

FIELD EDUCATION

Overview

Field education is an integral part of the academic preparation of the baccalaureate program in social work. The field practicum and bi-weekly integrative seminar provide a vital learning experience in professional practice.

The field education component of the B.A.S.W. program is operated independently of, but in close collaboration with, the Graduate School of Social Service's field work department. This decision is based on the social work program's intention to maintain the program's distinct identity and objectives and to address the specific needs of undergraduate students.

The program expects its field agencies to adhere to policies on nondiscrimination, affirmative action, disability, and sexual harassment. Agencies that do not adhere to such policies will not be used as field placements.

The responsibility for field placement location and coordination is that of the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. However, there is a great deal of cooperation and consultation between the program and the field work department of the Graduate School of Social Service. For example, undergraduate and graduate faculty and administrators communicate often during the process of developing new field placements to avoid confusing agencies and duplicating efforts. If one program cannot accommodate a request for students, they share the placement opportunity which is then investigated for appropriateness for the other program.

Field instructors have an M.S.W. degree and at least two years of post-master's experience. First time field instructors who supervise program students are expected to attend the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) that is offered each year by the Graduate School of Social Service. This seminar, focusing on how social workers can effectively take on the new role of field instructor, is taught by social work program faculty and staff.

The primary purpose of the program's field experience is to provide students with the opportunity to engage actively in generalist practice that complements and reinforces classroom learning. Students are engaged in every stage of the process, from preparing for entry into the field to their evaluation of the practicum experience. The field component enables the student to demonstrate their investment and competence in social work practice.

The setting for field education is a social service agency. The B.A.S.W. field coordinator and field supervisor work closely to plan learning opportunities that meets the educational needs of the individual student and the objectives of the program. Field education settings represent a cross section of social work practice in the greater New York metropolitan region (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) and reflect a wide range of social service programs.

Field Options

The field education model consists of approximately 16 hours of field education, usually scheduled two-three days per week, for a total of 420 hours in the agency and 30 hours in the accompanying integrative seminar for the academic year. Field placement begins in September and typically ends in early May. Students are expected to be available for their field placement **during the agency's regular working hours**. This

requirement provides the student the opportunity to participate in such learning experiences as staff meetings and professional consultations. Students who are employed are encouraged to discuss their educational goals with their employers and request accommodations in their work schedules to be available for their field placement.

Employment-based Field Placements

Some students are able to meet their field education requirement through the social service agency where they are employed in a social work capacity. Students interested in this option should indicate this preference to the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. They are asked to speak first to the director of their agency or agency department to gain approval for this request. The program will then evaluate the agency's appropriateness as a field learning setting for the social work student.

In order to be considered for a employment-based field placement, the following criteria must be met:

1. Students must have been employed by the agency for at least six months prior to work study application.
2. Students must have a new learning experience different from their work responsibilities, as their field work component.
3. The supervisor must be a qualified M.S.W., with two years post-M.S.W. experience. This supervisor must be different from the student's work supervisor.
4. The agency must provide time for the field instructor to meet with the employee/student for a minimum of one hour per week, and to attend the SIFI course if it has not been taken already.
5. The agency must sign a work study agreement insuring that program's requirements can be met.

Relationship with Field Agency

The program and field work agency are partners in the education of baccalaureate students in social work. The B.A.S.W. field coordinator serves as the field adviser. Because ongoing relationships with agencies are fundamental to ensure sound educational field experiences for students, it is essential that the field adviser maintains a pattern of regular contacts with agencies. Field instructors complete a six-week evaluation of the student that alerts the faculty adviser to any issues early in the internship. Students keep journals which they submit to the B.A.S.W. field coordinator in the Integrative Seminar that enhances communication, and helps to identify any issues in field work. Students are encouraged to share their experience both in and outside of the seminar with the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. Agency visits are the main way of ensuring the maintenance of a relationship and communication necessary for effective educational field experiences for students. Therefore, at least one visit is made to the agency each year. The visit(s) are intended to maximize the potential for student learning by addressing three principal objectives of field teaching:

1. Assist the agency in establishing and maintaining an effective learning environment.
2. Assist and support the agency supervisor in the role of field instructor.
3. Monitor the learning experience, assist the integration of the individual student and relevant agent personnel and productively intervene when learning impediments or difficulties are identified.

