FIELD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

FIELD LIAISON MANUAL

2017–2018

Lynn A. Warner, PhD
Interim Dean

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INTRODUCTION

The Field Education Department’s field liaison model provides proactive support to students and field instructors. Field liaisons, comprised of social work professionals with years of practice experience, serve an important role in the development of cohesive working relationships between students and field instructors. Additionally, they work to ensure that learning in field reinforces the tenets of academic instruction. Field liaisons are generally the first contacts for students and field instructors. They are often called upon to interpret and reinforce the MSW curriculum, field education policies and procedures and the timely completion of field evaluation paperwork and monitoring tools.

The 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education affirm that the intent of field education is to link classroom curricular content to the real-world practice setting. Field and classroom content are given equal importance in the MSW curriculum. Because field education presents unique challenges and rewards for student learning, field liaisons are assigned to help preserve the quality of learning and to provide mentorship to field instructors (as teachers) and students (as learners).

The Field Liaison Manual was created to help guide field liaisons:
- To serve as gatekeepers of the social work profession in field;
- To understand key learning objectives of the MSW program;
- To practice, with fidelity, tasks and duties of the liaison role;
- To understand and navigate different issues that emerge in field instruction;
- To utilize resources and forms that serve to monitor and evaluate student learning;
- To establish a format for the instruction of the Field Seminar course.

The Field Education Office is grateful for the tremendous contribution of its field liaisons. Our ability to ensure quality learning in field is enhanced by the dedicated professionals who mentor, monitor and mediate all aspects of the field instruction process. The field liaison manual evolved from the experiences and learned skills of our dedicated field liaisons.
TIMELINES AND DUE DATES
Below is a summary of important dates for field liaisons to remember. A complete calendar for graduate field education can be found in the Appendix.

<table>
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<td>First Day of Practice Skills Lab</td>
<td>Monday, August 28</td>
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<td>First Day of Field for 2nd Field Advanced Concentration (AC) Students</td>
<td>Thursday, August 31</td>
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<td>Last Day of Practice Skills Lab</td>
<td>Tuesday, September 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Field (AC) Students: completed Learning Agreement due in Field Ed. Office</td>
<td>Thursday, September 14</td>
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<td>First Day of Field for 1 Field (Generalist) Students</td>
<td>Monday, September 18</td>
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<td>Generalist 1st Field Students: completed Learning Agreement due in Field Ed. Office</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Evaluation for 2nd Field (AC) Students due in Field Ed. Office</td>
<td>Friday, November 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Evaluation for 1st Field (Generalist) Students due in Field Ed. Office</td>
<td>Tuesday, November 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day of Field for 2nd Field (AC) Students</td>
<td>Friday, December 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day of Field for 1st Field (Generalist) Students</td>
<td>Tuesday, December 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Attendance forms due in Field Office</td>
<td>Friday, January 5, 2018</td>
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<td>Field resumes for 1st Field (Generalist) Students</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field resumes for 2nd Field (AC) Students</td>
<td>Thursday, January 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Evaluation for 1st Field (Generalist) Students due</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 6</td>
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<td>Second Evaluation for 2nd Field (AC) Students due</td>
<td>Friday, March 9</td>
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<td>Last Day of Field for 2nd Field (AC) students</td>
<td>Friday, May 4</td>
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<td>Last Day of Field for 1st Field (Generalist) Students</td>
<td>Tuesday, May 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third (Final) Evaluation for 2nd Field (AC) Students, and attendance forms due</td>
<td>Friday, May 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third (Final) Evaluation shared with 1st Field (Generalist) Students and attendance forms due</td>
<td>Tuesday May 8</td>
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<td>Training session for New Hires</td>
<td>Thursday, September 7</td>
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<td>Training session for New Hires</td>
<td>Friday, September 8</td>
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<td>Intro phone call or email to students and field instructors</td>
<td>2nd week after field begins</td>
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<td>Initial site visit to first field placements</td>
<td>October 16-31</td>
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<td>Field Liaison documentation and seminar attendance reports for Fall semester due</td>
<td>Friday, December 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Liaison Check – in</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 16</td>
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<td>Field Liaison Check – in</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 13</td>
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<td>Field Liaison documentation and seminar attendance reports for Spring semester due</td>
<td>Friday, May 11, 2018</td>
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FIELD EDUCATION STAFF
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Payroll Documents/Travel Reimbursement
Mikaline VanKuren    Diane Brauner
Field Secretary    Fiscal Administrator
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Payroll Schedule/Holiday Schedule/Employee Benefits/Attendance
Human Resources
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Questions about SSW
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sswhelp@albany.edu
PRACTICAL MATTERS FOR FIELD LIAISONS

Appointment Status
Field liaisons are appointed on an annual basis during a contract period designated by the Field Office. They are given the title, “Lecturer”. Field liaisons are eligible for employee benefits designated by the State of New York University at Albany. The salary is set by the Director of Field Education and is not subject to merit increases. Field liaisons have access to University resources and electronic systems only during the contract period in which they are employed.

Payroll
Liaisons are paid bi-weekly, in accordance with the payroll schedule set by the University at Albany. Persons recruited to serve as liaisons will be required to complete personnel and tax documentation prior to beginning employment. The School of Social Welfare’s fiscal administrator or Human Resources department may be contacted for questions regarding the hiring process.

Time and Attendance
Field liaisons accrue sick time, which can be used when needing to take time off from field liaison duties. Vacation leave is not offered to contracted lecturers. Employees are required to notify the Field Education Office when taking a leave of absence during the academic year. This can be achieved by emailing or calling the Director of Field Education at least two weeks in advance of a planned leave from work. Any sick time taken during the contract period must be documented at the end of each month in the UAlbany HR Leave Entry portal in the employee’s MyUAlbany account.

SUNYCard
All employees of the University at Albany are required to obtain a picture ID card. SUNYCards are used to gain access to University buildings outside of general office hours. The card is also used for access to University equipment, facilities and library resources. ID cards remain active throughout the employee’s employment. There is no cost for obtaining your initial University at Albany SUNYCard. There is a fee for replacement of a lost or stolen SUNYCard. Employees can obtain your SUNYCard at the uptown campus in Campus Center B52. Further instructions about how to obtain a SUNYCard can be found on the website: http://www.albany.edu/uas/sunycard.php.

Parking
Employees of the University may purchase faculty/staff parking permits at a cost of $25, renewable annually from September 1-August 31. Employees with a parking permit on their registered vehicle(s) may park in designated faculty/staff parking lots during posted hours. Employees of the University at Albany must adhere to the parking regulations of the City of Albany. The Field Education Office will not be held responsible for payment of City of Albany parking violations or any other parking tickets issued during the course of conducting field liaison work.
**Office Equipment Resources**
University employees have access to office copy machines, located on the first and second floors of Richardson Hall. The Field Office fax machine is located in the Field Secretary’s Office in Richardson 116. Office supplies needed for the completion of liaison functions may be obtained through the Field Education Office.

**Meeting Space**
Field liaisons may conduct meetings with students in a designated office space provided by the Field Education Office. To reserve the space, field liaisons should contact the Field Office secretary at (518) 442-5321.

**Travel Reimbursement**
When conducting field liaison business, field liaisons will be reimbursed mileage for travel. The mileage reimbursement rate is set annually by the NYS Department of Labor. Requests for reimbursement should be submitted to the Field Education Office monthly. Field liaisons should not accumulate multiple months of travel reimbursement requests; this will delay reimbursement and may be denied. Field liaisons should not schedule air travel or hotel accommodations for the purposes of liaison-related work without receiving prior approval from the Director of Field Education.

**Mandatory Trainings**
By accepting the position of Lecturer for the Field Education Office, field liaisons agree to attend mandatory trainings and check-in sessions, which serve to prepare them for meeting the expectations of the role of field liaison. Trainings are provided by the Field Office and schedule dates are determined on an annual basis. Missing training sessions impacts the ability of field liaisons to understand and meet the responsibilities of the job. This may impact approval for continuing appointment in future academic cycles.
THE ROLE OF LIAISONS IN FIELD INSTRUCTION

The field liaison serves as an important communication link between the School, agency and student. The field liaison provides support to the field instructor at the agency and serves as a mentor to the student. Liaisons are assigned to agencies at the beginning of their field placements and continue working with the students and field instructors until the end of the field practicum.

Field liaisons serve as the first contacts when challenges emerge in field. Liaisons consist of social workers with years of supervisory experience in social work practice. They are resources for students and field instructors throughout the duration of the field placement. They can be consulted on the development and review of performance evaluations, provide guidance on ethical dilemmas or assist in the development of learning agreements. Liaisons contact the field instructor and student a minimum of once per semester, but can be contacted at any time during the field practicum.

For each first field (Generalist) student assigned, field liaisons are expected to schedule on-site field agency visits a minimum of once per semester. On-site field agency visits are not required for second field (Advanced-Concentration) students. However, site visits may be necessary if challenges occur during the field practicum.

The initial meeting during the fall semester serves to proactively build a cohesive working relationship between the student and field instructor. This is also a good time for the field instructor and student to get to know their field liaison as a reliable resource and contact person to address any issues or concerns related to field.

The purpose of the on-site field agency visit during the spring semester is to formally check-in with the student and field instructor about the student’s progress in field and to assess the student’s readiness to complete all field education requirements by the end of the academic year. This is also a time to determine if there is a need for a more focused learning agreement, mediate any identified challenges in the working relationship and/or to help plan for the student’s smooth transition from the agency by the end of the field practicum.

Students interning at their second field (Advanced-Concentration) placements are expected to have achieved the core skills necessary for practice at the advanced student level of practice. As a result, on-site field agency visits are not required for this cohort of students. Field liaisons communicate with second field students and their field instructors by telephone or email. It is recommended that introductory outreach take place early in the semester, followed by a minimum of two additional correspondences during the academic year.

In addition to their regular duties, liaisons also facilitate the Integrated Field Seminar course to all first field (Generalist) students.
DEFINING THE LIAISON ROLE

Field Liaison Job Description
The field liaison is a part-time Lecturer position. The field liaison represents the School and coordinates relationships between students and community agencies in which students complete their required field placements. This social work professional provides supportive services designed to create cohesive working relationships between MSW students and their field instructors. MSW field liaisons must have an MSW degree from a CSWE-accredited social work program and have a minimum of two years of post-graduate experience in social work practice.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Attends required field liaison training sessions, as required for all newly hired field liaisons.
2. After training, prepares for and teaches the Integrated Field Seminar for first year MSW students in field. Uses field seminar to assist students with integrating course work and field work for developing social work practice skills. Evaluates seminar coursework.
3. Interprets SSW policies, procedures and agency expectations to the field instructor and student; continually monitors the fit of agency placement and student abilities in accordance with the MSW program curriculum.
4. Reviews and approves students’ assignments and learning objectives as outlined in the learning agreement.
5. Reviews field evaluations completed by the Field Instructor, process recordings and applicable macro projects to assess students’ skill development.
6. Arranges office hours to accommodate individual student meetings as needed or requested.
7. Conducts site visits and other outreach activities with the field instructor and student (as outlined by the Field Office) to evaluate the students’ performance in field.
8. Provides the first intervention(s) if a problem arises at the field placement; the goal would be to resolve the conflict and monitor.
9. Communicates with the Director of Field Education if a problematic placement cannot be resolved through early interventions.
10. Makes recommendations for continued use of agencies and field instructors. Assists with identifying new sites for field placements and facilitates partnership with the School of Social Welfare.
11. Provides input that may be considered in the assignment of the final grade(s) for students in field.
12. Attends group or individual meetings for field liaisons as scheduled by the Field Education Office.
13. Maintains written records of field liaison duties as required.
**Summary of Duties**

**Support to Field Instructors and Students**

Students starting field, especially for the first time, have a number of questions and concerns. The Field Education Office relies upon the field instructors and field liaisons to help students adjust to their field assignments. Students may be balancing a number of issues with their academic program and the stress may impact their performance in field.

