

Submitting Your Personal Essay

Master of Social Work

Your personal essay will address how your experiences, strengths, and distinguishable qualities will make a positive contribution to the Master of Social Work program and the field of social work.

Your essay should reflect your best professional writing. You need to answer all three (3) prompts below in no more than six (6) double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins on all sides. You must begin each section of your essay with the required heading. Your essay will assist the Admissions Committee in evaluating your capacity and readiness for graduate social work education. In essence, this is an opportunity for the Admissions Committee to get to know more about you and your previous experience, and why you want to pursue an MSW. Your essay must follow the format provided below.

Your essay must include these headings and follow this format:

Heading for section 1: Pursuing an MSW

What has led you to seek a graduate degree in social work? Why do you want to be a social worker? How have your personal experiences, including education, work, and/or volunteering, contributed to this desire? What specifically led you to apply to a social work program rather than programs for other helping professionals such as psychology, counseling, or healthcare? Do you have specific career goals within social work? (1-2 pages).

For advanced standing applicants only

How has your BSW education prepared you for graduate work and influenced your decision to pursue your graduate degree?

Heading for section 2: Case Review

Read the following case study and reflect on your personal beliefs and values. Write a short essay (1-2 pages) using the questions that are provided as a guide.

You are a social worker in a community health clinic, and you will be seeing a new client today, named River who is 52 years old and lives with their long-time partner. The clinic where you work serves people who are uninsured and come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. It is a common part of your job to give out bus passes, referrals to the food bank, and help your client navigate the application process for various needs-based programs, such as food stamps. River has set up this appointment to address some of these tasks, but also the doctor at the clinic felt they would benefit from counseling as they have been experiencing some depressive symptoms. As you begin the meeting with River, they note to you that the intake forms that they completed prior to your visit only included binary gender options (i.e., female/male), and River identifies as genderqueer. They found this troubling and non-inclusive, especially for a clinic that seeks to serve a wide range of underserved populations.

- How might you address River's concern during the session? After the session? What values and ethics guide your decisions?
- What issues of difference and diversity were raised for you? How do your personal philosophy, values, and worldview align with social work as it relates to diversity and difference? How will you approach human differences as a practicing social worker?

- After reviewing the Code of Ethics (see: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>), discuss the professional values and ethics that would be applicable for this case.

Heading for section 3: Social Issues

Pick a social issue where you have a strong opinion, such as abortion, marital equality for the LGBTQ+ community, or the Black Lives Matter movement. In two sentences, identify the issue and your opinion. Next, imagine you are leading a group with another clinician from your agency. After the group ends, while clients are still in the room, the other clinician expresses their opinion about the issue. Their opinion is exactly opposite yours, and the clinician finishes by denigrating people who hold the opposite opinion. In a brief essay (1-2 pages), explain what you would say or do? Why?