**FAQ Sheet MSW program**

**When can I apply?**

You can apply at any time. However, all accepted students begin the program in August for the regular program and July for the advanced standing program. Admission deadlines are:  January 15 (priority); March 15 (deadline); May 1 (late deadline - if space available).

**What do I need to apply?**

The admissions committee will need to review official transcripts from all colleges/universities attended, two letters of recommendation, and your admissions essay. You will need to demonstrate that you have obtained a bachelor’s degree by the time of admission, maintained a GPA of 3.0 or higher, have completed a prerequisite statistics and research methods courses, and have the writing skills necessary for graduate study.

In addition, advanced standing applicants need to submit their field practicum evaluation completed by your placement supervisor from their BSW practicum. One letter of recommendation also needs to come from the program director of their BSW program.

**What if I don’t meet all of the admission requirements?**

Students may wonder whether they should apply if their GPA is lower than the 3.0 minimum or if they have not completed the prerequisite statistics or research course. The admissions committee takes a number of factors into consideration when determining the ability of an applicant to successfully complete our program. So if your GPA is a bit lower than 3.0 or if you have not completed a prerequisite course, the committee may determine that you are a good fit for the program and may recommend either probationary or provisional admission.

**What is probationary or provisional admission?**

Probationary admission occurs when the admissions committee sees that you have the potential for successful graduate level work but that your undergraduate GPA is below the minimum standard of 3.0. Under probationary status you would be limited to nine graduate credits (3 courses) your first semester and expected to obtain a minimum of 3.0 in those classes. After successful completion of that first graduate semester, the probationary status is removed. If you enter on probationary status, it will take between 2 ½ - 3 years to complete the program.

Provisional admission means that there is a condition attached to your admission. This could be the completion of a prerequisite course or obtaining a passing score on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam. Your provisional admission should spell out when you need to complete the requirement. In the case of the prerequisite courses, this can often be completed concurrently with your first semester of graduate school.

**What is the difference between the 2-year regular program, the 3-year regular program, and the advanced standing program?**

The advanced standing program is reserved for students who have received an undergraduate degree from a CSWE accredited social work program. Students who have done well in their undergraduate BSW program (GPA minimum of 3.25) are eligible to apply for advanced standing, which eliminates the first year of graduate studies. Students in the advanced standing program would take a bridge course in the summer and then jump into the second year of the regular program.

The regular program is delivered in a 2-year format or a 3-year format. The course work is the same, however the plan of study differs. In the 2-year program students take an average of five classes per semester and completion of a field/practicum experience that averages 16 hours/week during both years. In the 3-year program students take an average of three classes per semester and delay their field experiences until year two and three.

**How do I decide between the 2-year and 3-year programs?**

This is personal decision for each student. Consider the many aspects of your life that you are juggling as you complete your graduate degree. Are you working? Do you have parenting or other family responsibilities? How much time can you devote to your studies? Have you freed up 16 hours/week for the practicum hours to be completed? We encourage you to talk over with the MSW program director your 2 or 3 year options.

**I work full time. What do I need to do in order to be successful in your program?**

All of our classes are in the evening or on weekends. One thing to consider if you are working full-time is the hours needed to be set aside for the field or practicum. The expectation is 16 hours/week spread throughout the semester. How will you make sure that you have that time available? If you are working full-time, we highly recommend you pursue the 3-year program, as it is very difficult to complete the program, with the practicum expectations, in 2-years. If you are looking for practicums on evenings and weekends, we cannot guarantee them because of the shortage of those types of opportunities. Most agencies do not have MSWs that work and are available to supervise during those hours.

**What is field or practicum?**

This is the signature of the social work profession. A substantial part of your education takes place in agencies providing social work services. We currently have over 200 agencies we work with to provide you with this experience. Agencies range from child protection to schools to prisons to nursing homes to hospitals to community centers. You can work in pet therapy, provide case management with persons experiencing homelessness, and with agencies advocating at the legislature to address issues in the community. The profession of social work is broad. You will have an opportunity to learn the profession of social work at two different settings by completing 450 hours at one agency in the first year and another 450 hours at another agency in your second year. You will be supervised by a social worker who has been selected by our faculty as someone skilled in mentoring and professional development.

**How do I get a placement?**

You will complete a field application form and resume and submit them to the Field Director at the School of Social Work. This form is a chance for you to express your desires regarding settings you are interested in or populations with which you would like to work. The form also gives an idea of limitations you might have such as schedule or area of the island. The Field Director then works with agencies to find a good match. You will be given information about the agency and complete an interview at the agency. If it’s a good match, then we proceed. Time is important here as many of the good placements go very quickly. If you are a new applicant, you need to get that field placement in as soon as possible, ideally by April. There are a couple of practicums that offer a stipend, however 99% of the agencies do not offer paid practicum.

**How do I finance this?**

Graduate school is a significant investment in your future. We encourage you to fill out the FAFSA early. The recommendation is by March 1st in order to meet the priority processing deadline. In addition, we encourage you to pursue any and all scholarship opportunities. Some to note:

* Yellow Ribbon Scholarship Program - The Yellow Ribbon Program is a partnership between Hawaii Pacific University and the Department of Veteran Affairs, to supplement the tuition benefit of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Yellow Ribbon program will cover your actual tuition expenses at HPU for all required courses in an approved degree program, for up to $10,000 ($5,000 from HPU plus $5,000 from the VA) per year in addition to your base benefit.
* School of Social Work Scholarship – each year the HPU School of Social Work awards two scholarships, one undergraduate and one graduate.

Another way to help with the cost of school is through the graduate assistantship program. The School of Social Work has a number of graduate assistantships to award each year. The graduate assistantship is a program where you participate in a research study with a social work faculty member and thereby gain important understanding of how research informs social work practice. In addition to the experience you receive a tuition reduction. The typical formula for the graduate assistantships in our school is 8-10 hours/week of work on a project in exchange for a 25% tuition waiver. Because of the time commitment, the program may not be feasible for everyone. The graduate assistantships are only awarded at time of admission and may be continued if the student desires for up to two years. In order to be eligible you must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.5.

**How will I know what courses to take?**

Relationships are the key to social work practice and that is evident in the model of mentoring followed within the School of Social Work. Upon admission you will be assigned a faculty advisor who will meet with you a minimum of once per semester to plan out your courses and help you to graduate on time.