- Some students may have difficulty conceptualizing being learners in field, instead of employees. As a result, some students may struggle with the pace of learning, expecting to be exposed to client contact too soon or (conversely), feel unprepared to have client contact when field instructors are ready to assign them. As a result, these students may be reluctant to take risks or make mistakes.
- Field liaisons can help students understand the relationship between the academic curriculum and field learning. As social work professionals in the field, liaisons can also provide information about the many types of social work practice.
- As learners, students can apply core practice skills across a range of client populations. Field liaisons can help students who are reluctant to work with certain populations understand the integration of generalist skills to practice.
- Field liaisons may also serve as mentors, providing support and guidance to students as they contemplate their professional goals after graduation.

Additionally, field liaisons can help field instructors prepare for students by learning and adapting to individual styles of learning. The “one size fits all” approach to supervision often creates a fractured working relationship that can delay the achievement of competency of skill for the student. Liaisons offer mentorship to both students and field instructors, empowering both to fully participate in the learning process. Field instructors and students receive guidance from liaisons on mediating conflict, assessing skills and managing ethical dilemmas.

**Field Seminar**

Field liaisons serve as instructors of the Integrated Field Seminar for MSW students in their first field (Generalist) placements. The seminar is used to reinforce the role field plays in the MSW curriculum, facilitate dialogue among students for support and guidance on field issues and assess competency of skills through group discussion and assignments.

**Evaluation and Grading**

Through review of field evaluations, process recordings and discussions with students and field instructors, field liaisons will be instrumental in assessing the competency of skill for students completing their field placements. Liaisons may be asked to provide input that will be considered in the assignment of the grade(s) for Field Instruction. This could include reports regarding seminar attendance and participation, completion of assignments and performance in field.
Assistance with Site Development
In the course of conducting site visits and networking with field agency partners, field liaisons may learn of new internship opportunities for future students. Liaisons are encouraged to notify the Director of Field Education when there is the potential for new field placement opportunities. Field liaisons can also provide input regarding the quality of existing field placements.
MSW FIELD EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Field Education is an integral part of the SSW curriculum, merging theory and instruction with real time practice experience. Students have the opportunity to apply what is learned in the classroom by working with clients, social work leaders and social systems.

Generally, MSW students complete two full years of field over four semesters, with the field practicum taken concurrently with coursework. Students intern up to 500 hours, two days per week for two semesters each year. The first field generalist placement usually occurs on Mondays and Tuesdays and coursework is taken Wednesdays through Fridays. The field courses taken during the first field practicum are RSSW 650 and 651. The assignment of first field generalist placements is handled by the Field Education Office. MSW part-time students take their generalist field practicum during their second year of study and must commit to two full days of field per week. Students have the option of choosing their second field advanced concentration field placements or requesting to have the Field Office assign their placements. The field courses taken during the second field advanced concentration practicum are RSSW 752 and 753. Field days for advanced concentration placements are typically on Thursdays and Fridays. Part-time students take these courses during their fourth year of study and must commit to two full days of field per week. Students may also consider Block or Work Study options for field. More information about Block field options and Work Study can be found on the Field Education website.

All first field generalist students will participate in an Integrated Field Seminar, in conjunction with their field placements. The seminar focuses on the professional and practice issues that students encounter in field, and provides a forum for seeking guidance and addressing concerns. The seminar is taken concurrently with RSSW 650 and 651.

Field Instruction I is a three-credit course. Field Instruction II, III and IV are each four-credit courses. Academic credit is given at the time of successful completion of the Field Seminar and both RSSW 650 and 651 for generalist field and the completion of RSSW 752 and 753 for advanced concentration field. The courses are graded Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory (S/U). Students receive a final grade at the end of the second semester of field each year. This occurs because field requirements are determined through demonstrated competency of skills over the course of two semesters. As a result, the grade for the first semester is always “I” Incomplete.

The Field Education Office holds a number of information sessions for students about field assignment processes. The information sessions address frequently asked questions and policies about Field Education requirements.

Career development workshops are offered each year to guide students in their professional development and path toward social work licensure. Additionally, there is an annual Field and Career Fair that connects students to agencies around the region for field placements or employment opportunities. Additional resources can be obtained by contacting the Field Office at (518) 442-5321 or at sswfieldoffice@albany.edu.
TYPES OF PLACEMENTS

1ST Field (Generalist)
The generalist field placement exposes students to a cross section of social work experiences, serving to ground them in foundational practice skills necessary for advanced clinical or macro practice. The assignment of first field placements is done by the Field Education Office. MSW part-time students take their generalist field practicum during their second year of study.

2nd Field (Advanced Concentration)
The advanced concentration field sequence follows the generalist field. Here, students engage in more advanced social work practice in their desired concentration of clinical or MACRO. At this stage, students identify their preferred concentration, clinical or MACRO, which can only be one, not a combination of the two. Students have the option of choosing their second field placements. MSW part-time students take advanced concentration field during their fourth year of study.

Advanced Standing
Students graduating with an undergraduate degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited social work program may apply to the Advanced Standing (AS) program. AS students have taken some practice coursework and field instruction, as part of their undergraduate studies. The AS status enables students to complete the MSW degree in less time than the traditional two-year MSW degree program. At the School of Social Welfare, AS Field Instruction is a three (3) semester assignment (summer, fall, spring) that is held at one agency. The summer portion of field completes the generalist sequence. In the fall, AS students begin advanced concentration field, along with corresponding advanced concentration coursework (clinical or MACRO). Liaisons for this cohort are Field Office staff (Assistant Directors of MSW field).

Summer Block
Students seeking their advanced concentration field placements have the option of requesting a Summer Block placement. To be eligible for a Block placement, students must have successfully completed Field I and II and earned at least 37 credits. Students must be in good academic standing at the School of Social Welfare and have three out the last five years of paid full-time employment in human services. Field sites must agree to have students do a Block placement. An official request for a Block placement is made to the Field Education Office. A complete application (instructions can be found on the Field Education website) should include: (1) an up-to-date resume, (2) a letter of reference from the student’s field instructor of the first field practicum, and (3) a list of the student’s masters-level courses. A copy of an advisement worksheet to indicate completed and in progress course work would be acceptable. Acceptance or refusal of Block placement application requests are determined by the Field Education Office. Liaisons for this cohort are Field Office staff (Assistant Directors of MSW field).

Summer/Fall Modified Field Schedule
This option is available to advanced concentration students requesting to start their second field placement in the Summer and continue through the Fall. Students must have successfully completed Field Instruction I and II and be eligible for graduation by the end of the Fall
semester. Students must have taken advanced practice coursework prior to starting the advanced concentration field practicum, or be taking advanced practice coursework concurrently with field. Designated field days are Thursdays and Fridays. Guidelines for completing the application for the summer/fall modified field placement can be found on the Field Education website. Acceptance or refusal of Modified field application requests are determined by the Field Education Office.

**Liaisons for this cohort are Field Office staff (Assistant Directors of MSW field).**

**Work Study**

Students employed full-time may request to have one of their two field placements at their place of employment. For consideration of a current employment site, students must verify they had paid employment in human services three out of the last five years AND that they have been employed at their current employment site for at least one year at the time of application submission. Nursing, teaching or educational assistantships or camp counseling are some examples that do not qualify as relevant human service experiences. The designated human services agency should provide clinical or macro services that uphold a mission of service congruent with the curricular objectives of the University at Albany School of Social Welfare. Students considering Work Study must demonstrate that their work site provides a different learning experience from their primary work duties. Additionally, the field instructor of record must be different from the student’s direct supervisor. There is an application form that must be submitted for consideration of Work Study. The application and guidelines for completion can be found on the website (also see guidelines in the Appendices). Acceptance or refusal of work study application requests are determined by the Field Education Office.

**International Field Placements**

Students starting their advanced concentration field are eligible to consider an international field placement. International field placements provide students the knowledge and skills for practice within the frameworks of global social and political contexts. As the U.S. grows in its diversity, social workers must possess skills that address the complex needs of a diverse nation. Skills learned from an international field experience will be transferable, enabling students to integrate practice with vulnerable populations from underdeveloped countries with diverse populations in the U.S. This opportunity differs from both Study Abroad and international service learning. In field, students are providing direct practice to constituencies reliant upon their specific skill sets as developing social work practitioners. The School of Social Welfare currently has international field placements through partnerships with schools of social work or non-government organizations (NGOs) in Ghana, Scotland, the Dominican Republic and South Africa. **Liaisons for this cohort are Field Office staff.**

**Paid Internships**

Due to the need to build a skilled workforce in the social work profession, some agencies offer paid internships to incentivize work with certain populations. The School of Social Welfare offers some paid internship opportunities for work with vulnerable populations. There is a competitive application process. More information about these opportunities can be found on the Field Education website. Students cannot accept more than one compensatory allotment through the School of Social Welfare (i.e. paid internship with graduate assistantship) during the course of their enrollment in the MSW program.
MSW ADVANCED CONCENTRATIONS

MACRO Concentration

The MACRO (M-Management Efficiency & Leadership Development, A-Advocacy & Empowerment, C-Community Building & Collaboration, R-Resource Development, and O-Outcomes Evaluation & Improvement Systems) concentration provides students with courses and related experiences which disseminate and develop the knowledge, values, sensitivities, and skills for macro-level practice. Today’s human service environment presents demands which require integrative competencies. For example, in today’s information age environment, human services management is increasingly multi-dimensional and data-driven. Additionally, with rapid, dramatic policy change, effective management must include collaborative skills for visionary leadership.

The MACRO concentration prepares students for planning, implementation and evaluation of services at the organizational, systems and policy levels of change. Graduates will assume positions such as program planner, clinical manager/program director, researcher/program evaluator, staff development and training, resource developer (fundraising, grant writing, and marketing), community organizer/community developer and social policy advocate.

The MACRO concentration requires students to complete one advanced MACRO practice course, one advanced MACRO elective course, one additional graduate elective course, and an advanced policy course. Electives may be chosen from any courses classified as advanced MACRO, advanced clinical practice, advanced policy or a related graduate-level course in another department.

Clinical Concentration

In the Clinical concentration, students acquire advanced and specialized knowledge of human behavior, social systems, and intervention processes that will aid them in assisting clients at the individual, group, family or community levels. Students may focus their study in a number of diverse fields, such as child and family services, mental health, healthcare and aging. All Clinical concentration students must take three advanced practice courses, an advanced policy course, one course in evaluation of clinical practice, and an advanced field practicum in the Clinical concentration.

Graduates who specialize in clinical social work are employed in many types of settings, such as mental health, health care, family service, and child welfare agencies. A substantial number of graduates work in school systems, aging and alcohol/substance abuse programs. Clinical social workers help people identify and resolve psychosocial problems, treat mental and behavioral health disorders, and work to address disparities in care and minimize/eliminate social injustice to vulnerable populations. Clinical social workers use a wide variety of helping methods, including almost the entire range of approaches to individual, family, and group counseling and various methods of bringing about change in clients’ environments.
Clinical social workers frequently take on supervisory responsibilities within a few years of graduation, often in combination with continued clinical practice. Many eventually assume managerial positions in service programs and agencies.
FIELD INSTRUCTION COURSE GUIDELINES

Field Instruction is a series of required courses for the MSW degree. Field Instruction I and II are the courses to register for when taking Generalist (first) field. Field III and IV are the courses to register for when taking Advanced-concentration (second) field. Field Instruction I is a three-credit course and Field Instruction II, III and IV are each four-credit courses.

Field I and II must be taken concurrently with Micro Practice in Social Work I and II. A withdrawal from or failing grade in the Micro Practice in Social Work courses will result in the suspension of field.

Field Coursework
Field Instruction is comprised of a series of courses taken throughout the program. Whether enrolled full-time or part-time in the MSW program, students are required to take four sections of Field Instruction. Field Instruction generally occurs over two years, two semesters each year. Students have to complete up to 500 hours of field per year. The catalog numbers for Field Instruction are as follows:

- Field Instruction I – RSSW 650
- Field Instruction II – RSSW 651
- Field Instruction III – RSSW 752
- Field Instruction IV – RSSW 753
- Field Instruction V – RSSW 754

Full-time students in the 2-year MSW program generally take Field Instruction I and II in the first year of the program, along with courses taken during the Fall/Spring sequences. Field I and II must be taken concurrently with Micro Practice in Social Work I and II. Students are required to have completed Human Behavior and Social Environment I and II and Macro Practice in Social Work I and II courses or to take them concurrently with Field I and II.