During the visit the field coordinator meets with the field instructor, the student, and other relevant personnel to discuss the student's progress.

The visit also may be coupled with an individual conference with the student. The faculty adviser reviews:

1. How field education is affecting the agency
2. Student's relationship with agency personnel
3. Quality of student contact with clients
4. Nature and number of assignments carried by the student
5. Time allotted for supervisory conferences
6. Nature of the supervisory contract
7. Student's process recordings
8. Learning opportunities other than specific student assignments
9. Space for students
10. Viability of agency as a field setting

As consultant to the field work agency, the faculty adviser is responsible for knowing the structure, function, staff and other pertinent information about the agency. It is especially important that the faculty adviser be aware of changes in agency structure, services, and staff that may influence the quality of the student's educational experience. Consultation may be planned with the field instructor's supervisor or agency educational coordinator as indicated.

At least two process recordings per semester are submitted by the student so that the individual student's perception and concerns can be reviewed and addressed. The session provides the student, on a consultation basis, with alternate ways of thinking about problems, increased self-awareness, and the opportunity to individualize academic and field career planning. Individual conferences provide the faculty adviser with time to help the student to clearly identify his/her own learning needs and deficiencies, and place these in the context of student strengths, current functioning and future goals. The adviser can assess whether the field placement is providing the student the opportunity to practice with diverse populations and populations at risk, to engage in practice assessment, and to have assignments in accordance with the program's curriculum. The B.A.S.W. Field Coordinator will meet with the student during the first two months of their internship to systematically review their performance and progress in their internship and classes.

Integrative Seminar

All students in field placement participate in the integrative seminar, which meets for a total of 15 sessions during the academic year. The overall purpose of the integrative seminar is to assist students to combine what they learn in the classroom with what they learn in the field. The seminar is structured to provide students with a forum where they can share their experiences from the field and classroom, work towards the development of increased self-awareness, and receive additional knowledge to supplement their academic and practical experience.

The integrative seminar is led by the students' faculty adviser. Attendance is required as part the student's obligation to fulfill 450 field practicum hours. The seminar is considered part of the student's field education and does not earn a separate grade or additional credits for the student.

Upon completion of the integrative seminar, students are expected to:

1. Develop basic skills for building and using peer support
2. Develop an understanding of their professional identity and their role as a generalist practitioner

3. Develop basic skills to manage the affective content inherent in social work practice
4. Develop an understanding of the common base of social work practice across a wide range of settings
5. Develop basic skills necessary for working with diverse populations
6. Develop an awareness of the role of supervision in social work practice and basic skills in regard to how to get the most out of their supervision
7. Develop an understanding of the importance of continuing to work towards an increased sense of self awareness
8. Develop an understanding of how to apply classroom knowledge to their work in their field placements
9. Develop basic skills in critical thinking to enable them to identify, evaluate, and make decisions regarding ethical dilemmas and value conflicts in agency practice in the context of their personal and professional values
10. Develop tentative plans for future employment, education, and/or interests in the profession

The integrative seminar incorporates a variety of learning strategies, including discussion, brief lecture, student presentations, invited guests, etc. It provides a forum for sharing student concerns and problem solving through mutual aid and support. The seminar pays particular attention to helping students apply content on diversity, social justice, social policy, and advocacy in the field experience. The energies of the faculty adviser and students are directed towards integration and application of knowledge and skills. Content is timed to the stage of student development over the course of the year and moves to deeper levels of inquiry.

While the seminar's primary focus is students' work in class and field, attention is placed on planning for the future. This may include exploration of practice fields and preparation for employment as well as discussion and planning for future education.

Placement Process

In the spring semester prior to entering the field placement, all students complete field forms which reflect their particular interests and experiences. While efforts are made to correspond to the students' interests, the emphasis is placed on arranging a field placement that provides a generalist practice experience. Students are encouraged to suggest possible placements to their faculty adviser for exploration. Follow-up on their suggestions is done by the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. The placement is made by the program based upon program requirements, agency capacities, and student needs. Students are informed of their placements by the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. Once a potential internship is identified, the B.A.S.W. field coordinator sends a copy of the student's resume to the potential field supervisor. The B.A.S.W. field coordinator discusses the opportunity with the student. If it seems like a good match, an interview is arranged between the potential field supervisor and the student.

