



# MSSW Application Requirements

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# General Requirements

All applicants to the Master of Science in Social Work program are required to submit the following:

## Online Application Form

### Application Fee

All applicants must submit a \$75 application fee upon submission of their application. AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and Teach for America alumni are eligible for application fee waivers. Veterans, McNair Scholars, Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students are also eligible. Do not submit an application fee if you feel you may be eligible for a waiver as the fee is non-refundable. To request a fee waiver, upload verification of your service to your application or email proof of participation/service to the Director of Admissions at [dl635@columbia.edu](mailto:dl635@columbia.edu).

### Resume

Please submit a detailed current resume in chronological order, listing paid work and volunteer experience separately, indicating whether the experience was full-time or part-time, by whom it was supervised, and the nature of the client population. For part-time employment, please indicate the weekly hours worked. The resume should also include descriptions of community and leadership activities, other relevant life experiences and all languages read and/or spoken in addition to English. The resume may be longer than one page, but should not exceed more than three pages in length.

### Admissions Essays

The admissions essays consist of three components, which can be completed separately or combined into a single essay. These essays are an opportunity for you to tell us more about yourself, your professional interests and experiences that have influenced you to pursue an MSSW degree. Please see the Admissions Essays section on page 5 for more details.

### Three Letters of Reference

Letters of reference should come from professors, your most recent employer or volunteer supervisor, or those who know you in a professional context. Letters of recommendation can be submitted digitally or on paper. Submitting letters of recommendation digitally through the online application is recommended, as it saves you and your recommender the cost of postage and expedites the processing of your application. If your recommender is submitting their letter of reference on paper, please ask him/her to send the recommendation directly to us. If your recommender gives you his/her completed recommendation letter to submit on his/her behalf, it should be in a sealed envelope signed across the flap.

Please keep in mind that our online application system can only accommodate three letters of reference. Additional letters of reference can be submitted by using the paper recommendation form. The paper recommendation form is accessible as a PDF, allowing both you and the recommender to complete the form digitally. Digitally completed forms can be e-mailed to [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu); printed forms can be sent by regular mail or in person to the address below. Digitally submitted reference letters must be submitted by the recommender, not the applicant.

All paper letters of recommendation should be submitted by mail or in person to: CSSW Office of Admissions, 1255 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.

**CSSW adheres to the provisions of the Educational Privacy Act of 1974 in respect to references. No personal references will be accepted, nor references from professionals with whom you have had a client or patient relationship.**

### **Transcript(s)**

To expedite the application review process, you are strongly encouraged to upload a digital copy of your official transcript to your online application prior to submission. This eliminates the need to have transcripts mailed to CSSW during the initial processing and review of your application and precludes any decision delays resulting from a missing transcript. Applicants who are currently enrolled at their undergraduate institution while applying for admission should submit a transcript showing all courses taken, including courses that are in progress. **Applicants are required to submit transcripts from all institutions where they have completed 12 or more credits toward their undergraduate degree.**

If you are unable to upload your transcript(s) within the online application system, you may submit them by regular mail. Do not mail in a paper version of your transcript if a digital version has already been uploaded to the online application unless you are requested to do so by CSSW.

All applicants who receive an offer of admission are required to provide an official copy of their final transcript prior to enrollment. A transcript is considered final if it includes the final grades for all of your coursework and confirms that your undergraduate degree has been awarded. The Columbia School of Social Work reserves the right to rescind any offer of admission if discrepancies between unofficial and official transcript(s) are found.

Official transcripts submitted in paper form should be mailed to: CSSW Office of Admissions, 1255 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. Official transcripts can also be transmitted digitally to [csw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:csw-admit@columbia.edu). Digitally transmitted transcripts must come from the issuing institution or the third party the institution has contracted to send transcripts. Transcripts in paper form must be submitted in a sealed envelope by the issuing institution or the third party issuer to be considered official.