Field Instruction III and IV are usually taken in the second year of the program on either the Fall/Spring semester sequence or Summer/Fall semester sequence (for approved modified field schedules). Students taking Field III and IV have the option of applying for Block placements if all requirements are met. This option is permitted as long as Field Instruction I and II are taken without a break in semesters.

Students are in field two full days (16 hours) per week. Field days are typically Mondays and Tuesdays for the Generalist field placement and Thursdays and Fridays for the Advanced-concentration field placement. This continuity in scheduling is important for student learning, agency operations and consistency of client care. The field schedule also coincides with the sequence of courses needed for degree requirements.

Field Instruction V is a 3-credit course that provides a supplemental field experience for students in their Advanced-concentration coursework. Taking the course requires two full days per week. The prerequisite course is Field III (RSSW 752). Field V may be taken concurrently with Field IV (RSSW 753). A permission number from the Director of Field Education is necessary to register for RSSW 754.
SUSPENSION FROM FIELD INSTRUCTION

In accordance with the School of Social Welfare’s Professional Standards for Social Work Practice, and with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, students must demonstrate understanding of and adherence to the professional and ethical standards for social work practice. A student may be suspended from a field placement for behavior that is deemed detrimental to self, the client, agency or community. The determination of detrimental behavior is made by the Director of Field Education, with input from the field liaison and/or the field instructor/agency.

The Director of Field Education will make this determination following an investigation of the behavior or practices in question. Lack of knowledge or skill may warrant further instruction and training for skill development.

The decision to suspend a student from field is determined after a comprehensive review of the practices or behaviors being investigated. To ensure safety and further undue risk, students may be suspended from field pending the outcome of an investigation.

During an investigation of behavior in field, the field liaison and Director of Field Education will carefully examine the student's professional behavior as reflected in written records or reports and statements made by the student, field instructor and other agency personnel. Client information is protected during the investigation process. At the conclusion of the investigation, the field liaison will submit a written report to the Director of Field Education. The report will include a recommendation for the student to: (1) continue in the same placement, (2) be assigned to a different placement or (3) be terminated from field and assigned a “U” Unsatisfactory grade.
EVALUATION AND GRADING PROCEDURES

Evaluation of Skills
The process of evaluation is an important component of any educational endeavor because it helps give definition to learning. Standards for evaluating competency can be found in the Appendix. The Director of Field Education serves as the instructor of record for all MSW field education courses. While evaluation of professional practice should be ongoing, there are some important issues for field instructors and students to consider when completing field evaluations:

1. There are three written evaluations of student performance to complete over two semesters for each field sequence.
2. Considered part of the final grade for Field Instruction I and II, a macro project must be completed in order to receive a final grade of Satisfactory.
3. Also considered part of the final grade for Field Instruction I and II is attendance to and participation in the Field Seminar course.
4. Standards for evaluation are based upon a continuum of skill development over the two years of field practice. Evaluation measures for generalist and advanced concentration clinical and MACRO are derived from the MSW program curriculum and from the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education.
5. Students in field should be exposed to enough practice experiences to provide for a rigorous learning experience in field. In consideration of appropriate practice opportunities, field instructors should assign a range of clients/cases that challenge students’ learning over the course of the year. At a minimum, students should have 3-5 clients/cases assigned in the Generalist field year and 5 or more clients/cases assigned in the Advanced-concentration (Clinical) field year.
6. In accordance with the CSWE EPAS (2015), social work competence represents “the ability to integrate and apply social knowledge, values and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being. There are nine social work competencies for which students are evaluated at both the generalist and advanced concentration levels. The nine social work competencies are:
   a) Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior
   b) Engage diversity and difference in practice
   c) Advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice
   d) Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice
   e) Engage in policy practice
   f) Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities
   g) Assess individuals, families groups, organizations and communities
   h) Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities
   i) Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
7. Students entering field for the advanced concentration year are evaluated on the above competencies, but the engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation measures differ based on the concentration (clinical or MACRO). Students in the clinical concentration are evaluated based on practice with individuals, families and/or groups. MACRO students are evaluated based on practice with groups, organizations and/or communities.
8. Students in Generalist or Advanced-concentration Clinical field must submit one completed and reviewed process recording with each evaluation. There should be a different process recording with each evaluation.
9. Field instructors should review evaluations with students as a way of communicating progress and areas needing improvement.
10. Evaluations and process recordings are sent to the Field Education Office and then to the field liaison for review.
11. Final evaluations and input from the field liaison are key determinants in the assignment of the final grade for Field Instruction.

Grading
1. Field Instruction is delivered in a two semester sequence for each year of field. Students receive an “I” Incomplete after completing the first semester of any field sequence. This designation is changed to a “S” Satisfactory or “U” Unsatisfactory for both semesters after the final evaluation is submitted for the second semester of the field sequence.
2. A “Satisfactory” grade means the student has demonstrated competency of skills in social work practice. An "Unsatisfactory" grade means the student has not achieved the minimal objectives of the course.
3. A student may appeal a “U” Unsatisfactory grade in Field Instruction. Requests to appeal are sent to the Committee on Standards for Social Work Education. To learn more about the appeals process, students may contact the Assistant Dean for Academic Programs at (518) 442-5322.
4. Field Instruction I and II (RSSW 650 and 651) must be successfully completed before continuing on to Field III and IV (RSSW 752 and 753). A “U” Unsatisfactory grade in Field Instruction will mean automatic removal from field and a recommendation for dismissal from the MSW program.
FIELD LIAISON TASK INSTRUCTIONS

Trainings for Field Liaisons
Trainings serve to orient new staff to the responsibilities of field liaisons, while also reviewing the training curriculum and syllabus content for the seminar. Attendance to these trainings is mandatory, and field liaisons will not be able to teach the seminar course if all sessions are not attended.

Outreach Calls
One’s approach to calls will vary depending upon whether it is a first or subsequent call. An introductory phone call should include an explanation of the field liaison’s role:

- Monitoring of student performance.
- Education and consultation
- Mediation and problem solving
- Documentation

In addition, field instructors should be informed of the best way to contact their assigned liaison.

Tips for Calling Field Instructors
The following sample of questions may help jumpstart and focus your contacts with field instructors. They are intended to supplement rather than supersede what may already work for you. The Learning Agreement is also an excellent source of information on what has already been established between the supervisor and student. If the Learning Agreement is overdue for submission, this could indicate a problem and serve as a useful point of inquiry.

- Generally speaking, how does the internship seem to be working out for the two of you so far?
- Has your student been submitting Process Recordings regularly for your review?
- How is the student getting along with others?
- How much client contact has the student had thus far? (Content/Frequency)
- How comfortable does the student seem to be interacting with clients at this point?
- Did this student start from the ability level you expected? Is the student learning at a pace appropriate for their role?
- How is your supervisory relationship going with this student?
- Do any particular strengths or weaknesses stand out to you?
- What level of satisfaction with the placement has the student expressed to you? (If any)
- Do you have any questions concerning assignments or due dates at this time?
- Has the student displayed any issues with attendance, punctuality, or professionalism?
Site Visits
On-site visits to each field agency assigned to students in their first field placements should be conducted a minimum of once each semester (Fall/Spring). The Fall semester site visit should occur around October. The spring semester site visit should occur by late February/early March. Site visits are not required for students in second field (advanced concentration) placements. The purpose for conducting an on-site visit early in the Fall semester is to become acquainted with the students and field instructors and to inform of your supportive role to the learning process. Goals for the first meeting include:

- Gaining familiarity with the agency, field instructor and learning opportunities available for students
- Assessment of the working relationship between the student and field instructor
- Review of the learning agreement
- Identification and resolution of any initial barriers to learning
- Review of the evaluation process
- Reinforcement of the use of process recordings
- Reinforcement of the importance of documentation in supervision and the writing of critical summaries about competency of skills

Review of Learning Agreements
The learning agreement is an individualized learning plan for the student that is developed with the input of the student, field instructor and placement agency. The learning agreement should be developed within the first two weeks of the field placement. The purpose of the learning agreement is to outline the learning objectives for the year, along with the specific tasks that will formulate learning for the student. The learning agreement also clearly explains the responsibilities of both the student and field instructor to the learning process.

The field liaison will review the learning agreement to ensure that objectives outlined in the agreement coincide with the Field Instruction course objectives. Key things to pay attention to include:

- Supervision provided at a designated time and place for a minimum of one hour per week
- Appropriate learning opportunities (number and type of cases, macro project, etc.)
- The learning agreement is signed by both the student and field instructor

Learning agreements that are minimally complete or delayed may indicate problematic issues emerging such as access to supervision, length and content of supervision or lack of follow up documentation submitted by the student. If these issues are encountered, the field liaison should follow up with the field instructor as early as possible.

Focused Learning Agreements
A Focused Learning Agreement (FLA) may be needed if the student fails to progress at the expected pace in one or more critical areas. This contract intervention allows the student and field instructor to temporarily protract the scope of overall learning and provide an intensified emphasis on one or several essential skills. To the extent possible, learning methods, measureable performance targets and a set time frame for review of progress should be specified.
The purpose of the FLA is to provide a short-term assessment period to determine if the student is capable of learning the fundamental skills necessary for continuance in the placement. If the field liaison and field instructor determine the need for a focused learning agreement, the field liaison should offer to be a participant in its development and should alert an Assistant Director of Field Education. Copies of the FLA should be signed and dated by the student, field instructor and field liaison. One copy should be sent to the Field Education Office. Samples of focused learning agreements can be obtained in the Field Education Office (also see a sample in the Appendix).

**Process Recordings**
Process recordings are important tools for assessing competency of social work skills. Process recordings are designed to help students visually interpret their use of social work practice skills, while gaining insight into their professional growth and development. Process recordings should be done once weekly by students in first field (Generalist) and second field (Advanced Concentration Clinical) field. Field instructors should review their students’ process recordings and provide written and verbal feedback through comments on the documents and as discussion topics in supervision. Field liaisons should reinforce the importance of students and field instructors using process recordings as learning tools. One completed process recording should be submitted with each field evaluation for review. Each evaluation should have a different process recording.

**Field Seminar**
Field liaisons will teach the Integrated Field Seminar to students in their generalist placements. There will be seven sessions of field seminar for Fall/Spring. Field liaisons will receive instruction on assignments and guidance on facilitating the seminar course in the training sessions. Attendance, participation and completion of assignments are factored into the final grade for Field Instruction 650 and 651. The master syllabus can be found in the appendix. Field liaisons are required to track attendance and submit an official attendance report for assigned students to the Director of Field Education by designated due dates each year.

**Documentation of Field Liaison Services**
Field liaisons will be asked to document all contacts with students and field instructors. There are two tracking forms that field liaisons will complete: the Field Liaison Placement Checklist and the Field Liaison Contact Sheet. The field liaison placement checklist tracks:
- Agency, field instructor and student contacts
- Completed site visits for generalist students
- Completed learning agreements, evaluations, process recordings and macro projects.

The field liaison contact sheet enables field liaisons to record any problems identified during the course of their contact with the placement agencies, along with comments for recommended next steps or interventions. The completed forms are handed in to the Field Office at the end of each field sequence (December/May). Copies of these forms can be found in the appendix.

**Writing Critical Summaries**
Field liaisons receive input about a student’s progress in field through multiple sources. Meetings with the field instructor and/or student and review of field evaluations provide substantive evidence of a student’s proficiency of social work practice skills. It is important for field instructors to monitor and track the progress of the students they supervise. It is prudent to
track each student’s progress through documented summaries and this form of documented tracking can be described as “critical summaries”. Without having an organized process for tracking students’ progress, it will be difficult to summarize performance challenges, particularly if there is a need to terminate a field placement assignment. Field liaisons can assist field instructors in documenting solid critical summaries. An example can be found in the Appendix.

