Auburn University Samford Hall Tower Logo in orange and blue

# Auburn University Social Work, BA

The Auburn University Social Work Program, founded in 1975, provides a BA degree in Social Work to approximately 150 students, graduating 40-50 students annually. The program has been continuously accredited through the Council on Social Work Education since 1978. The Social Work Program is a baccalaureate program within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work in the College of Liberal Arts.

The Mission of the Auburn University Social Work Program is to make a positive impact on the social problems within the State of Alabama by educating and training generalist social work personnel who are capable of addressing the problems unique to Alabama’s poor, advocating on behalf of the disenfranchised, including children and families at risk, and dealing with diverse populations. We do so by establishing and maintaining community partnerships, as well as developing and implementing research techniques and evaluative strategies designed to address these problems in a collaborative manner.

The Social Work Program mission is consistent with instructional and state context, as we aim to prepare students to serve the poor and underserved population in our state and beyond. The Social Work Program’s foundation and practice courses communicate the historical roots of oppression and poverty and encourage students to strive toward social justice.

## Student Learning Outcomes

### Specificity of Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are derived from 10 Educational Competencies and associated 41 Practice Behaviors identified by the Council on Social Work Education in the 2008 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

* 1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
     1. Advocate for client access to the services of social work
     2. Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development
     3. Attend to professional roles and boundaries
     4. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication
     5. Engage in career-long learning
     6. Use supervision and consultation
  2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice

1. Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice
2. Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Ethics in Social Work Statement of Principles
3. Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts
4. Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions
   1. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
5. Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom
6. Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
7. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
   1. Engage diversity and difference in practice
8. Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppose, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power
9. Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
10. Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
11. View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants
    1. Advance human rights and social and economic justice
12. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
13. Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
14. Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice
    1. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
15. Use practice experiences to inform scientific inquiry
16. Use research evidence to inform practice
    1. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
17. Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation.
18. Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment
    1. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services
19. Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being
20. Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action
    1. Respond to contexts that shape practice
21. Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services
22. Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.
    1. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

*Engagement*

1. Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
2. Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
3. Develop mutually agreed-upon focus of work and desired outcomes

*Assessment*

1. Collect, organize, and interpret client data
2. Assess client strengths and limitations
3. Develop mutually agreed-upon intervention goals and objectives
4. Select appropriate intervention strategies

*Intervention*

1. Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals
2. Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities
3. Help clients resolve problems
4. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
5. Facilitate transitions and endings

*Evaluation*

1. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions

### Comprehensive Outcomes

The outcomes listed previously are comprehensive in that they reflect the breadth, depth, and scope of our program. These 41 Practice Behaviors have been identified by the Council of Social Work Education (the accrediting body for social work education) as a comprehensive set of learning outcomes based on knowledge, values, and skills that must be sufficiently demonstrated by students preparing for generalist social work practice. Students must demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies (and associated practice behaviors) in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

### Communicating Student Learning Outcomes

The comprehensive list of student learning outcomes, and the feedback from the previous University Assessment is discussed at our annual summer faculty business meeting. All of the program faculty participate in the meeting. We also include the student learning outcomes (i.e. competencies and practice behaviors) on the Social Work Program’s website, in the Social Work Student Handbook, and in the course syllabi. Following a student’s acceptance into the Social Work Program they will enroll in Methods of Social Work Practice I (SOWO 4060). The Social Work Program Director attends the first day of class to provide an orientation to the program and to review the student learning outcomes, rationale for the outcomes, and accreditation standards.

## Curriculum Map

### Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment to view the Social Work, BA Curriculum Map

## Measurement

### Outcome-Measure Alignment

All assessment data collection efforts occur during SOWO 4950 Senior Integrative Seminar – when students are conducting their internships. All student learning outcomes are focused on graduating seniors, so assessment data is collected toward the latter end of their placements. Each of the 41 practice behaviors (student learning outcomes) are measured utilizing two separate instruments. One is the Intern Field Evaluation and the second is the Student Self- Efficacy measure. Each of these measures were created by program faculty and allow student intern filed supervisors to rate students on their level of proficiency in demonstrating each practice behavior, or as in the case of the self-efficacy measure, students rate themselves on how well prepared they feel they are with regard to the practice behaviors. (See Appendix B for an illustration of outcomes and assessment alignment)

### Direct Measures

1. The **Intern Field Evaluation** instrument is a 41-item questionnaire that asks Field Instructors (community social work professionals who are supervising our interns) to rate students on their attainment of each practice behavior. Students are rated on each item using a scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating an “Outstanding Level”, 4 is “Above Expected Level”, 3 is “At Expected Level”, 2 is “Below Expected Level”, and 1 is “Failing Level”. For example, the first item on the instrument states: “Advocate for client access to the services of social work.” Field Instructors are asked to “Circle the appropriate rating” using this scale for all 41 practice behaviors.
2. The **Student Self-Efficacy** instrument is a 41-item questionnaire that asks students to rate themselves on how well prepared they believe they are with regard to each of the 41 practice behaviors. Students rate themselves on each item using a scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating “Very Well Prepared”, 4 is “Well Prepared”, 3 is “Prepared”, 2 is “A Little Prepared”, and 1 is “Not at all Prepared”. For example, the first item on the instrument states:

Please “Identify how well prepared you believe you are in each of the following areas: Circle the appropriate rating.” First item is: “Advocate for client access to the services of social work.”