### **Transcript Upload Guidelines**

The best way to upload a transcript is by requesting a digital copy of your official transcript (where available) and uploading the file to your online application. If your institution does not issue digital transcripts, you should request paper a copy of your official transcript on paper and have it scanned, so it can be uploaded as a digital file. Scanned transcripts should clearly display the institution's name and other identifying marks seen on the original paper copy. Digitally submitted transcripts should include the transcript legend, which may be on the back page of the transcript.

Non-official versions of your transcript, such as a screenshot of your coursework and grades on your institution's website, will not be accepted. If you are unable to upload a legible document, you will need to have an official paper transcript mailed to CSSW.

If you have any questions about uploading your transcript(s), or what type of transcript(s) will be accepted, please contact the admissions office at [csw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:csw-admit@columbia.edu) or (212) 851-2400.

## Additional Requirements by Program

Applicants to the Online Campus, Advanced Standing, Reduced Residency, Professional Option, and Transfer programs must submit all the required materials mentioned on page 2 and 3, and will have the following additional requirements:

### ONLINE CAMPUS

- All applicants to the Online Campus must complete an interview with the admissions team in order to be considered for admission. Upon submission of the application, Online Campus applicants will receive a confirmation email, which will include a link to the Online Campus Interview page on our website. Online Campus applicants must select an interview time on the online scheduler or contact the Office of Admissions if they cannot find a time that fits their schedule.

### ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM

- **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Advanced Standing Program instructions in the Admission Essays section, answering essay questions 1, 2, and 3B.
- **Field Work Evaluation Form:** Applicants must have an *Undergraduate Field Evaluation Form* completed by a field instructor or appropriate person at your BSW program. The form can be found in the References section of the application. The form can be submitted by mail, fax, or as an email attachment to [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu).
- **List of BSW Courses:** A list of all of your BSW program courses with descriptions must be submitted for review. Ideally, please list by term taken. The course descriptions can be taken directly from your school's course catalog or website. Applicants in the process of completing their BSW program should include a list of classes they will be taking in their final semester(s). Course descriptions should be uploaded in the Admissions Essays section of the application. The list can also be sent by email, fax, or regular mail to the Office of Admissions.

### REDUCED RESIDENCY PROGRAM

- **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Reduced Residency Program instructions in the Admission Essays section, answering questions 1, 2, and 3C.
- **Supervisor Recommendation:** One of the three reference letters must come from a current supervisor.

### PROFESSIONAL OPTION PROGRAM

- Applicants should submit a participatory letter from Columbia School of General Studies. Call the Admissions Office for details: (212) 851-2400.

### TRANSFER STUDENTS

- **Specific Admission Essays:** Applicants should follow the Transfer Student instructions in the Admissions Essays section, answering questions 1, 2, and 3B.
- **Academic Reference:** A minimum of one of the three required letters of recommendation must be an academic reference.
- **Field Work Evaluation Form:** Transfer student applicants must have a *Graduate Field Evaluation Form* completed by a field instructor or appropriate person at your MSW program. The form is

located in the Reference section of the application. The form may be submitted by mail, fax, or as an email attachment to [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu).

- **List of MSW Courses:** A list of all of your MSW program courses with descriptions must be submitted for review. The course descriptions can be taken directly from your school's course catalog or website. Applicants in the process of completing their MSW courses should include a list of classes they will be taking in their final semester(s). Course descriptions should be uploaded in the Admissions Essays section of the application. The list can also be sent by email, fax, or regular mail to the Office of Admissions.

Note: Transfer students are admitted for a maximum of one year of study at CSSW.

## NON-DEGREE APPLICANTS

- Non-Degree applicants only need to submit their transcript(s) and a \$95 application fee.

**NOTE: Applicants who are having trouble uploading materials to their online application should contact us at [cssw-admit@columbia.edu](mailto:cssw-admit@columbia.edu) or by phone at (212) 851-2400. Materials such as course descriptions and field evaluation forms can be submitted by email, regular mail, or fax. Our mailing address is CSSW Office of Admissions, 1255 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. Our fax number is (212) 851-2305.**

## Admissions Essays

Applicants are required to answer three essay questions, which may change from year to year. The three questions can be answered separately, or combined into a single essay. If applicants choose the latter, they must submit their essay in Question 1. Admissions essay questions will be available in August for admission to the following Spring and Fall terms. Please create an account on our online application to view the current essay questions.

