of bodies, allowing MSW counsellors to work for various employee & family assistance and other programs. There are a number of processes; check with the BCCSW on becoming registered.

Many of our social work faculty members have spent years in direct practice and clinical work themselves and/or have research interests in these topics. Find a faculty member with an interest in a field similar to yours and talk with them about how to gear your degree toward this interest.

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Faculty Clinical & Practice Interests:

- **Bruce Bidgood, Associate Professor:**
(Sabbatical July 2016 – July 2017)
group work with perpetrators and victims of intimate violence, child welfare support and mutual aid programs, stress and burnout in social workers
- **Susan Burke, RSW, Assistant Professor:** *Child welfare/caregiver assessments, social work stress adoption/parenting support, work with Indigenous social workers/students*
- **Dawn Hemingway, RSW, Associate Professor, Chair:**
(Sabbatical July 2016 – July 2017)
seniors' mental health, dementia, caregiving, disability issues, women's health
- **Nancy Jokinen, RSW, Associate Professor:**
(Sabbatical July 2016 – July 2017)
aging, disability, health, dementia, age-friendly communities
- **Indrani Margolin, RSW, Associate Professor:**
(Sabbatical July 2016 – July 2017)
expressive arts therapies, spiritually focused clinical social work, meditation, working with adolescent girls, dating violence and body-image disturbances
- **Heather Peters, RSW, Associate Professor:**
(Sabbatical July 2016 – July 2017)
working with vulnerable or street-involved youth, harm reduction practice and illicit drug use, service access for marginalized clients, structural social work practice, homelessness
- **Joanna Pierce, RSW, Associate Professor and Field Education Director:** *mental health, community development, cross-cultural communication, remote & northern practice, child welfare*
- **Dave Sangha, Assistant Professor:** *working with immigrant and diasporic communities*
- **Glen Schmidt, RCSW, Professor, MSW Coordinator and Acting Chair** *mental illness, relationship counselling, mediation, critical incident debriefing, family therapy*

- **Tammy Stuble, RSW, Assistant Professor, BSW Coordinator:** *child welfare practice, mental health, family violence, spirituality*
- **Si Transken, RSW, Associate Professor:** *violence against women, depression, activism therapy*

For further information about the MSW program at UNBC, please contact:

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School of Social Work
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Email: glen.schmidt@unbc.ca

Visit our website at:

<http://www.unbc.ca/social-work/graduate>

For information on admission to Graduate Studies at UNBC, please contact:

Marlina Hawes
Enrolment Services Officer
Office of Graduate Programs
Telephone: 250-960-6306
Email: gradunbc4u@unbc.ca

Regulations of the Office of Graduate Programs and the Graduate Academic Calendar take precedence over this document. Please refer to their webpages:

www.unbc.ca/graduateprograms
www.unbc.ca/calendar/graduate

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Question: My goal is to be a counselor; will a Master of Social Work prepare me for a counselling career?

Answer: Yes, an MSW can prepare you for a clinical and counseling career. Here's how...