Before placements begins, the program shares information about the student and the program with the agency. This review of the student's educational and experience background, interests, and learning needs becomes a source for the formulation of an early educational plan for the student. This initial information is useful in planning educational goals and in the field instructor's selection and assignment of cases.

Field Agency Requirements Overview

Agencies having student placements are expected to be committed to the fact that students are learners and understand that performance of students is not that of staff members. Agencies are expected to provide a diversity of assignments according to student educational needs and to provide the concrete needs, such as sufficient workspace, which are necessary for professional practice. At the same time, agency needs are respected. Learning assignments of students should not impede or hamper the agency's everyday functioning.

Agencies are to commit time for their field instructors to supervise students one to one-and-one-half hours per week and time to complete written evaluations. The agency should provide students the opportunity to attend staff meetings, in-service training, or other such meetings as may occur for the general staff.

The field placement provides students with a generalist practice experience. The program views the generalist practice model as an integrative approach to practice which attends to the profession's person-in-environment focus. Through the integration of classroom, field, and advising, students learn to move readily across system levels and among practice methods.

Field agencies are expected to provide students with the opportunity to work with a range of client systems and should provide experiences with multi-level practice in which students work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations to the extent possible. At minimum, the field agency should provide opportunities for the student to work with clients at three client system levels with at least one of the three at the macro level of organization or community (in addition to their work with individuals, families, and/or groups). If an agency is not able to provide this minimum range, the B.A.S.W. field coordinator assists the field instructor in exploring possible alternatives.

The student should have approximately 8 of their field placement hours in direct service to clients, including collaborative and collateral visits. Building up a caseload occurs over time. B.A.S.W. students frequently shadow a social worker or other qualified staff member prior to working independently with clients. All students should have one to one-and-one-half hours of supervision per week. The remaining hours are used for administrative responsibilities, including agency recording, telephone calls, preparing for conferences, writing reports, etc. Time may also be used for consultation with field instructor, staff meetings, and other learning experiences in the setting and within the community. **It is not expected that the student be able to complete process recordings during agency time.**

Agencies need to inform the B.A.S.W. program of changes in any of the following:

1. Agency address or telephone number
2. Agency director or coordinator
3. Field instructor
4. Pending strike or labor dispute
5. Absence of field instructor from the agency for more than one week
6. Student absence for more than three days
7. Significant program or agency changes that affect day-to-day work

Hours, Holidays, Absence, and Make-up Time

Students observe agency hours and holidays except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and spring recess, when students will not be in field education. Absence from field education up to three days, due to illness or other emergencies, will be managed in the agency. When there are only three days of justifiable absence, the time need not be made up. Arrangements for religious observance are made between the student and the agency. The supervisor should consult with the faculty adviser about any absence in excess of three days. All field placements total a minimum of 420 hours in the field for the academic year. Sometimes students may wish to change the number of hours a week they attend placement with a consequent change in the ending date for the year. Such changes are sometimes possible provided they have the advanced approval of the field instructor and the faculty adviser.

Travel

The agency is expected to reimburse students for travel expenses when travel is part of the required field work assignment.

Home Visits and Safety in the Agency

Home visits are an important part of social work and should be included when appropriate. The agency and student need to make provisions for safety. The social work program recommends the following safety guidelines for students while in field work. Students need to take appropriate precautions regarding:

1. Time of day for home visits
2. Use of main streets for walking
3. Appropriate dress
4. Traveling with official agency identification
5. Use of escorts when necessary for home visits
6. Making sure agency knows date, time, location, and purpose of visit
7. Not being in the agency by oneself
8. Having access to an emergency phone

The agency should provide security to students in the same measure as provided to employees. This includes orienting students to procedures they should follow for their own safety. In the event of an emergency during the placement, the field instructor should be notified as well as the faculty adviser. The program director should be notified if the faculty adviser is not available.

Labor Disputes

In cases where there is an anticipated strike or slowdown, agencies must notify the student's faculty adviser immediately. When social work staff is involved in a strike against the agency, students are withdrawn for the duration of the strike. Students are not expected to cross picket lines. The University assumes neutrality. The faculty adviser will be available for consultation in these instances and assumes responsibility for providing the field practicum experience.