In general, successful applicants will demonstrate the *Essential Abilities and Attributes for Admission and Continuance in the School of Social Work* outlined below.

### **Essential Abilities and Attributes for Admission and Continuance in the School of Social Work**

The following standards, distinguished from academic standards, describe the physical, cognitive, emotional, and character requirements to provide reasonable assurance that students can complete the entire course of study and participate fully in all aspects of social work education and practice.

Acquisition of competence as a social worker is a lengthy and complex process that will be undermined by significant limitations of the student's ability to participate in the full spectrum of the experiences and the requirements of the curriculum.

Students in the Columbia School of Social Work are expected to possess the following abilities and attributes at a level appropriate to their year in the program. They are expected to meet these standards in the classroom, in their practice, and elsewhere. Attention to these standards will be part of evaluations made by faculty responsible for evaluating applications for admission as well as by faculty responsible for evaluating students' classroom and practicum performance.

**Motor Abilities**

The social work student must have sufficient motor abilities to attend class and practicum placement. Reasonable accommodation through technology for limitations in motor abilities will be allowed. The Office of Disability Services may be consulted regarding reasonable accommodations. For more information, please visit [www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services](http://www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services)

**Sensory Abilities**

The social work student must have the ability through his/her senses to participate in classes and practicum placement. Students must acquire and integrate data through the use of their senses. Reasonable accommodation through technology for limitations in sensory abilities will be allowed. The Office of Disability Services may be consulted regarding reasonable accommodations. For more information, please visit [www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services](http://www.health.columbia.edu/disability-services)

**Communication Skills**

The social work student must communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals. Students must express their ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to listen to others. They must have sufficient skills in spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program.

**Professional Commitment**

The social work student must have a strong commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession. The student must be committed to the essential values of social work, which are the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her right to a just share of society's resources.

**Self-Awareness**

The social work student must know how his/her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect his/her thinking, behavior and relationships. The student must be willing to examine and change his/her behavior when it interferes with his/her working with clients and other professionals and must be able to work effectively with those in subordinate positions as well as with those in positions of authority.

**Knowledge Base for Social Work Practice**

The professional activities of social work students must be grounded in relevant social, behavioral and biological science knowledge and research. This includes knowledge and skills in relationship-building, data-gathering, assessment, interventions and evaluation of practice.

**Objectivity**

The social work student must be able to objectively and systematically evaluate clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way.

**Empathy**

The social work student must endeavor to seek to comprehend another individual's way of life and values. He/she must be able to communicate this empathy and support to the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.

### **Energy**

The social work student must be resilient to the undesirable effects of stress, exercising appropriate self-care and developing cooperative and facilitative relationships with colleagues and peers.

### **Acceptance of Diversity**

The social work student must appreciate the value of human diversity. He/she must 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, ability, sexual orientation and value system.

### **Interpersonal Skills**

The social work student must demonstrate the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals. These include compassion, altruism, integrity, and the demonstration of respect for and consideration of others.

### **Professional Behavior**

The social work student must behave professionally by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, adhering to the profession's code of ethics, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, and completing assignments on time.

## **International Applicants**

### **English-Language Proficiency**

Applicants who are not U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents and who are citizens of non-English speaking countries must have a working knowledge of English. To meet this requirement, applicants must achieve the following minimum score on the TOEFL or IELTS exam:

**IELTS** Minimum Score = 7.0

#### **TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

- Internet-based Test (iBT): Minimum Score 98
- Computer-based Test (CBT): Minimum Score 233
- Paper-based Test (PBT): Minimum Score 577

Applicants submitting Paper-based Test scores only must also submit the following individual scores:

- TWE (Test of Written English): Minimum Score 4.0
- TSE (Test of Spoken English): Minimum Score 4.0

Applicants are not automatically exempt from taking the TOEFL if they have received a degree in the U.S. or from an institution whose official language is English. Please contact the Office of Admissions for more information.

