
Q&A for the Revised SUAS Program (Students)

Substance Use & Addictions Specialist (SUAS) Program

Q: What has changed about the SUAS Program for 2019-2020?

A: The most significant change for the students is that you now do NOT use all of your electives to complete the SUAS program. This has been the single biggest deterrent and we listened! You now have only three required “extra” courses, leaving you with ample room to take electives of your choice. As a current SUAS student recently stated, *“There is simply no good reason not to take the SUAS track and become dually licensed. Everyone should do this for themselves and their clients.”*

Q: Does choosing SUAS mean I am committed to working only within the field of addiction?

A: Not at all. Here’s the reality: You cannot NOT work with the issue of addictions or problem use, so why not improve your skill set and become more marketable? You will be preparing to work with mental health AND substance use issues.

Q: Will I forgo learning about mental health issues?

A: No. In fact, we must try to get away from thinking dichotomously about mental health and substance use. Knowledge and skills in both are essential to effective treatment services and SUAS helps prepare you for working with a wide range of client needs.

Q: How many courses are required for SUAS?

A: You are required to obtain 12 credit hours within the SUAS curriculum. There are nine required SUAS credits (3 courses) and a robust menu of other choices for the final three hours. These courses are NOT in addition to the 62 credit hours needed to obtain your MSW! Below are the SUAS-Approved courses. Be advised, schedules are subject to change.

- Required SUAS Courses (these give you 9 of the 12 required SUAS credit hours):
 - SOWO 700: SUAS: Foundations of Addiction (3 credits, available online during the summer or in the classroom during the fall)
 - SOWO 760: SUAS: Clinical Practice (3 credits)
 - SOWO 761: SUAS: Diverse Populations (3 credits)
- Menu of Additional SUAS-Approved Courses (choose from any of the following courses to meet a minimum of 3 additional SUAS-approved credits, giving you a total of at least 12 credit hours of SUAS-Approved coursework)
 - Fall SUAS-Approved Courses:
 - SOWO 741: Integrated Behavioral Health (1.5 credits)
 - SOWO 767: Differential Diagnosis & Case Formulation (3 credits)
 - SOWO 831: Substance Use Policy (1.5 credits; Mar-May)
 - SOWO 840: Adult Mental Health Theory & Practice (3 credits)
 - SOWO 842: Families Theory & Practice (3 credits)
 - Spring SUAS-Approved Courses:
 - SOWO 743: Social Work at the Interface of Mental Health and Criminal Justice Systems (1.5 credits; Mar-May)
 - SOWO 750: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (1.5 credits; Jan-Mar)
 - SOWO 758: Differential Diagnosis (1.5 credits; Jan-Mar or Mar-May)

- SOWO 764: Motivational Interviewing (1.5 credits; Jan-Mar or Mar-May)
- SOWO 765: Social Work Practice with Groups (1.5 credits; Jan-Mar or Mar-May)
- Summer SUAS-Approved Courses
 - SOWO 764: Motivational Interviewing (1.5 credits)

Q: Are any of the courses offered during the summer?

A: Yes! Many SUAS students choose to take SOWO 700 (online) during one of the summer sessions, although it is also offered as a hybrid class during the fall. You could also choose to take Motivational Interviewing during the summer, although it is also offered twice each spring.

Q: Is there anything else I should know about taking a SUAS-Approved course from the menu of options noted above?

A: Yes. To ensure fidelity to the mission and requirements of the SUAS program, when taking a course from the menu of options, you are expected to tailor assignments, when reasonable and feasible, to topics germane to problematic substance use and addictions. Your SUAS faculty and course instructors will offer you guidance.

Q: Do all my field placement clients have to have substance use or addictions concerns?

A: No. The goal is to ensure you have a reasonable opportunity to work with clients with substance use concerns. Because problematic substance use and addiction is so ubiquitous in our society, we simply need to create an environment that screens for and addresses these issues.

Q: How do I get supervision specific to substance use and addiction?

A: SUAS students require clinical supervision by a Certified Clinical Supervisor. Your field faculty will ensure you receive the required supervision either at your field site or from our SUAS clinical supervision group on campus. Students consistently report high satisfaction with this group format, which offers clinical direction, learning, and camaraderie.

Q: Can I be enrolled in SUAS and PrimeCare simultaneously?

A: Yes! We have many students who do both and it is a great way to immerse yourself into integrated care (i.e., the integration of mental health, substance use, and primary care).

Q: How about SUAS and Child Welfare, or School Social Work?

A: Yes, and yes! We even have students do SUAS, PrimeCare, and School Social Work. While the load certainly increases, students report this as being quite “doable”. Here are a few words from our School of Social Work specialty:

“Students who are interested in working with high school students are able to pair the SSW certificate with SUAS. There are a few school placements that we reserve for students interested in SSW and SUAS.”

Q: Are traditional, advanced standing, and distance education students all eligible for enrolling in the SUAS program?

A: Yes! We have students from all three sectors complete SUAS.

Q: How does SUAS help me professionally?

A: Besides giving you the necessary tools to work with a more diverse population, SUAS puts you on a fast track toward becoming a Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist. This means that upon graduation you may obtain your LCASA (Associates) and in as little as one more year become fully licensed! A year later you may be eligible for your LCSW, thereby becoming dually licensed. Keep in mind, there continues to be a growing need for significantly increasing a workforce capable of working with substance use issues. Your skills and licensure

in this arena are in high demand, and having both the LCSW and LCAS licenses is an exceptional professional advantage that consistently creates opportunities.

Q: What do SUAS alumni say about their experience?

A: Alumni overwhelmingly note being thankful they chose SUAS for their professional growth and development. Here is what two recent alumni had to say:

“One of the greatest decisions I made while pursuing my MSW was completing the Substance Use and Addictions Specialist Program. The program provided me with the knowledge to better serve the population that I work with in Child Protective Services. Not only did I gain the knowledge, I also had a better understanding of the families I worked with and the challenges that they faced in life. The professors did not hold back when it came to exposing us to the field. They provided us with an interactive learning experience and it was obvious that their goal was to make sure we left the school prepared to serve the community. Because of the program, I am confident in my profession and for that I will be forever grateful.”

- Erica Mayes-Gordon, SUAS Class of 2016

“Stepping into the job market as a fresh MSW graduate at the same time as three Schools of Social Work worth of candidates was scary. Having my LCAS-A not only made me eligible for a lot more positions than folks without it, but it also helped set me apart from the other candidates. I essentially got my dream job just a couple months out of grad school, and I wouldn’t have been able to apply had it not been for my LCAS-A!”

- Jennifer Mossefin, SUAS Class of 2017

Q: What if I have more questions about SUAS or just want to talk about the program?

A: Easy-peasy. Just contact Mike McGuire (SUAS Director) @ 336-405-9506 (mobile), or uncmike@unc.edu