Rutgers University School of Social Work MSW Program
Technical Standards for
Admission, Matriculation, Progression and Program Completion

As the Rutgers University MSW program seeks to prepare students for professional and ethical social work practice, MSW candidates¹ are expected to meet the program’s academic standards, maintain a high level of professional and ethical conduct, and adhere as closely as possible to professional and ethical standards articulated in the NASW Code of Ethics. In addition to the clearly defined academic standards specified in the School of Social Work (SSW) Academics website and the School’s Standards for Professional and Ethical conduct delineated in the MSW program handbook, the School has identified a set of technical standards that specify the non-academic attributes, abilities, and skills candidates must demonstrate for admission, retention, progression, and graduation from the MSW program.

Admission to the School of Social Work is conditional on the candidate’s ability to achieve and meet these technical standards in conjunction with the academic standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, and depends on a process that examines and values all pertinent skills, attitudes, and attributes of each candidate on a case-by-case basis. The School of Social Work adheres to the highest ethical and professional standards of the Social Work profession. In doing so, the School of Social Work reserves the right to deny admission to candidates or to discharge candidates who, upon completion of this interactive process, cannot meet these technical and/or academic standards or who would be deemed to pose a threat to patients and others in the educational and clinical (i.e., field education) environment. Under all circumstances, a candidate should be able to perform in an independent manner. The use of an intermediary in the clinical setting is ordinarily not permitted and may never be used as a substitute for a candidate’s judgment or intellectual acumen. The use of an intermediary would be considered only when it does not alter an essential element or function of these technical and/or academic standards.

- **Professional Communication:** The social work candidate must be able to communicate effectively and professionally with other students, faculty, staff, clients, field supervisors and other professionals from a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently (in English) and must be able to clearly and accurately record information and interpret verbal, written, and nonverbal communication. Candidates must also be open to receive feedback from other social work or allied professionals as well as their peers.

- **Observation Skills:** Observation requires the use of visual, auditory, and somatic senses (or the functional equivalent) in a variety of areas related to contemporary social work practice. Candidates must have the ability to observe and evaluate in classroom settings, small group teaching exercises, one-on-one evaluation, social work settings and practice sites. Candidates must be able to observe a client accurately, particularly as related to social work assessment and intervention.

- **Motor and Sensory:** A candidate must demonstrate sufficient motor and sensory function to successfully complete a class and field practicum, with or without reasonable

¹ The term “candidate” refers to candidates for admission to SSW as well as current SSW students who are enrolled and seek to progress and graduate.
accommodations.

- **Intellectual, Conceptual, and Integrative Abilities:** Candidates must possess adequate intellectual, conceptual and integrative abilities to successfully complete coursework and field practicum. Social work practice entails assessing and intervening in complex situations with vulnerable populations and social workers must possess these abilities to engage in complex problem-solving and practice effectively.

- **Behavioral and Interpersonal Attributes:** A candidate must possess the appropriate behavioral and interpersonal attributes in order to develop and maintain professional relationships with clients, colleagues, instructors, and community members in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and the RU SSW Standards of Professional and Ethical Conduct. These include, but are not limited to, emotional self-regulation, self-awareness, flexibility, and compassion. The candidate must be able serve (in an appropriate manner), all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation (or lack thereof), gender identification, ability, sexual orientation, and value system. The candidate should also respect cultural differences among their peers, faculty, supervisors and other professionals.

- **Field Education Practicum:** An integral part of the social work education process is the completion of generalist and specialized social work field education practicum experience. Within the constraints established by law, in these experiences student social work interns are placed in social work practice settings and expected to function at the professional level of a social worker with the highest ethical standards.

Candidates are expected to maintain a high standard of professional behavior including adherence to the School’s standards of professional and ethical conduct and the NASW code of ethics. Additionally, candidates are expected to adhere to HIPAA regulations (if applicable), which include but are not limited to maintaining client confidentiality, and the protection of access to client records. Candidates are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate a willingness to engage clients, social workers and allied professionals, and others in the provision of client-focused services and care.

A candidate, whose behavior or performance raises questions concerning his/her ability to fulfill these technical standards, will be referred to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs (amhunter@ssw.rutgers.edu) and may be required to obtain an evaluation and/or testing by a health care provider designated/approved by the School, if appropriate. The results will be provided to appropriate School/University leadership to determine whether the student is fit to pursue the educational and/or field education program. If the candidate is deemed fit to pursue the program, the School reserves the right to require actions recommended by the health care provider, including but not limited to further testing, counseling, monitoring, and leaves of absence.

Candidates who cannot meet the technical standards with or without reasonable accommodations may be subject to review by the appropriate University officials to determine the appropriate action, which can include dismissal from the program. Candidates must be proactive in addressing deficiencies in meeting the standards and follow appropriate University policies set forth in doing so.
The RU SSW complies with all applicable laws concerning applicants and students with disabilities. For any eligible student, Rutgers University provides reasonable accommodations in order to ensure that all candidates have an equal opportunity to participate in all programs, services, and practical training activities. These technical standards are not intended to deter any candidate for whom reasonable accommodation would allow the fulfillment of the complete curriculum. RU SSW will provide reasonable accommodations, according to University policies and procedures, to otherwise qualified applicants and matriculated students with disabilities unless: (a) such accommodations impose undue hardship to the institution, (b) direct threats of substantial harm to the health and safety of others due to the disability cannot be eliminated by any reasonable accommodations available, or (c) such accommodations fundamentally alter the educational program or academic standards.

If you have any general questions about this form or its contents, please contact the SSW Student Affairs Office at studentaffairs@ssw.rutgers.edu. Students with questions regarding what types of accommodations may be considered to achieve these standards are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at the Rutgers Campus they are enrolled immediately to begin discussions and register for services at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services.