**Review of Field Evaluations**

Evaluations, process recordings and macro assignments are sent to the Field Education Office and then forwarded to the field liaisons for review. Field instructors and/or students may request a meeting with the field liaison to discuss the evaluations. Field liaisons are requested to review and return all original documents to the Field Education Office. In the Spring semester of second field, field liaisons should review student progress and provide input about concerns promptly as it may impact the field education grade. Final evaluations and input from the field liaison are key determinants in the assignment of the final grade for Field Instruction courses.

**Gatekeepers of the Profession**

The School of Social Welfare Standards for Social Work Education, found in the appendix, outlines the ethical, performance and academic standards for students. As gatekeepers of the profession, faculty, field instructors and field liaisons are all expected to require that students uphold these standards.

Field liaisons monitor the overall field placement assignment. This includes assessing the students’ level of competency, evaluating the field instructor’s supervision and determining appropriateness of the learning within the agencies hosting students. In the event that the liaison becomes aware of any unethical practices by the student, field instructor or organization, such knowledge should be immediately brought to the attention of the Director of Field Education.

**Mentorship and Advisement**

As experienced social work practitioners, field liaisons can also serve as advisors to students seeking to map out career goals or determine whether social work is a good professional fit. Field liaisons are encouraged to offer this service and be available to meet with students requesting guidance and/or support.
STUDENTS’ RIGHTS

FERPA
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of educational records for students ages 18 and over. Generally, schools must have written permission from the student before releasing any information in the education record.

Field education is part of the educational curriculum for undergraduate and graduate education. Field instructors and field liaisons are classified as adjunct instructors and serve as teachers in field. As a result, field liaisons may share elements of a student’s educational record with field instructors within the context of overall educational competency. The agreement between the School of Social Welfare and the agency partner implies agreement on instruction of the educational curriculum. Communication between the School of Social Welfare and any entity unrelated to student instruction requires the written consent of the student.

Field evaluations, process recordings, attendance sheets and critical summaries about student progress are considered student educational records and are subject to FERPA protection rules. Field liaison reports and documentation constitute educational records within the FERPA regulations. Due process considerations within the context of a grade grievance process support sharing educational records with the grievant. Under FERPA, students have a right to inspect their educational records. However, if there is a reference to any other student in a field liaison report, such references will be redacted before sharing with the grievant.

Additional information about confidentiality of students’ education records can be found on the website of the University at Albany:
http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulleted/release_information_by_registrar.html

Safety Standards
Agencies will make every effort to ensure the safety of students in field. For example, students will not be asked to place themselves at personal or professional risk in the following ways:

- Perform duties outside the scope of social work practice.
- Work unsupervised nights or weekends.
- Perform client restraints without formal training.
- Conduct unsupervised community-based activities without formal training and support (i.e. home visits, host community events unsupervised).
- Transport clients without formal training.

Students will be advised of all agency safety standards. Agencies may permit students to drive an agency vehicle if they meet the agency requirements for operating vehicles.

Disability Services
Students with a disability may obtain services through the University at Albany’s Disability Resource Center. Students requesting accommodations must register with the Disability Resource Center and complete an assessment. Upon request and authorization for release by the student, the Disability Resource Center will notify the Field Education Office of any needed
accommodations regarding field. The Field Education Office will work with the Disability Resource Center to determine if field can meet the necessary accommodations.

The website for the Disability Resource Center is [http://www.albany.edu/disability/](http://www.albany.edu/disability/).

**Sexual Harassment**  
If a student experiences any form of sexual harassment while in field, the student has several recourse for reporting:

- Inform the Field Liaison, Director or Assistant Directors of Field Education immediately. *[Students must be informed that reports to Field staff about sexual harassment require staff to file a report with the Office of Equity and Compliance.]*
- Directly contact the Assistant Vice President for Equity and Compliance at (518) 956-8168. This contact is strictly confidential.
COMMON ISSUES IN FIELD

Supervision

Students are entitled to adequate training and supervision by an MSW practitioner. The minimum requirement is one full hour of individual supervision per week. Group supervision can be provided as an additional learning forum, but is not a substitute for individual supervision. In addition to the supervision provided by an MSW practitioner, students may receive supervisory support from a task supervisor.

There are common problems that arise around supervision of students, the most common being that the student does not receive regular supervision. Students are often reluctant to report this to their liaisons for various reasons. It is important to ask students directly if they are receiving the appropriate amount and length of supervision. The response “we are together all the time” does not meet the requirements. Students need time devoted to them where they can have theoretical discussions, review process recordings and receive specific guidance and feedback about their practice. Students should be encouraged to go to supervision with an agenda of topics they wish to discuss. Another issue that students often face is that supervision is frequently cancelled or cut short. Students should be encouraged to assertively and politely ask that supervision be rescheduled when missed. Other problems related to supervision include:

- Not receiving specific feedback or receiving either positive or negative feedback only
- A supervisor who has poor boundaries – looking for a “friend” or other dual relationship
- Supervisor behaving unethically
- Not receiving enough learning opportunities/cases

Agency Changes during Placement

As we all know, the only constant in social work is change. Students often have difficulty adjusting to agency changes (loss of staff or entire programs, change in regulatory requirements, new computer/reporting systems, etc.). They should be encouraged to find ways of coping and view it as a learning opportunity and a form of skill development. If a field instructor leaves the agency or changes, the School needs to be apprised of it. Either a qualified field instructor needs to be identified by the agency or the student will need to be placed elsewhere.

Conflicts between Students and Field Instructors

There will be times when you are called to mediate a conflict between a field instructor and a student. Frequently this is the result of resentment that has built up over issues that have not been addressed (on the part of field instructor, student or both).

Situations that may create conflict are:

- Student does not meet field instructor’s expectation of student’s preparation for field
- Student has difficulty adapting to the organizational culture
- Student’s need for management does not match field instructor’s approach (micromanagement vs. too much autonomy/independence)
- Differences in values (i.e. culture, age, gender, etc.)
• Student displays unprofessional behavior(s) that have not improved with guidance

Some of the issues that generate conflict include:
• Difficulty in communication
• A difference in personal style (self-disclosing or not, authoritative vs. affiliative, directive or non-directive are some examples)
• A difference in orientation – i.e., task oriented vs. process oriented
• Students feel like they are being treated as an employee instead of a student learner

**Dual Contracting**

While most students and field instructors are not prone to “dual contracting” it occurs often enough to constitute a pitfall worth resisting and preventing. Once in place, this dynamic has a detrimental impact on the learning process even if the placement ends “smoothly.”

Students entering field may find themselves invited to engage in more than one “contract”. First, there is the way things are supposed to work according to the school. Then there is the way it really works once you get there. A second “contract” can emerge, usually unspoken, whereby the student agrees to go along with irregularities in return for a favorable evaluation. The arrangement works as long as both parties agree not to bring up one another’s shortcomings. This second unspoken contract is highly combustible and once violated can turn explosive. For instance, if the student feels overloaded, criticized or blamed for something they consider the fault of the field instructor or agency they may break the contract, blow the whistle, and betray “the secret”.

Violations can occur in reverse as well. A poorly performing intern who complains about an agency can expect to have their shortcomings, previously overlooked, now become front page. Whoever violates the “contract” first will trigger a backlash.

**Field “Lite”**

Many students feel pressured by the demands of a full life outside of school. They may be trying to balance being a student, homemaker, parent and full-time employee. They may know they have overscheduled themselves, but feel they have come too far to give up now. Overloaded and overwhelmed, they may seek the path of least resistance. Often the compromise is field; they try to do *Field Lite* - a nonexistent track that is informally and privately established.

Field “Lite” refers to an informal survival strategy that may be adopted by stressed students who need relief from the demands of an overwhelming schedule. While most students do not subscribe to field “lite”, it occurs often enough to warrant identification, intervention and prevention. Once in place, it can have a detrimental impact on the learning process. While returning adult students with human services experience and part-time students may be more susceptible to this phenomenon, it is not limited to them. Students experiencing health problems, financial stress, preoccupation with family matters and employment challenges are vulnerable to the potential compromise/minimization of their field learning experiences.

Unrealistic expectations aside, students may find themselves locked into a school program whose endless demands must now be accommodated, and these perceived demands may seem
excessive, redundant and inflexible. If the student has considerable work experience (past or present) they may believe they already qualify for an MSW. This undercurrent of entitlement and a desire to circumvent the perceived redundancy of field learning can contribute to difficulties adjusting to be in the learner role. Add to the equation an inexperienced field instructor and their tolerance can be pushed further. Enabling can occur if field instructors are inclined to “back off” a perceived mature student with experience. This strategy may be instituted in order to a) Defuse authority issues or b) Cash in on their presumed low maintenance intern/staff member (see Dual Contracting). Behavioral evidence may include frequent personal calls (sometimes of a crisis nature), a fragmented and heavily customized field schedule, unpredictable absenteeism and unreliable arrival and departure times.

**Employment Offers during Field**

Hiring students before they have finished field is discouraged. Even though an internship can function like an extended interview, past experience with this shows that when students are put into a dual role within the same agency, especially in the same department with the same supervisor, the learner role becomes subordinate to the employer role, thus compromising field education. If a student is offered a job at the same agency that he/she is interning, a new employment form must be completed and sent to the Director of Field Education within 30 days of the offer. Students can be advised to contact the Field Office to obtain the form. A decision about continuation of the field placement assignment will be made after an investigation is completed by the Field Office.

**Requests to Switch Placements**

The Field Office takes careful deliberation when deciding to switch a student placement. A change of a field placement assignment within a field sequence must consider the following:

- The timeline for achieving the objectives of field requirements.
- Having an appreciation for students developing skills for working out problems in relationships, improving communication skills and coping with style/learning differences between themselves and field instructors.
- Performance problems that may indicate a lack of readiness for social work practice.

However, the following criteria may result in a change of placement:

- Inadequate supervision (not receiving at least 1 hr. per week)
- Inadequate educational opportunities
- Relationship appears to be unworkable

Students seeking to find an alternative field placement due to performance concerns will not be reassigned.

**Student Performance Issues**

When performance issues arise during a placement, there are several safeguards to help address them before they reach crisis stage. It is crucial that field instructors know their liaisons and their role in helping to address performance issues. In addition, site visits, check-in phone calls and evaluations should be used to make an assessment of the student’s performance. Observations in the field seminar are also used to assess when performance issues need intervention by the liaison.
Some common performance issues include:

- Professional behavior related to time, attendance, attire, technology and cell phone usage.
- Inability to establish relationships at the basic level due to lack of interpersonal skills and/or empathy.
- Limited ability to conceptualize.
- Lack of initiative/not involving self adequately in the learning process.
- Inability to receive and/or incorporate constructive feedback.
- Failure to adhere to the professional standards ascribed in the SSW Standards for Social Work Education.

**Placement Planning for 2nd field**

Students preparing for Advanced Concentration field are given the option of finding their own placements. The vast majority choose this option. The Field Office offers various forms of assistance to students regarding their Advanced-concentration field placement. In January, a meeting is held to walk students through the necessary steps and paperwork involved in finding a placement. In February, the Field Office hosts a Field and Career Fair, in which students meet with agency representatives to discuss possible field education sites for Advanced-concentration field. Career workshops are also held throughout the year to help students prepare for professional practice.

**Monitoring Work Study**

Approval of Work Study placements is predicated on a commitment by the student, supervisor and host agency to establish and maintain proper boundaries to ensure that the quality and integrity of the learning experience is not compromised. Therefore the following points of examination and review may warrant special attention beyond that of a traditional placement:

- Different times and, to the extent possible, locations for the execution of learning vs. employment duties.
- The assignment of tasks and duties while in the role of intern reflect new learning opportunities related to educational goals.
- Supervision occurs with the regularity and duration as specified in the SSW program requirements.
- Schedule changes should be brought to the attention of the field liaison in a timely manner.

**Making up Field Hours**

Several circumstances may result in a need to make up field hours. The primary reasons are:

1. Delayed start (Should be shared between Field Office staff and the field liaison if occurring subsequent to the formal assignment of a placement).
2. Substantial interruption (Should be brought to the liaison’s attention by the student or field instructor).
3. Sporadic absences leading to a cumulative deficit.