Malpractice Insurance

The University provides liability insurance for its students during their field work. The insurance covers claims alleging negligent acts of students that result in harm to clients/client systems served. The policy has an applicable limit of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 aggregate for each student in field. The insurance is in effect only

during the term period of the student's field practicum experience at the designated agency site. A certificate of insurance may be provided to the agency site upon request.

Qualifications and Requirements for Field Instructors

Prospective field instructors must be graduates of accredited schools of social work, with at least two years of post-master's practice in a social service agency. In recommending a field instructor, agencies attest to the supervisor's ability to impart the knowledge and values of the profession of social work.

Supervisors new to field education must attend a course called Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI). SIFI is a mandatory course given without charge. Field instructors who have completed the SIFI course at another social work program in the New York City metropolitan area need not take it again. The purpose of SIFI is to provide new field instructors with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively meet their educational responsibilities as teachers of social work students.

Role and Responsibilities of the Field Instructor

The field instructor is a professional role model for the student. The field instructor conveys specific and general areas of knowledge and skill, provides a stimulus for the student's systematic and reflective thinking about social work theory and practice, and serves as a source of control and direction. The special kind of educational relationship that is established in this tutorial encounter is crucial for the learner.

Field instructors relate not only to the specific practice or methodological orientation of their agency but teach broader concepts by moving out from the specific case to the general professional experience, relating to the theories underpinning practice. This requires skill in moving back and forth from inductive to deductive levels in teaching. Effective field education not only imparts knowledge but encourages the student in the independent use and testing of the various content areas of the academic curriculum, sets clear goals, and fosters a systematic progression in learning related to the student's individual learning needs.

Prior to the student's arrival at the agency, the field instructor should prepare using the information obtained from the school so that there may be appropriate initial activity through which the student's normal anxiety and insecurity will be lessened. In addition, the student needs to feel that he/she is part of the staff and has something to contribute to the agency.

In order to facilitate the introduction of the student to the agency and to professional practice, the student should be given some general idea of the function and structure of the agency very early. More extensive information on the policies and the functions of the agency and of other agencies and community resources can be given in relation to the student's individual assignments since it is recognized that the student learns this best in relation to particular situations. The initial interview students have with a potential supervisor provides an opportunity for the student to learn about the agency and the department they may be interning in. They should use this opportunity to ask questions about both the agency and the type of work they would be doing if they were to be an intern there.

There are times when supervisors assign students to special projects that are part of another program or department as part of their learning experience. It may be necessary then to assign another supervisor to help

the student with this task. There are other times, such as when the field instructor might be absent, that a task supervisor should be assigned to the student. The task supervisor consults with the student's field supervisor as to learning needs and progress. The primary responsibility for the student's learning remains with the field instructor.

The field instructor needs to schedule a minimum of one to one-and-one-half hours per week on a regular basis for individual conferences with each student. Conference periods may be divided into two sessions if necessary. This time should be safeguarded so as not to allow interruptions. During the first few weeks that the student is in the agency, the field instructor should be accessible to the student for brief periods outside scheduled conference time, but this should not take the place of the individual conference. The time given by the field instructor for selecting assignments, reading student's records, or planning for students should be outside of individual conference periods.

Student conference periods should be planned for, and prepared for by both the student and the field instructor so that each may have the stimulation and responsibility of participating. The student should prepare recordings sufficiently in advance of the conference period to enable the field instructor to read the material. The conference can then be focused on the student's thinking and understanding and on planning the next steps. It is essential for sound learning that each keep notes of conferences in order to link thinking and planning from one conference to the next and to provide a base for the formal evaluation.

The field instructor's teaching should be focused on specific situations and consciously correlated with appropriate principles and concepts so that the student is helped to integrate theory and practice. Criticism should be given constructively and in the amount that the student can assimilate. The focus should be kept upon the case material so the student may understand the relevancy of the criticism and not personalize it. Thus the field instructor may suggest better use of self in the helping process without damaging the student's self-confidence. In this way, the students will be helped to develop a professional self and to feel free to look at their own attitudes and feelings as they affect their work. Students may have problems in relation to understanding and accepting themselves as a social worker. The field instructor is expected to help with this professional identification.