1. **Data Collection**

Both instruments are administered near the conclusion of each spring and fall semester at the end of the student’s internship. The administration procedures are presented below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assessment Instrument** | **When Administered** | **Responsibility** | **Data Source** | **Outcomes Measured** |
| Intern Field Evaluation | End of Internship Each Spring & Fall Semester | Field Director | Field Supervisors | All Practice Behaviors |
| Student Self- Evaluation (a self- efficacy measure) | End of Internship Each Spring & Fall Semester | Field Director | Student Interns | All Practice Behaviors |

## Results

1. **Reporting Results**

During the 2015-2016 academic year, 41 students (15 in fall & 26 in spring) were evaluated on their demonstration of the 41 practice behaviors. Based on the field instructor’s evaluations at least 97% of students performed at the expected level (ranking of 3), performed above the expected level (ranking of 4), or performed at the outstanding level (ranking of 5) on all 41 practice behaviors. ( See Appendix C: 2015-2016 Field Evaluation Results)

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 38 students (14 in fall & 24 in spring) completed the self-efficacy measure. Results indicated that over 97% of the senior social work students reported feeling prepared (ranking of 3), well prepared (ranking of 4), or very well prepared (ranking of 5) to perform all 10 educational competencies and the 41assocated practice behaviors. (See Appendix D: 2015-2016 Student Self-Efficacy Evaluation Results

1. **Interpreting Results**

Overall, the senior social work students are largely successful in mastering the 10 competencies as measured by the 41 practice behaviors (See Appendix E: 2015-2016 Social Work Program, BA Assessment Report Matrix). Field instructors indicated on the Final Field Evaluation instrument that no less than 97% of students either met or exceeded expectations on all practice behaviors, thus surpassing the 80% benchmark set by the faculty. Results of the Student Self-Efficacy measure also indicated that over 97% of students felt confident in performing the 41 practice behaviors. A means comparison between the field instructor ratings of student competency and the student self-efficacy ratings of confidence in 2015-2016 data indicate that there is no significant differences between these groups on any practice behavior. In comparison to the 2014/15 data, the program increased mean rates of all 41 practice behaviors and the 10 competencies.

1. **Communicating Results**

The primary review of all Social Work Program outcome data and implications for program renewal happens during the yearly Social Work Faculty Business meeting. Each August, the faculty attend the meeting to discuss program assessment data and outcomes, possible changes resulting from the outcomes and new initiatives as needed. All faculty are involved in the discussion of the program assessment outcomes and provide input on possible changes to the implicit and explicit curriculum that may improve student experience and outcomes. The faculty review data from the previous year.

## Use of Results

1. **Purposeful Reflection and Action Plan**

The Social Work Faculty business meeting serves as the primary review of all program assessment data for the previous year. During this process, faculty examine the competency benchmark achievement (currently set at 80% for each item) to determine efficacy. While overall benchmarks (for the 10 competencies) are reviewed, careful attention is also paid to each of the 41 practice behaviors. Although students are currently achieving the 80% benchmark for all practice behaviors and competencies, the faculty examines each practice behavior from both sources of measurement and discusses how the program can improve scores on behaviors receiving the lowest marks. For example, students typically score lower on competencies and practice behaviors related to research-informed practice. Upon further examination students report feeling more confident in their ability to perform many of these practice behaviors than their field instructors believe they are. While this difference was not statistically significant, program faculty discussed this difference and agreed we needed to ensure that both students and field instructors are thoroughly trained in the nuances of the instrument to ensure reliable data.

The faculty reviewed the 2015-2016 data during the Faculty Business meeting in August, and the feedback from the 2016 University Assessment Report during a later program meeting. According to the data, all senior level social work students met the 80% benchmark for each competency and practice behavior. Both measures reported an increase in mean rates over the 2014-2015 data, with only 2 practice behaviors on each of the measures reporting less than 100% of student success. Faculty thoroughly reviewed the data and decided to delay any significant changes regarding our BA program, curriculum or assessment data collection until the new graduate program in Social Work (Masters in Social Work [MSW]) began accepting students, and collecting data. As most of the faculty will be working across the undergraduate and graduate programs, and since the senior social work students are reporting 100% success rate on all competencies, the faculty felt it was important to maintain our current curriculum and assessment protocol as the graduate program begins. In addition, the Council on Social Work Education updated the Educational Practice Standards (EPAS 2015) changing the Core Competencies from 10 to 9 areas of focus. With a change in the Core Competencies, came a change in the defined indicators, formally known as “practice behaviors”.

Under the 2008 EPAS standards there were 41 Practice Behaviors that all social work students were expected to master upon graduation. According to the 2015 EPAS standards, there are 31 indicators and programs will need to shift the focus from measuring behaviors to measuring knowledge, skills, values and cognitive & affective reactions for each of the 9 Core Competencies. The new MSW program will begin assessment practices under the new CSWE Standards immediately and the BA program plans to shift to the new standards in the next couple of years. However, until the new program directors are settled (each social work program will have a new program director beginning June 1, 2017), and the new MSW program is established, the faculty chose to make no direct BA curriculum changes. The faculty discussed adjusting program benchmarks to reflect individual needs and goals of the students and program. For example, faculty discussed if an 80% competency benchmark rating is adequate for the following competency - 2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice, or should we require a 90% competency achievement? The faculty decided to maintain the current benchmark levels since students are achieving the goals at a 97%-100% rating.

In addition, the faculty discussed the feedback from the 2016 University Assessment Report. The report suggested that we have a conversation about the definition of verbs associated with the program outcomes. The faculty discussed in detail what they felt was successful achievement as defined by verbs such as understanding and demonstrating. Specifically, the faculty discussed the individual assignments each utilize in specific courses (see Appendix A: Curriculum Matrix) to ensure competency achievement. The discussion allowed faculty to process course assignments and discuss how practice behavior achievement happens across courses.

Faculty plan to discuss the 2016-2017 data that is currently being compiled, the competency benchmark ratings, and cross curriculum outcome achievement at the 2017 Faculty Business Meeting in August 2017.