### **Transcripts**

Applicants who attended institutions outside the U.S. must provide official records of study with their applications. These should be issued from or certified by the institution and include all course titles,

grades received, degree title and degree award date. Documents not in English must be accompanied by a certified translation.

### **Interview**

All applicants who are not U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents and who are citizens of non-English speaking countries are required to complete an interview with our admissions team in order to be considered for admission. After submitting the application, international applicants will receive an email, which will contain a link to the International Applicant Interview section of our website. All international applicants from non-English speaking countries must select a time on the online scheduler or contact the Office of Admissions if they are unable to find an interview time that fits their schedule.

## **Statistics Proficiency**

Proficiency in statistics is not a requirement for admission. However, all Masters of Science in Social Work candidates at the Columbia School of Social Work must demonstrate proficiency in statistics and quantitative methods in order to graduate. Our policy for how students can demonstrate proficiency will change for students entering in the Fall 2016 term. Please see the Statistics Proficiency requirement respective to the term in which you are applying.

### **Students Admitted for Spring 2016**

Applicants who are admitted for the Spring 2016 term may fulfill the statistics proficiency requirement by demonstrating they have taken an approved statistics course within the past five years with a B grade or higher. For Spring 2016 applicants, the statistics course must have been taken during the Spring 2011 semester or later. Students who enter in the Spring 2016 term can also fulfill the statistics requirement by successfully completing the statistics course offered at CSSW.

An acceptable statistics course should, at a minimum, cover the following topics: frequency distribution, central tendency (mean, median, and mode), variability (range, standard deviation and variance), random sampling, probability, hypotheses (null and alternative), decision rule, two-tailed probability evaluations, z-tests, t-tests, ANOVA and Chi-square testing. It is also recommended that your statistics course covers correlation and basic linear regressions.

The School of Social Work cannot accept a research course to fulfill this requirement, unless you are able to provide a copy of the syllabus that clearly outlines the extensive statistics work that was completed as part of the research course.

To satisfy your statistics requirement from a course you have already taken or are planning on taking prior to enrollment at CSSW, please complete the Statistics Course Approval Form by visiting <http://socialwork.columbia.edu/admitted-students/new-student-checklist/statistics-requirement-information/statistics-course-approval-form>

If a statistics course you have previously taken or are planning to take is approved, the Office of Admissions must have record of this course on an official transcript showing successful completion. Admitted students who have taken statistics at their undergraduate institution do not need to submit an additional transcript. However, admitted students who have taken or will be taking statistics outside of their undergraduate institution will need to submit an official transcript from that institution.



The statistics requirement does not impact admission to the program. However, it must be fulfilled by all admitted applicants prior to enrollment. If you are admitted and have not received confirmation that your statistics requirement has been fulfilled, you will need to fulfill the requirement before the Spring 2016 term or be automatically enrolled into a statistics course at CSSW.

**Students Admitted for Fall 2016 and After**

Students entering in the Fall 2016 term or later will no longer be able to fulfill the statistics requirement by completing a statistics course prior to enrolling at The School of Social Work. All students will be required to complete an introductory statistics course at CSSW during the first semester of their enrollment. The statistics course will be graded on a pass/fail scale. Students who fail the statistics course during their first term will have another chance to complete the course in the following semester. However, students who fail to complete the statistics course with a passing grade on their second attempt will be dismissed from CSSW.

Students have the option of taking a statistics waiver exam before the beginning of their first term to demonstrate their proficiency in statistics. Successful completion the statistics waiver exam will exempt the student from taking the course.

To find out more information about the waiver exam, please visit <http://socialwork.columbia.edu/admitted-students/new-student-checklist/waiver-exam-information>.