The common methods for making up time include:

1. Adding in hours each week on a predetermined consistent basis.
2. Adding in hours sporadically whenever possible.
3. Extending time in field past the established field calendar schedule.
Key requirements to keep in mind:
1. Plans to make up hours require the field instructor’s input and approval.
2. Any plan for making up hours should include the same legitimate learning opportunities and meaningful client contact included in the original plan.

Macro Projects for 1st Field Generalist Students
A macro project is required for all first field (Generalist) students. The purpose of a macro project is to expose students to skills around organizational, community and systems-level changes. Field instructors and students collaborate to develop a macro project suitable to the agency and learning needs of the student. Reminders about the development and completion of the macro project should occur when field liaisons make their site visits. Samples of macro projects done by former students can be found in the Appendix.

Career Planning
On occasion, students begin to reevaluate social work as their career choice and turn to their field instructors and field liaisons for advice. This topic is thoroughly explored in the document Field Office Q & A which can be found in the Appendix. In addition, liaisons may be called upon by students completing Advanced-concentration field, particularly when they are nearing graduation and approaching the job market. Students can be directed to various workshops offered by the School of Social Welfare to assist students in their job search on such topics as Resume writing, the Job Search, Interviewing, Salary Negotiation, Social Work Licensure, etc.

** Additional issues expressed by students can be found in the Field Q&A (see Appendix section).
MEDIATION

When issues arise in field, students and/or field instructors may need support in negotiating, mediating or resolving conflicts. Field liaisons are the first points of access when conflicts occur. Unrealistic expectations, infrequent or fractured communication and limited resources are examples of key variables that generate conflict. Below are some strategies to help provide support.

**Time for Listening**

When a student requests to meet with the field liaison, a meeting should be scheduled to listen to the student’s concerns. During the meeting, an assessment of the perceived problem should be captured before determining when and how to intervene. Students may have expectations to be removed from their placements when conflicts arise, and field liaisons can provide supportive counsel and reinforcement of the curricular objectives of the field learning experiences. Students should be informed of the field instructor’s role in mediating conflicts in field before decisions are made to remove them from their field placements.

**Managing Student Issues in Field**

Field instructors may require guidance on how to address performance deficits. Supervision should occur consistently, and constructive feedback should be provided and documented by the field instructor after meetings with the student. Field instructors should provide written feedback to students to ensure understanding of the performance concerns and include a plan for improvement. When it is evident that the student is not demonstrating competency of social work practice skills in a timely manner, there is a need to implement a Focused Learning Agreement. A meeting with the field liaison, field instructor and student(s) should occur at this point.

Field instructors may also need guidance in managing conflict with students that interfere with the learning experiences. Difference in the supervisory styles of field instructors and the learning styles of students can present unique challenges for the working relationship. Field instructors should understand these barriers and seek to resolve the issues that impact learning. Field liaisons should listen to field instructors’ concerns and validate their feelings.

**Extra Monitoring**

Field liaisons may schedule extra on-site visits with the field instructor and student. If discussions by phone/email correspondence do not resolve matters, field liaisons can meet with all parties at the placement agency. These meetings can be used to discuss the development of a focused learning agreement, or provide on-site mediation of contentious issues that impact the learning experiences of students.

**When to Contact the Field Education Office**

Assistant Directors of Field Education can be consulted during the intervention phase(s). If these interventions are unsuccessful, field liaisons should contact the Director of Field Education to discuss the problem(s). This should occur before a decision is made about suspending field or requesting a change in placement. Field instructors and students should be informed of the plan to contact the Field Education Office and that a follow-up meeting with the Director of Field Education may occur with all parties before deciding on the continuation of the field placement assignment.
LINKS TO HELPFUL TOOLS

Field Education Website - http://www.albany.edu/ssw/field-education-social-welfare.php

MSW Curriculum and Model Programs –
http://www.albany.edu/ssw/msw-model-curriculum.php

Field Q&A - http://www.albany.edu/ssw/assets/FIELD_EDUCATION_QandA.pdf

APPENDIX

SSW Standards for Social Work Education

Additional Common Issues in Field – Field Q&A

Example of a Critical Summary

Criteria for Field Evaluation

Learning Agreement Instructions

Sample of a Focused Learning Agreement

Sample Macro Assignments

Sample Process Recording

Field Liaison Tracking Forms

Field Seminar Syllabus

Field Seminar Resource Materials (for Handouts in Field Seminar)
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Introduction

All students are expected to meet and maintain the academic standards established by the School of Social Welfare. The academic standards established by the School of Social Welfare are comprised of expectations regarding both scholastic performance and professional behavior. Students are expected to meet and maintain these standards in the classroom, in field, and in other contexts where they are acting as a social worker or social work student. Adherence to these standards will be the basis upon which students will be evaluated by faculty, including field instructors, responsible for evaluating student performance in the classroom and field. Meeting the criteria for scholastic performance is necessary but is not the sole measure to ensure continued enrollment in a program. Students must also demonstrate professional competency and an understanding of and a commitment to the values and ethics of the social work profession. Advancement through the program is a privilege, not a right. Upon enrollment into the MSW program, students sign a form that verifies acknowledgement, understanding and acceptance of these standards.

The School of Social Welfare evaluates the academic performance of its students in four core areas: Basic Skills Necessary to Acquire Professional Competence; Coping Skills; Professional Performance Skills; and Scholastic Performance.

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Performance

1. Basic Skills Necessary to Attain Professional Competence

Communication Skills
The social work student must demonstrate sufficient written and oral skills to:

- Communicate ideas and feelings clearly, effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals
- Understand and articulate the content presented in the program and to complete adequately all written and oral assignments
- Demonstrate a willingness and ability to listen to others.

Interpersonal Skills
The social work student must demonstrate interpersonal skills to relate effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals. These include flexibility, empathy, nonjudgmental attitude, respect, and the abilities to listen, communicate and negotiate.

Cognitive Skills
The social work student must demonstrate sufficient knowledge of social work and clarity of thinking to process information and apply it to situations in the classroom and field and other professional situations. The student must demonstrate the ability to conceptualize and integrate knowledge and apply that knowledge to social work practice.
Appreciation of Diversity
Social work practice requires understanding, affirmation and respect of another individual’s way of life and values. The social work student must demonstrate respect and sensitivity toward other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals and others who are different from him/herself regardless of the person’s age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, race, religion, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, or value system.

2. Coping Skills Necessary for Performance in the Program and Professional Practice

The social work student must demonstrate the capacity to interact positively and effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals at all times and to execute sound judgment and performance in the program. The student must demonstrate appropriate coping skills in the face of personal or other circumstances, including seeking counseling or other sources of support and assistance, to ensure that such circumstances do not:
- compromise academic performance
- interfere with professional judgment and behavior
- jeopardize the best interests of those to whom the social work student has a professional responsibility.

3. Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice

Professional Commitment
The social work student must demonstrate a strong commitment to further social and economic justice and to serve persons who are vulnerable, marginalized or oppressed.

Professional Conduct
The social work student must act professionally and responsibly in matters of punctuality, attendance, appearance and presentation of self.

The social work student must be able to advocate for her/himself in an appropriate and responsible manner. The student must be able to receive and accept feedback and supervision and apply such feedback to enhance professional development and self-awareness. The student must demonstrate the capacity to recognize and maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries and appropriately use self-disclosure.

Self-awareness
Self-awareness is a key component of social work practice. The social work student must be aware of how his or her values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect his or her thinking, behavior and relationships with other students, faculty, staff, clients and professionals, including those in authority. The student must be able to accurately assess his or her own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. The student must be able to examine and appropriately modify his or her behavior when it interferes with his or her professional work.
Ethical Obligations
The behavior of the social work student must adhere to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional practice as delineated in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics.

4. Student Performance

Undergraduate Students
Undergraduate Social Welfare majors must meet the academic standards defined in the Undergraduate Social Welfare Program Student Handbook and the Field Education Handbook, Undergraduate Program of the School of Social Welfare.

Graduate Students
MSW students must meet the academic standards defined in the Graduate Faculty and Student Handbook and the MSW Field Education Handbook of the School of Social Welfare.
ADDITIONAL COMMON ISSUES – FIELD Q&A

Q: What if I’m not getting enough cases or client contact at my placement?

A: The answer depends on the reason for lack of client contact. A low client census at the agency may be indicative of a field instructor being protective of students or clients. To understand the reasons for this, it is important to discuss your concerns with your field instructor. You may also consider the following if the field instructor is being protective in the assignment of cases:

*Low census*: If full case assignments are slow to come, consider approaching your supervisor with an interim proposal. Identify part of a case or group that you could assist with and offer to help out on that basis (specific opportunities will vary depending on your placement setting).

*Protective Field Instructor*: A) Open the topic with your field instructor for a dialogue and address his/her concerns directly. B) Invite your field instructor to shadow you. C) Offer to take parts of an assignment or share a case. Although your involvement may be modest at first, it will provide an opportunity to demonstrate your abilities. Client contact will likely increase as a result of your field instructor’s growing confidence in your abilities. D) Share class assignments and syllabi with your field instructor so that he/she has a better understanding of what you should be able to do with a client. E) Contact your field liaison for input if the situation persists.

Q: What if I can’t get the kind of case I need to complete a class assignment?

A: Try branching out. If the type of client or client contact isn’t available in your immediate situation, perhaps you could find it nearby. Your field instructor may know of an affiliated department or setting that may have just what you need and be willing to help. One student created the kind of contact she needed by proposing to do a follow-up visit with a client who was phasing out or discharged. Some agencies are quite receptive to such proposals, especially if they can serve a dual purpose. Of course the nature of the class assignment will direct your search and evaluation of possibilities.

Q: Staff members at my placement sometimes joke about their cases. Isn’t this unprofessional?

A: Your concern is understandable and delves directly into ethical practices. Is it…?

  A) Disrespectful  
  B) Unprofessional  
  C) A Breach of Confidentiality  
  D) A Sign of Burnout

Before reaching a verdict, consider a couple of alternative angles.

  A) In some settings “gallows humor” functions as a method for coping with high levels of stress. Hospital emergency departments, for instance, are often compared to combat zones by the people who work in them (periods of calm punctuated by unpredictable flurries of extreme stress and demand). This experience of being “in the trenches” means repeatedly bearing witness to people as they endure the worst events of their lives. The staff members share a common commitment that is seldom questioned. Under such
circumstances, humor might be perceived as an important outlet and adaptive form of coping. (“This work will make you either laugh or cry.”) However, conduct that is blatantly unprofessional should never be excused as stress management. Such instances might include joking about cases in the presence of clients, family members or agency personnel unrelated to the case.

B) One tool that might assist with a “differential diagnosis” here is your own observation. How do staff members behave when working directly with clients? Are clients treated with respect? Does behavior toward clients reinforce or contradict your initial impressions? Is this a norm for this workplace? Does it reflect high or low levels of morale?

Such ethical dilemmas play an essential role in the task of developing one’s own professional identity. Students must consider to what extent their personalities, temperaments and values become factor into how such encounters are interpreted. An important skill for agency-based practice is learning how to reconcile our needs to both affiliate and differentiate within a work group. Finally, these experiences invite students to explore methods that can be used to help cope with work-related stress. Make a point of talking it over with your field instructor and/or field liaison.

Q: Process Recordings seem like a burden to both my supervisor and me. Any advice?

A: Weekly process recordings remain a firm requirement. It sounds like it’s time to reduce costs and increase benefits. The following tips are aimed at accomplishing this.

Streamline Process/Product:

- Instead of slaving three hours over refining a single process recording, strive for one hour of time invested.
- If your handwriting is perfectly legible you have the option of not typing it.
- Using the template provided during orientation is also an option.

A thorough and accurate transcription of an entire client session should always be your plan. Under some circumstances, you may need to employ other methods. Examples include:

- At a school program for young children, there was initially little opportunity for full-length sessions with students. The intern assembled recordings from a series of brief encounters that showed continuity and evolution.
- If time constraints at an agency force you to shorten your process recording, select two sections that are strengths and two difficulties for input.