Educational Planning Overview

In order to achieve the objectives of field education, it is essential for the field instructor to develop an educational plan. The first step in formulating this plan is to develop a supervisory contract. Student and supervisor discuss the student's experience, past supervision, professional interests, and learning goals, as well as curriculum requirements and evaluation criteria. From this, supervisor and student enter into a contract.

The educational contract delineates the following mutual expectations:

1. Number and type of assignments
2. Recording requirements
3. Schedule and format of supervision
4. Educational goals for the semester and the year

This contract will be written by the field instructor and submitted to the B.A.S.W. field coordinator. It serves as an important guide for the student and field instructor throughout the year. The educational contract

is elastic in that it is open to negotiation as new learning needs arise throughout the year. The educational plan also takes into account the student's tempo of learning. It indicates how the field instructor will help students use professional strengths to achieve agreed upon learning objectives. It is highly recommended that the student be given assignments and meet some of their clients as soon as possible. It is recommended that early reading of records by the student be limited to those for which the student will be responsible. The B.A.S.W. field coordinator provides an educational plan for the field supervisor and student to complete.

Student Process Recording

Process recordings are an essential tool for both learning and teaching the practice of social work. Student written work enables the field instructor to make an adequate educational assessment of the student and helps the student reorganize his/her learning needs. The B.A.S.W. field coordinator will also review samples of student process recordings with the student to assess their progress.

For the baccalaureate program student, process recording is essential to inform the field instructor about what the student is doing with clients. One or two process recordings per week are required throughout the placement. Other techniques for direct monitoring of student work such as audio tape and videotape may be used to supplement, but not replace, process recording. Students should also be taught how to write case summaries, letters, statistical reports, and other records germane to the agency's program. Process recordings and other materials should be kept in a secure place in the agency in order to insure confidentiality.

Process recording is a teaching method utilizing a detailed written description of what occurs during a client(s)/student contact. At the beginning of the academic year, students and field instructors are given our process recording manual that details the structure of process recordings and provides numerous examples of well-structured recordings.

All process recordings, regardless of format or size of client system, include the verbatim exchange of what transpired during the session. Process recordings should be required for a variety of students' assignments, and when possible, should include group, family, and community sessions in addition to individual contacts.

Student Journaling

Throughout the field work year, students will be required to submit reflective journal entries to their integrative seminar instructor on specific field education issues.

Student Field Evaluations

Evaluation is an important part of the educational process and should be ongoing throughout the year. Written evaluations are done twice yearly, shortly before the end of each semester. These formal evaluations enable the program and the student to see how well the student is applying social work knowledge, values, and principles to practice. They provide the opportunity for both field instructor and student to take stock of the student's skill development and of the supervisory process. The evaluation form also serves as a planning tool. The list of skills contained in the evaluation can guide the field instructor in making assignments and monitoring the student's work.

Written Evaluation

The program provides forms for the written evaluation that is submitted electronically, containing checklist and narrative components. Evaluations should be discussed jointly after the student and field instructor have each reviewed the semester's work and the evaluation form. However, while the student should have input into the process, it is the field instructor's evaluation. Following mutual discussion, the field instructor writes the evaluation and reviews it with the student. Students are expected to achieve a rating of "Competent" in most skill areas.

The written evaluation is divided into sections that address engagement skills, data collection, contracting, intervention and case management skills, and supervisory and professional relationships. Students are given a final rating that includes outstanding, very good, satisfactory, marginal passing, and unsatisfactory performance.

- An **ADVANCED COMPETENCY** rating is given to students who have demonstrated superlative performance in the field, highly integrating classroom and practice skills with a strongly developed, consistent "conscious use of self."
- A **COMPETENT** rating is given to students who fulfill the learning assignments in the field assignment but at a beginning level.
- An **APPROACHING COMPETENCY** rating is given to students who demonstrate an understanding of practice skills but are very uneven and tentative in their demonstration of skills in practice. There may be difficulties in the supervisory or professional relationship that warrant this assessment.
- An **UNSATISFACTORY** rating is given to students who do not understand nor are they able to utilize social work skills in practice. They may demonstrate a substantial ethical gap in their social work skills and may demonstrate major difficulties in the relationships with supervisors and professional colleagues.

