

MSW Writing Assignments: Overview of Expectations

The majority of classes and all field practicums will have some type of writing requirement. Keep the following in mind:

- Students are expected to be familiar with (and use) the basic elements of essay writing: introduction, thesis, supporting paragraphs, and conclusion.
- Many papers will require students to identify applicable material and review literature beyond that provided in class lectures and assigned readings.
- Instructors may have specific requirements or restrictions regarding the use of primary and secondary source literature, lecture material, or internet sources for references.
- While the School of Social Work has no standardized format or reference style, the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 5th edition) is the style preferred by most faculty. Check with your instructor regarding the degree to which you are expected to follow APA style.

When grading papers, professors consider the following:

- Are the main ideas of the paper thoroughly developed, presented, and substantiated?
- Does the paper integrate ideas from class texts, readings, lectures, and discussions?
- Does the paper have a clear and well-defined organizational structure?
- Are there appropriate transitions between ideas?
- Are thoughts and ideas understandable and logical?
- Are thoughts and ideas soundly linked to well-supported arguments?
- Is language used in a clear and meaningful way?
- Is the writing style appropriate to the assignment?
- Is person-first and non-sexist language used throughout the paper?
- Is literature salient to the topic; is it cited and referenced appropriately?
- Is APA style used (to the degree it is required?)
- Are there typing errors?
- Does the paper involve introspection?
- Does the paper grapple with the complexities of social work practice?
- Does the paper incorporate interesting and creative ideas?

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