Process Recording Used for Skill Development:

A) Demonstrate Skills: If your field instructor has been slow to assign cases it may be because they are feeling protective of you or the clients. Process recordings may highlight your skills, which may increase the field instructor’s confidence in your readiness for practice.
B) *Convert your Field Instructor into an Ally:* Process recordings are sometimes used by faculty as the basis for an assignment. For instance you might be required to identify a number of interventions with a process recording. Why not ask your field instructor to team up with you on this assignment and assist you? This shift in perspective from critic to ally can help expand your roles beyond that of sender/receiver of feedback.

C) *Enforced Empathy:* As a student learner you may feel an acute sense of vulnerability and exposure. It may help to know that your field instructor (when enrolled in supervisor training) was required to submit to the school a process recording from a supervisory meeting with their student. Having been in the same boat may provide an opportunity to share with one another what that’s like and what’s at stake. Keep in mind that your field instructor might also experience some level of risk and exposure. Their comments on your work reveal a level of expertise.

**Q:** My fieldwork has led to a reconsideration of Social Work as my career choice. What does this mean?

**A:** You’re definitely not alone. Whether entering the field as an intern or recent graduate, we may become troubled when we encounter things we hadn’t anticipated. Here’s a brief sample of possible encounters.

- I’m only able to give help that seems limited and incomplete.
- The system is sometimes fragmented and incomplete.
- Injustices abound.
- I take the lives and troubles of my clients home with me and can’t seem to turn it off.
- Sometimes it seems I’m surrounded by staff who are cynical and burned out. They don’t seem to try as hard or care as much as I do.

Whether you find such encounters intriguing, annoying or disturbing will depend on your temperament and personal values. It’s impossible to tackle the origins and implications of each example here. However, it may be helpful to examine a phenomenon that many professional social workers will recognize. As newcomers entering the field our expectations and pre-conceptualizations about the profession may at times collide with its realities and imperfections. The resulting impact can trigger an internal crisis of which there are numerous variations. The experience may include a sense of disillusionment or betrayal, wounded ideals, feelings of loss and grief. Here are two:

- **A) Single Event:** All elements culminate within one particular instance. The crisis is acute.

- **B) Protracted:** Smaller episodes create a progression that is incremental. A low-grade crisis of dissatisfaction is perpetuated.

**Resolution:** If resolved in favor of continuing in the profession, the crisis becomes a significant milestone in the evolution of one’s professional identity (loss of innocence being a presumed initiation). Such events serve as a definite wake-up call/reality check. Some input from a trusted friend might assist in your interpretation of the experience. And don’t rule out your Field Instructor as a sounding board. She/he may find your honesty and self-awareness both
impressive and refreshing. They may also be encouraged to tell a story (stories) of their own. Keep in mind also that while some may be reluctant to admit it, many seasoned professionals periodically ask themselves the same thing you are.

Questions for Consideration:

- How can I tell the difference between the burned out cynic and the seasoned veteran who has learned how to work and take care of her/himself?
- How do I accept limitations without feeling defeated?
- Are my feelings of helplessness associated with particular expectations?
- Must I relinquish my ideals as I become socialized into the profession?
- Which of my personal values are non-negotiable?
- Is there a relationship between naiveté and idealism?

Q: What’s a macro project and how do I plan one?

A: The macro project for field is part of the generalist field experience and applies to first year students only. It is intended to provide you an experience with initiating change at a larger systems level. Ideally it should take place in the agency or community beyond the level of working with individuals or small groups. You can propose your own idea to your field instructor but the project should have practical benefit to the agency. If you know what you are going to do early on you include it in your learning agreement. The project constitutes a field assignment independent of any similar project that might be assigned in another class at school and they should not be substituted for one another. Once completed, the product or project description should be attached to the next field evaluation submitted to the Field Office when that evaluation is due. Conducting your project needn’t take the whole internship but it could depend on the scope. The important thing to keep in mind is not to procrastinate and have it haunt you down the home stretch.

A list of sample macro projects can also be found in this appendix.

Q: How can I be doing so well in class but struggling so much in my internship?

A: Big topic. There are several ways to address this question but one thing we’ve noticed is that these two performance arenas draw on different skill sets. Check out the two lists below.

Different Demands for Thriving and Surviving

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic success</th>
<th>Internship Success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Spontaneity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Ability</td>
<td>Acceptance of learner role</td>
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<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Self Soothing</td>
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<td>Organization</td>
<td>Role Transitioning</td>
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<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>Establish and maintain boundaries</td>
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<td>Reading comprehension</td>
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<td>Test Taking</td>
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These lists aren’t exhaustive nor are they mutually-exclusive. Effective functioning borrowed from one place can be transferable to the other.

The academic arena relies heavily on our intellect. If graduate school entails a continuation of the student role for you, then your executive muscles may be well exercised by now. In addition, requirements for success in class are usually spelled out in a syllabus and expectations are clearly defined. Successful behaviors are established more quickly when results and feedback are direct and rewards are clear. So one reason you might be doing better in class is that the rules of the game are clearer and you’ve been at it longer. There’s also more consistency between teachers and classes than between agencies and clients.

In field, conditions are more ambiguous and place heavy demands on a skill set characterized by integration that can be difficult to acquire without “trial by fire.” One prime task for students is managing the tension between two competing aspects within the role of intern. How does one balance the desire to prove competence with the vulnerability of not knowing? This is why self-soothing becomes a critical skill for mastering this task. We don’t go on and on discussing this skill now but it’s worth reflecting on a bit.

Additional Considerations

Script Building
In addition to the skill of self-soothing, script building can help us deal with the vulnerability of not knowing. Learners formulate and test acceptable ways of saying, “I don’t know”, which can minimize feelings of helplessness or incompetence. Many interns pose clarifying questions that buy time until they can organize their thoughts better for a response. Some students follow an “I’m not sure…” with a “…but I’ll find out for you.”

Borrow from Yourself
Identify something you can already do well and build it into your placement duties. One student with a teaching background offered to run a psycho education group at his clinic placement. His performance there fortified him for leading a relapse prevention group which was less familiar to him. Another student struggled with setting limits with mandated clients she found to be manipulative. Even though being the enforcer didn’t come naturally to her she thought of another time at a camp for kids when she had to get tough and it worked. This gave her confidence to relocate that part of herself and apply it when necessary in her new setting.

Make it Your Own
There’s little worse than feeling like an imposter in a costume soon to be discovered. To improve the fit try putting your own twist on a task and see if it works. Starting small will lower the stakes. One student tried out a pie diagram in some of her assessments with clients. It worked so well she began using it routinely and the rest of the team eventually adopted it. Though now a formal tool, it was originally devised to help her take ownership of her role- to feel less self-conscious and more authentic.
**Invite a Story**
This may require taking a chance. How welcoming are you and your field supervisor to admitting/discussing the not knowing and vulnerability that comes with it? Perhaps your supervisor could describe a time when they confronted and dealt with this experience. Many supervisors still haven’t forgotten what it was like and honestly won’t have to look far to find an example. Telling stories can model interpersonal courage, normalize our experiences and give permission to disclose.

**Identify What’s at Stake**
Reflect on what’s at stake for you regarding your performance in field. You can do this not only with your overall performance but with specific instances. Trust permitting, consider sharing some aspect of this with our field instructor. Your field liaison may also provide a safe outlet or sounding board if desired.

**One Placement is One Agency**
Keep in mind that one placement setting doesn’t represent an entire field of social work possibilities. One task in developing a professional identity involves an agency and population sort process. Within each agency an organizational culture is imposed requiring some ratio of mutual adaptation. Ease of adaptation can impact our performance as we consider: Too fast? Too slow? Too big? Too small? Too formal? Too informal? Etc.
CRITICAL SUMMARY SAMPLE

Summary of Issues Leading to the Termination of Field Placement for [Student]
Submitted by [Field Instructor], Field Placement Supervisor

[Student] is a second-year macro student who interned at the [Agency] for the Fall 2014 semester and the first few weeks of the Spring 2016 semester. After careful deliberation, extensive discussions with field liaison [Name] and a face-to-face meeting with [Name], we agreed it would be best for [student] to continue her education at another agency (preferably one offering clinical/direct practice opportunities).

[Student] is bright and articulate, and the ending of her placement at the [Agency] was not caused by any inappropriate or damaging behaviors on the part of [student]. Rather, the placement was terminated because it was not a good fit between [student’s] existing skill set; her future career plans; her expectations for the macro field experience; and the learning opportunities available at the [agency].

That said, there were several performance and behavioral issues that impeded [student’s] ability to succeed in the [agency] placement. They are identified here not to criticize, but to help [student] continue her personal and professional development so she can enjoy success at future placements and places of employment.

Performance Issue: Computer Skills

[Student] is open about her shortcomings in this area, and she deserves credit for tackling her fear of the computer. Nevertheless, her skills in this area are abysmal, especially for someone that has had to submit papers throughout her college years.

[Student’s] lack of ability with this basic function limited what I could give her for work, and the work I did give her required multiple edits to produce an acceptable finished product. I am not talking about complicated tasks—simply form letters.

[Student] is unable to touch type, is unfamiliar with how to format basic business correspondence, and lacks knowledge and experience in Word and Excel. She required so much tutoring that much of the time spent on projects was spent on edits and re-writes rather than the projects themselves. I do not have the time, nor is it my responsibility, to teach basic computer skills to second year Master’s level student. A keyboarding class and intensive practice are recommended, followed by classes in Word and Excel.

Although [student] has made improvement in this area, the deficits hinder her from advancing projects in a timely manner and functioning in a more independent manner.

Behavioral Issues

[Student] displayed several behavioral issues that interfered with her ability to interact successfully with others at the [agency]. These behaviors were compounded by discomfort and anxiety about how to function in the unfamiliar macro setting. [Student] experience and strengths lie in the direct practice arena.
**Behavioral Issue #1: Not Listening**

[Student] has a habit of interrupting when someone is speaking, especially when she is unsure of herself. For example, when trying to explain something to her on the computer, she will move the cursor up and down frantically on the screen trying to find what you are talking about rather than listening and absorbing what is being said.

**Behavioral Issue #2: Lack of Focus and Unpredictable Quality of Work**

[Student] is easily distracted and lets personal issues interfere with her ability to focus at work. For example, if her school schedule was busy or her children’s activities required a lot of driving one week, the quality of [student] work would suffer. One week her letters might need to be edited only once; the next they might need to be returned three times. When asked the cause for these variances, [student] would indicate they were due to either a ‘good week’ or a ‘bad week’. The unpredictability in the quality of [student] work limited what I was willing to give her. “If she can’t handle a form letter, how will she ever manage to write her own letter or design an invitation?” I adjusted my expectations down and had to give [student] simpler work than expected for a second year student.

**Behavioral Issue #3: Argumentativeness**

[Student] has strong opinions and vocalizes them well. This can be a strength, but it can also be a weakness. In [student’s] case, her argumentativeness prevented people from wanting to work with her. When faced with negative feedback, [student] tended to get defensive and reiterate her point several times. She was unable to internalize the feedback. (One exception is in the typing edits. [Student] was always open to receiving that feedback and making the necessary corrections.)

**Misconceptions about the Purpose of Field Practice**

[Student’s] background in direct practice led her to feel relatively competent in that area, so she opted for macro work when pursuing her second year placement. The student in her felt it would be better to gain experience in something new rather than enhance skills she already possessed. Several times during the placement, [student] remarked that she would end up in direct practice when she graduated. This indicated to me the placement was not a good match for [student] skills and future plans.

I applaud the learner in [student] who opted to take the harder, less familiar path, but the purpose of a second year placement is not to ‘get your feet wet,’ but to hone the skills you hope to use in your employment. [Student’s] mistaken belief is unfortunate in that it put her in a placement that did not suit her many strengths.