The student is presented with the completed evaluation and is asked to sign the evaluation, indicating only that it has been read. Field instructors may decide to have a final discussion about the particular ratings and comments, particularly if there is some disagreement.

At the end of each semester, students independently evaluate the field practicum experience as part of the integrative seminar. This evaluation focuses on the student's assessment of his/her progress, the agency environment for learning, and the contributions of their field instructor.

Grading of Students in Field Education

Field education is a year-long course and is graded by the faculty adviser on a pass/fail basis. At the end of the first semester, if the student is progressing well, a grade of In Progress (IP) is given. Grades of satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) are given upon completion of the course, i.e., at the completion of the 420 hours and accompanying integrative seminar in May. Since field education is a full year course, no credit can be given if a student withdraws before the end of the academic year.

The B.A.S.W. field coordinator relies heavily, though not exclusively, on the written evaluation from the field supervisor in assigning a field work grade. Other factors that are taken into consideration are:

1. Other information from the supervisor and other personnel at the time of the field visit
2. Student's process recordings and reflective journaling
3. Information from individual conferences

4. First-hand observation in the integrative seminar
5. Feedback from classroom instructors

Program students are expected to maintain performance standards in the field practicum, as well as in the social work classroom. The full policy describing the maintenance of satisfactory progress in the program and the "program continuance review" mechanism appear in the policy and procedures section of this document.

In the Event of a Problem

A learning problem is that which impedes a student's understanding, acceptance, and use of knowledge in their professional performance. There are multiple circumstances that might result in a learning problem. For example, a learning problem may result from a student's individual reactions, cognitive style, or approach to new learning situations. The learning problem may also be the result of a difficult match between supervisor/agency and student. It is important to get to the root of the problem in order to determine an appropriate solution.

The field instructor is expected to discuss, as part of the educational process, the student's emotional reactions, with focus on the case material, as they affect their ability to work with clients. If it becomes apparent that the student has difficulties or any other problems that interfere seriously with training, the field instructor has the responsibility to bring this assessment to the faculty adviser. After reviewing the situation with the field instructor and student, the faculty adviser may request an administrative review.

Students are rarely removed from agencies in the middle of the year. When this is necessary, it is only for serious educational reasons and only after the adviser has attempted to resolve the problem with both student and field instructor. It is important that students and field instructors work through the above process in resolving differences. In the midst of a frustrating situation in the agency, the field instructor or the student may be tempted to short circuit the process and terminate the placement prematurely. Such action makes it very difficult for the program to assess what went wrong and to plan appropriately for the student. The program established the field placement and must be a full partner in any decision to end it. In addition, when early and full use is made of the faculty adviser, many placements that are in jeopardy can be turned into productive learning experiences.

In the case of an "unsatisfactory" evaluation from the field instructor, the B.A.S.W. field coordinator has the following options:

1. To reject the unsatisfactory evaluation and give a "satisfactory" grade
2. At mid-year to reject the unsatisfactory evaluation and recommend replacement with the final grade to be determined on the basis of work in the new placement
3. To accept the evaluation and give an "unsatisfactory" (failing) grade in field work. A "program continuance review" meeting will be called, which may determine that the student may repeat the course, subject to availability of an agency, selected by the school, willing to accept the student. The student will be considered on probation and at risk. A placement with appropriate additional support and attention to the student will be sought.
4. To accept the evaluation and give an "unsatisfactory" (failing) grade. A "program continuance review" meeting will be called, and may recommend that the student be discontinued from the program.

There may be times when agencies are unable to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as field placements. For example: the

intended field instructor may leave with no replacement; the quantity or nature of assignments may not be appropriate for student learning; organizational reorganization may result in a chaotic situation; or agencies may be confronting severe external or internal demands and pressures as to present an obstacle to student learning. Under such circumstances, the B.A.S.W. field coordinator in conjunction with the student and the program director will review the situation to determine if a change in placement is warranted.

Students with field related concerns are encouraged to confer with their field instructors. Should the concerns remain unresolved, they may confer with the B.A.S.W. field coordinator and following that, the program director.