**Future Plans**

I appreciate the contributions [student] did make while at the [agency], and I commend her desire to make the most of her education by gaining exposure to both ends of the social work continuum. A direct practice setting, combined with intensive computer training, will give [student] the chance to succeed, which she very much deserves. I wish her all the best.
FIELD EVALUATION CRITERIA

The generalist and second-year clinical practice field evaluation instruments are comprised of nine competencies for which students have to demonstrate proficiency of social work practice skills: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice; Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice; Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice; Engage in Policy Practice; Engage with Individuals, Families and/or Groups; Assess Individuals, Families and/or Groups; Intervene with Individuals, Families and/or Groups; and Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families and/or Groups. Students are evaluated on a continuum of skills at one interval throughout the field instruction sequence. The skills are applicable to individuals, families, groups, and community assignments.

The MACRO evaluation instrument is comprised of nine competencies for which students have to demonstrate proficiency of social work practice skills: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice; Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice; Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice; Engage in Policy Practice; Engage with Groups, Organizations and/or Communities; Assess Groups, Organizations and/or Communities; Intervene with Groups, Organizations and/or Communities; Evaluate Practice with Groups, Organizations and/or Communities. Students are evaluated on a continuum of skills at one interval throughout the field instruction sequence. The skills are applicable to groups, organizations and community assignments.

For each evaluation period, please rate a student on every item by entering the number that corresponds to your assessment of the student’s demonstrated performance in the box or boxes to the right of each item. Reevaluate a student’s performance from a previous evaluation when the student’s performance has changed.

Ratings

1 Unacceptable (never or rarely meets criteria)
2 Needs improvement (meets criteria inconsistently)
3 Satisfactory (meets criteria most of the time)
4 Very good (consistently meets criteria)
5 Outstanding (consistently exceeds criteria)
9 Not applicable in practice setting

Summarize the student’s overall performance for each section by placing an X at the point on the bar graph that represents his or her overall performance for that section. Space for comments is included after each section.

The last page includes an overall student rating, with space for comments and goals for the next evaluation period. The student and field instructor are required to sign each evaluation. When a student disagrees with the contents of the evaluation, he or she may submit an addendum stating the reasons for disagreement. The addendum is attached to the evaluation in the student’s file. The field liaison reads all evaluations and is available to meet at the student’s or field instructor’s request.
Any time a student receives a summary rating, in any section, of “needs improvement” or “unacceptable,” it is important to provide supporting documentation in the comments section.

Your careful attention to completing the evaluation form is greatly appreciated. Evaluation is a crucial part of a student’s professional training and provides an opportunity for feedback and educational planning.
LEARNING AGREEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

This learning agreement is an individualized working agreement between the student, the field instructor, the placement agency, and the School of Social Welfare. This agreement is to be developed jointly by the student and the field instructor, taking into account: agency parameters, priorities and resources; the particular learning needs and interests of the student; and the resources available to the field instructor. This learning agreement, in conjunction with the field evaluation instrument, will specify:

- What the student needs to learn
- Assignments and other opportunities for learning
- Responsibilities of both field instructor and student

The field instructor will facilitate the process. At each evaluation the learning agreement will be renegotiated and future goals and objectives spelled out in the final section of the field evaluation instrument.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN DEVELOPING AGREEMENT READ THE FOLLOWING:

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

- What do you hope to learn in your field placement this year? What kinds of experience, knowledge and skills do you want to gain?
- What personal strengths do you bring to this field placement?
- What areas are you uncertain about? What things worry you most about field? What areas would you like help with?
- How do you most enjoy learning? What helps you to learn?
- What makes it hard for you to learn? What kinds of things help you then?
- How does this field placement connect to your social work experience so far, and to your view of your future?
- When you imagine your "dream" field instructor, what qualities seem most important in helping you to learn and succeed?

STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING THE LEARNING AGREEMENT

- At a meeting between the field instructor and student talk about both of your ideas and expectations for the placement and of each other. Select the areas most important to you from FOOD FOR THOUGHT to discuss with your field instructor.
- Together identify specifics for: learning opportunities that will take place in the first evaluation period; the supervision plan; assignments; student/field instructor responsibilities; and goals for the first evaluation period.
- Include macro practice assignment for 1st year M.S.W. students.
- The field instructor will then fill out field instructor responsibilities and the assignments. The student will fill out student responsibilities and supervision plan.
FOCUSED LEARNING AGREEMENT - SAMPLE

Student:
Field Instructor:
Field Liaison:
Date:

The student, field instructor and field liaison have agreed that the following performance targets will be established and attained in order to meet the requirements for proceeding with field 752, 753. Progress toward these performance targets will be reviewed after completion of the first 6 weeks of the internship. Continuance at this field site is predicated on sufficient progress in the areas targeted below as determined by the field instructor and field office staff. Initiative and communication skills will be the focus for these goals.

1. Establish and Maintain Relationships with Multidisciplinary Team Members:
   a. In order to develop competence in this area, [student] will assist in the initiation, cultivation and active maintenance of key working relationships with professional staff as designated by her field instructor. In addition [student] will contribute during case review meetings by presenting a well-organized synopsis/update of the social work perspective related to individual clients.
   b. Student will demonstrate active participation in the discussion by offering suggestions, asking for clarification, providing feedback.
   c. For the term of this agreement [student] will also provide her field instructor a process recording of a transaction involving [student] and another hospital staff member. These written process recordings should be submitted once weekly and in advance of scheduled supervision in order to allow review time.

   Evaluation Method:
   Direct observation by supervisor.

2. Supervision Initiative:
   a. In order to demonstrate the ability to initiate and sustain a shared dialogue [student] will begin supervision by coming prepared to discuss the following as an agenda: synopsizing current cases, provide a description of [student’s] own assessment, present options formulated for consideration, have specific questions for supervisor that pertain to discrete aspects of the case, use of self and personal reactions to the work.

   Evaluation Method:
   Direct observation by supervisor.

Signatures:

Student __________________________ Date _________
Field Instructor __________________________ Date _________
Field Office Staff _________________________ Date _________
SAMPLE MACRO ASSIGNMENTS

1. Resource Development
   a) Compiling a list of area home health care AIDS for a HIV program
   b) Developing a resource manual for new students
   c) Identifying the funding source of the agency

2. Data Collection/Research
   a) Developing client satisfaction surveys
   b) Developing a socio-cultural assessment of the organization
   c) Developing a client needs assessment instrument

3. Program/Group Development
   a) Developing the procedure to form a new therapeutic group
   b) Developing a parents advisory committee in a day care center
   c) Developing a peer support group in a school setting

4. Alliances and Coalitions
   a) Outreach and coalition development with other agencies
   b) Collaboration and attending meetings at other organizations
   c) Developing a monthly luncheon of area providers

5. Community Based Initiatives
   a) Developing outreach relationships with community organizations
   b) Identifying already existing neighborhood initiatives
   c) Identifying potential collaboration parties in the community

6. Social Action/ Lobbying/Advocacy
   a) Contacting county and state legislators to secure the legislative process
   b) Develop a voter registration drive
   c) Organize demonstrations to protest budget cuts
   d) Compile a list of federal, state and local public officials serving on key committees

7. Administration and Supervision
   a) Supervision of agency volunteers
   b) Chair meetings
   c) Attend board meetings

8. Fund Raising
   a) Participating in agency annual fund raising events
   b) Develop new strategies for capital campaigns
   c) Organizing potential sources for volunteer involvement
### PROCESS RECORDING TEMPLATE

**Process Recording #**

**Date**

**Scenario:** Summarize the discussion – identify the speakers; summarize the purpose of the discussion; location, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Dialogue</th>
<th>Social Work Students’ Gut-Level Feelings</th>
<th>Logical Interpretations</th>
<th>Supervisor Comments</th>
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<td>2. Of client interaction</td>
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<td>3. Of skills used/alternative approaches that could be used</td>
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Process Recording Exercise

*(Adapted from Fine Tuning an Old Instrument@ Neuman, K. And Friedman, B)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACEMENT DETAIL</th>
<th>Contact #1 Student &amp; FI</th>
<th>Site Visit #1*</th>
<th>Learning Agree.</th>
<th>1st Eval.</th>
<th>Contact #2 Student &amp; FI</th>
<th>Site Visit #2*</th>
<th>2nd Eval.</th>
<th>Final Eval.</th>
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* Not applicable for 2nd field (advanced-concentration) placements

Field Liaison Name (Print):_________________________________________________  Academic Year:____________________________
FIELD LIAISON CONTACT TRACKING FORM

Liaison Name: ___________________________  Semester: _____ Year: _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD INSTRUCTOR NAME</th>
<th>AGENCY PLACEMENT</th>
<th>STUDENT NAME</th>
<th>Contact # (1st or 2nd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|                           |                 |              |                       |

COMMENTS

*Guidance for the review of all incoming documentation is specified in the FIELD LIAISON MANUAL.*
MASTER SYLLABUS FOR FIELD SEMINAR

RSSW 650 and 651 Field Instruction I and II (Integrated Field Seminar)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

RSSW 650 Field Instruction I - a 3 credit course and RSSW 651 Field Instruction II - a 4 credit course introduce social work practice and provide the initial experience of practice in a social work setting. Students are placed in a social service agency where, under a qualified field instructor, they are exposed to experiences that enable them to apply, integrate, and extend the theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom and to develop social work skills and appropriate attitudes, particularly in relation to at-risk and oppressed groups. Assignment to a specific agency is made according to each student's educational needs. Students are in field two days per week (16 hrs.) and are required to complete up to 500 hours for the two semester sequence.

Students also participate in a field seminar, which meets seven times over the academic year (Fall/Spring). The field seminar provides instruction, guidance and support to students in helping manage professional and practice issues encountered in field. Students will compare practice experiences, integrate classroom learning with practice, and apply critical thinking skills to their practice and professional development. Attendance to the field seminar (14 hours) will count towards the total number of field hours required for the completion of Field Instruction I and II.

Requisite Course Criteria: RSSW 620 must be taken concurrently with Field Instruction I (RSSW 650). RSSW 610 and 630 are prerequisite or concurrent courses. These courses must be successfully completed prior to registering for Field Instruction II (RSSW 651). RSSW 611 and 631 are prerequisite or concurrent courses for RSSW 651. RSSW 621 must be taken concurrently with Field Instruction II.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Course objectives for the internship match the items on the final field evaluation and include the following areas:

1. Student as Learner
2. Development of Professional Attitudes, Values and Ethics
3. Knowledge and Skills for Agency-Based Work
4. Communication Skills
5. Assessment Skills
6. Intervention Skills

At the end of the Seminar, students will be able to:

1. Describe the agency mission, history and structure, sources of funding, role in the community service delivery system, relationship to the community in which it operates and role of the social worker.

2. Reflect on their practice demonstrating self-awareness, conscious use of self and professional identity development as a social worker.

3. Apply the knowledge, skills and values of cultural competence and cultural sensitivity to work with clients.
4. Apply relevant theories and evidence-based research to practice in Field.
5. Direct their own learning by utilizing supervision appropriately and the development and use of the learning agreement.
6. Apply critical thinking in determining appropriate approaches and social work skills for use with each unique client system.
7. Assess the impact of discrimination, oppression and injustice on populations at risk and employ strategies that promote human rights and socioeconomic justice.
8. Assess and evaluate ethical dilemmas inherent in social work practice situations.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to be active participants and attendance is mandatory. Assignments are to be completed by the due dates.

**Attendance Policy:**
Students are expected to attend every seminar session. Students must attend their assigned seminar section; you cannot attend an alternative seminar section with another field liaison/seminar instructor. In the event of an emergency or illness, where you must be absent from a seminar course, you are expected to communicate through electronic mail. The instructor must be notified no later than 24 hours after the missed seminar session. Because attendance to the field seminar is counted as field hours, unexcused absences will affect the total number of hours required for the completion of field.

**Grading:** The overall S/U grade for Field Instruction I and II will include attendance to the field seminar and achievement of the objectives listed above. Students receive a grade of “S” for Field Instruction I and II based on their work in field and in the field seminar course.

**Disability Resource Center:** It is the policy of the University at Albany to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students requesting accommodations for the participation in the field seminar must register with the Disability Resource Center and complete an assessment. Upon request and authorization for release by the student, the Disability Resource Center will notify the Field Education Office of any needed accommodations regarding the seminar course. Any student requesting an accommodation for the seminar course should make this request in person as soon as possible.

IV. ASSIGNMENTS

**Recommended Readings:** Students can find the following journal articles and handouts related to topics that will be discussed over the course of the year. The articles can be found on Blackboard under the Seminar course.

_The Supervisory Conference Handout_


**Reflective Journals:** Students will complete a minimum of seven entries due before the beginning of each class. The journals are submitted directly to the field liaison/seminar instructor and information in the journals is not shared with the field instructor without the student’s consent. There is no length requirement. However, content needs to be substantive. Each journal entry should be uploaded in Blackboard in Microsoft Word format. Topics to journal on include, but are not limited to:

- Challenging/Difficult clients
- Assessing the supervisory relationship
- Self-awareness and questions around diversity/values/beliefs
- Exploration of questions of privilege and power
- Handling interpersonal stress and incorporating self-care
- Ethical dilemmas encountered
- Managing conflict and difficult situations in supervision/organizational dynamics
- Discussion on high and low points during the week at the placement
- Participation in seminar/level of engagement
- Identifying skills used at that placement (i.e. communication, assessment, intervention)

**Self-Evaluation Essay and Presentation:** For this final assignment, to be presented in sessions 6 and 7 of the seminar course, students will reflect on lessons learned throughout the year and assess their professional social work practice skills. The essay will explore both personal and professional learning experiences, with students evaluating both their skills and their fit for social work practice. The essay should be between 4-6 pages in length with 1.5 inch space between lines. Presentations will be made in small peer groups and will articulate learned skills, how students will build upon learned skills to prepare for advanced practice and how the field experience enlightened students about the profession and its true fit for the practitioner. The assignments should outline the following:

1. Describe learned skills and your strengths.
2. Identify areas that were uncomfortable for you and where you feel the need for more growth and development.
3. Summarize one experience that contributed most to your personal growth.
4. Describe how the seminar course contributed to your personal and professional growth.
5. Identify action steps you will take to further prepare for advanced levels of social work practice.

V. **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Session I: Beginnings**
- Preparing for Field (Beginning Self-assessment)
- Development of a Personal Learning Agenda
- The Role of the Field Liaison
- Field Policies and Procedures
- Contracting
- Learning Style

**Session II: Use of Supervision**
- Core Ingredients of a Learning Alliance
- Boundaries
- Setting and Negotiating Agendas for Supervision
- Evaluation and Feedback
- Learning Tools

**Session III: Professional Self and Values and Ethics**
- Professional Identity
- Self-care
c. Skills for Using Confrontation and Differentiation
d. Dealing with Value Conflicts
e. Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas

**Session IV: Agency Context**
a. Different Contexts Affecting Agency Functioning and Development (i.e. history, political, economic)
b. Understanding and Adapting to Organizational Climate and Culture
c. Agency as a System (Person in Environment)
d. Agency Sort/Affecting Change

**Session V: Cultural Competence/Dealing with Difference/Social Justice**
a. Developing Mechanisms for Cultural Awareness and its Impact on Practice
b. Defining Levels of Social Justice in Service to Populations
c. Advocacy for Individual and Community Service Needs

**Session VI: Termination with Clients/Agencies (Self-Assessment Presentations)**
a. Navigating the Parallel Process of Terminating with Field Instructors and Clients
b. Evaluation of Practice with Client
c. Ending Self-assessment of Knowledge and Skills

**Session VII: Termination as a Group/Teachable Moments/Preparing for Advanced Concentration Field (Self-Assessment Presentations)**
a. Learned Lessons from Field, Peers and Teachers
b. Reflections on Development of the Social Work Professional (Ending Self-assessment)
RESOURCES MATERIAL FOR FIELD SEMINAR COURSE

- Concerns of Beginning Field Students
- Learning Style Handout
- Handout for “The Learning Pyramid”
- Handout of “The Supervision Hour”
- Challenges in Supervisory Relationships
- SPIN Handout on Asking for and Receiving Feedback
- Handout Distinguishing Organizational Culture from Organizational Climate
- Handout on “Understanding the Impact of Difference on Social Work Practice”
Concerns of Beginning Field Students

1) Where is my workspace? Will my possessions be secure? Will I have privacy? How will I be able to make/receive phone calls in an emergency?

2) To whom may I turn in an emergency if you are not available? From whom in the agency may I seek supplementary supervision?

3) How will I explain my student status to clients? What if they have negative reactions to this, such as rejection, disparagement, etc.?

4) How might a typical client of this agency view me, given my race, gender, physical appearance, manner, age, etc.?

5) What are formal and informal dress codes here?

6) What are my relationships to other professionals/paraprofessionals within the agency? Can I have lunch with them, discuss cases with them, discuss my supervisor with them, date them, etc.?

7) How could I potentially harm a client?

8) Will I be expected to “cure” all my clients? What if I can’t?

9) What behaviors could result in my expulsion from, or failure in field?

10) What happens during supervision? Whose job is it to structure their meetings?

11) What happens if I make a mistake with a client?

12) Is it ok to have strong feelings toward clients, or is this unprofessional?

13) Are you really going to make me do process recordings? What if I hear that other students in my class aren’t really doing them?

14) How much personal information do I share with clients? What if they want to become my friend, or get too close to me? Where do I draw the line? [Students often believe they should come into the field already knowing this.]

15) How is a student different from being an employee? Do I have the same amount of paperwork? Can I criticize agency policies and practices, or fear being “fired” for doing so?

16) Must I adhere to the same rules of conduct as practiced by licensed social workers? What if these ethical standards differ from those of other agency employees? Which people constitute as my “reference group”? 
Learning Style

Learning styles are ways of learning, in which these styles help people in their studies. Knowing your own learning style and applying it is a great help in our studies. So when a person learns best with a particular style, that doesn't mean that style will be perfect for everyone.

There are 3 types of learning styles. They are Visual, Auditory and Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners.

I am a visual learner. Visual learners are those who learn through seeing. These are the characteristics of a visual learner:

- Reader/ observer
- Benefits from diagrams, charts, pictures, films and written directions
- Values to-do lists, written notes
- Easily visualize objects
- Daydreams a lot
- Visualize things when thinking

I enjoy drawing. Visualizing things are kind of my thing. I usually visualize something when i think of it. I often make to-do lists and daydreamed during lessons. This makes me a visual learner. I knew it and it helps me as diagrams and pictures help me to understand things better. I also understand better by seeing demonstrations.

As i said, visualizing is my thing. I do it when i am communicating so that i can interpret the things that they said in my mind better. Lectures bore me to death, but visualizing what the lecturers tell keeps me in being attentive. I don't really like to copy notes but i always do, in bullet lists.
Experience is essential to understanding, and understanding leads to social problem solving.

John Dewey (1859-1952)
The Supervision Hour

The first issue is, of course, getting your full hour of supervision. Busy is the norm these days, but a lot can be learned from busy supervisors. Please be sure to reschedule when your supervision is cancelled. If it is repeatedly cancelled, let’s talk. Also, it is important that you get a relatively uninterrupted hour - not catch as catch can and not with phone, and in person interruptions constantly.

Both you and your field instructor should prepare for it. Some field instructors request a written agenda prior to your meeting. Even if not requested, it is important that you have an agenda of things you want to cover. Sit down and ask yourself “What should be the focus of this supervision session? What do I need to have prepared to accomplish what I hope to accomplish?” Come up with an agenda of your concerns and questions. Order them in order of priority – what is time sensitive, what concerns you most? Know also that your field instructor may come in with agenda items.

What goes on an agenda?
The purpose of supervision is to discuss professional issues. The following are some examples:

1. Work with clients – ex. Assignment of cases, groups, projects
   - Case analysis
   - Applying theory to practice
   - How to proceed with a case, planning interventions
   - Skills and info you might need
   - Asking for feedback on your work
   - Reviewing a process recording

2. Projects assigned to you – ex. Reporting on progress and areas where stuck

3. Work and interactions with colleagues

4. Understanding of your responsibilities to the agency

5. Ethical issues

6. Diversity issues

7. Personal reactions to your work – countertransference,

8. Asking for support and feedback

9. Supervisory relationship itself – how it is going between the two of you.

Looking at similarities and differences – style, age, gender, race, etc.

The process of supervision also varies. Some people use it for sharing information – talking about cases and projects. For some it is mostly content oriented – who the client is and what she needs. For others it is more about process – “When I meet with my client we get off track. This can emphasize either the client’s dynamics – “Client seems to be withholding information” or the student’s dynamics – “When I meet with clients, I feel unsure of what to say next”.

Think about which ones you have focused on and which ones you have avoided and why. There isn’t a right or wrong – just another area for self-awareness. Try to strike a balance or try a different way. We all tend to stick with our comfort zone. As you get more comfortable with your field instructor, try to take some risks. If you are more comfortable with discussing client issues, try to focus on the process one time.
CHALLENGES IN SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

The following are common challenges:

Poor match between supervisor and supervisee – different personalities, different styles with clients, philosophies, etc.

Frequent change in supervisors

The absent supervisor

The inadequate supervisor – your needs are not being met ex. Not getting feedback

The critical or difficult supervisor

The unethical supervisor

The overloaded, overworked or overwhelmed supervisor

Dual relationships – friends, therapist, babysitting etc.
BUILDING SKILLS IN SUPERVISION AND FEEDBACK

Guidelines for Asking for and Giving Feedback

SPIN

S – Specific
Ask your field instructor to describe specific behavior that he/she appreciates or wants to suggest changes in. An example statement could be: “I would like you to comment on my summary to the group. Was it an accurate summary of the group’s decision?”

P – Positive
Ask about behaviors that are working well, changes already made, goals already accomplished, and positive suggestions to change. “I think I’m being more assertive with handling those boys’ remarks. Have you seen a change for the better?”

I – Use of “I” Messages
Ask for feedback using “I” messages. This helps you to identify your own issues, thoughts and feelings. Take responsibility for being part of the relationship. An example: “I really need to hear from you about how I am handling my priorities.”

N – Negotiate
Ask for feedback in order to open discussion, realizing that your field instructor may not be ready to discuss the subject yet or in the terms you suggest. Note also that various perceptions are possible and the “truth” may be a combination of both your own impressions and those of your field instructor. An example: “I appreciated your trusting me to complete the project last week, but I was really nervous that you weren’t here to double check my work. I’d like to figure out with you some way I could get your feedback on my work before it is finalized.”

Definitions

Organizational Culture

Definition: The way things are done in an organization, which shape employee behavioral expectations and norms.

Can include classifications such as constructive or proficient culture vs. defensive or rigid/resistant culture.
- Constructive or proficient cultures: employees possess behavioral expectations and norms of achievement, innovation, competence, cooperation, supportiveness, responsiveness, and emphasis on reward for performance.
- Rigid / resistant cultures: employees have behavioral expectations and norms of approval, conventionality, dependency, opposition, power, formulation and suppression.
Relationship to: motivation, cooperation, performance, adapting to changing situations.

Organizational Climate

Definition: Employees’ shared perception in their work environment.

Can include dimensions of engaged, functional or stressful climate.
- Engaged clients: indicates a high level of personal accomplishment and low levels of role conflict, emotional exhaustion, and workload. Employees share perception that work environment allows them to accomplish worthwhile tasks, remain personally involved in work and provide high quality services for clients.
- Stressful climates: low level of personal accomplishment but high levels of role overload, role conflict, and emotional exhaustion. Employees share perception that work environment is emotionally exhausting and overwhelming.
Relationship to: job satisfaction, retention, work attitude, organizational productivity/service effectiveness.
Understanding the Impact of Difference on Social Work Practice

What is gained by addressing issues of difference with your client?

a. Helps you to be clearer about how your own experiences influence your practice with clients and work with colleagues.

b. Addresses and has the potential to remove ambiguity about issues related to difference, serving to deepen the relationship and feelings of safety with your clients – creating a stronger working relationship.

c. Increases the degree of cultural competence in your practice and in building a healthier working relationship with your field instructor.

d. Increases confidence in being able to navigate the building of learning alliances with your field instructors and work with future clients.