SUPERVISION

Typically, field instruction of students occurs through a variety of styles and methods, including formal conference time with the field instructor, group of team supervision, demonstration, coaching, and team meetings. The choice of which activity best fits the student and the assignments are left to the field instructor. However, the pattern of instruction must be by design and minimum contact time must be established. The School requires a minimum of one hour of supervision per week, but recommends more. The plan should bear a direct relationship to the competencies/practice behaviors of the relevant practicum course statement and the student’s goals as expressed in the educational agreement. This appendix provides some descriptions of activities that can be used in the supervisory session.

The student is expected to take a proactive stance in regard to the use of instructional time. This can mean formulating questions, topics, and/or agendas and any relevant written materials (such as case notes or reports or drafts) for field instruction conferences or meetings. The following pages provide some ideas on how to assess the student, suggests possible learning activities, and describes some ways to evaluate competence. Descriptions for some of these assignments can be found in Appendix C.

Baseline Assessment and Methods of Evaluation
Knowing what one needs to learn is an obvious prerequisite to achieving professional mastery. The student achieves such mastery through engagement in self-assessment and the field instructor’s assessment, and subsequent written evaluation, of the student’s abilities and performance.

It is important for the field instructor to have a sense of the knowledge and skills a student brings to the field placement. The initial challenge to the field instructor is figuring out the student’s level of competence at the beginning of the field placement. Students come with a range of experiences and nothing should be assumed or predetermined prior to the student’s arrival at the field site. In addition, the amount of experience alone does not guarantee competency. Therefore, each student should have an individualized baseline assessment. From this baseline data, the field instructor and student can develop a plan to provide learning opportunities that fit with the individual student.

Some suggestions for establishing a baseline assessment of the student’s abilities:

- have the student write a brief summary of his/her strengths and weaknesses
- have the student observe your practice—discuss the student’s observations about the client, the problem situation, assessment and intervention, social work roles, values and ethics, etc.
- have the student write a summary of an observed transaction between client and field instructor
- observe the student’s practice of beginning-level tasks
- assess the student’s verbal communication skills through role play situations
- assess the student’s written communication skills through case summary, letter, meeting notes, etc. using the format required by the agency
The following is a list of learning experiences to help stimulate thinking about identifying learning experiences for social work students. This list is not exhaustive, some of the items may not apply to your setting, and there may be additional learning opportunities unique to your specific agency/organization or area of practice to consider.

1. Read case records, committee meeting minutes, and agency reports/newsletters/web page
2. Read journal articles and review websites pertaining specifically to the agency/organization or area of practice
3. Observe the field supervisor or other appropriate agency personnel in interactions with clients, colleagues, and other community organizations. Prepare a summary or assessment of the interaction. Write an assessment of the client.
4. Listen to a tape-recorded interaction or lecture or watch an audio-visual presentation. Prepare a critique for discussion.
5. Attend a meeting (e.g., staff/team, agency committee, agency board, community group). Take notes on the dynamics of the discussion. Provide a written summary of the content.
6. Visit the agency in the evening or on weekends to observe agency activities during these “off-hour” times.
7. Audio or video-tape an interaction with a client. Review and critique it.
8. Interview the field supervisor and take a social history. Discuss the interview process.
9. Sit in the waiting area and observe the atmosphere, behaviors of individuals, and interactions between clients and staff.
10. Be responsible for a caseload of clients (number assigned may vary based on responsibilities involved and School of Social Work requirements). Conduct interviews with clients and provide direct services.
11. Visit other community agencies and organizations (e.g., referral sources, collaborative partners).
12. Attend a court hearing.
13. Attend related professional workshops, seminars, and lectures in the community.
14. Attend in-service staff development programs.
15. Prepare an in-service staff development program.
16. Co-facilitate or lead a group. Participate in the pre-planning.
17. Co-facilitate or lead a meeting. Participate in the pre-planning.
18. Go out on home visits. Conduct or participate in the interview.
19. Take on-call (after hours) responsibilities.
20. Role play with the field supervisor to try out new skills and techniques.
21. Participate in orienting new students or staff to the agency/organization.
22. Keep a daily log of experiences and reactions to them. Use a critical thinking approach in reflecting on the experiences.
23. Prepare a process recording of an individual interaction, group session, meeting, or telephone contact.
24. Participate in a one-way mirror observation as an observer or as a subject.
25. Interview administrators, managers, or other staff to gather specific information about their roles.
26. Assist in writing or revising the agency’s policy and procedures manual.
27. Assist in writing or revising the agency’s manual/resource file for student interns.
28. Assist in gathering information for and prepare an annual program or agency budget.
29. Develop, or assist in developing, a grant proposal.
30. Identify new funding opportunities.
31. Assist in writing a newsletter. Prepare a web page item.
32. Assist with a marketing or public relations project.
33. Participate on an agency committee to plan an event (e.g., fund-raising, educational workshop, community activity).
34. Develop outcome measures for a program or special project.

35. Design and conduct a research project.

Don’t forget your “wish list” of activities you have on your Things To Do list (written or otherwise) that could match well with the student’s competencies/practice behaviors. These activities may be great learning opportunities for the student. For example, that coalition meeting you never have time for may be perfect for your student. Perhaps your student can update the agency’s community resources directory. What about those clients who need a follow-up phone call after having received services from your agency? Even within the parameters of competencies/practice behaviors, you can be creative in identifying learning experiences for the social work intern.
Evaluation of student performance is an ongoing, interactive process between student and supervisor culminating in an end-of-semester written evaluation. For a fair and complete assessment of student performance, the field instructor should employ a variety of measures along with the repetition of such measures. This approach will increase accuracy and fairness in evaluating student performance and provide the field instructor with more opportunities to offer professional direction, guidance, and specific feedback. Listed below are methods of evaluation that can be made use of over the course of the field placement to evaluate the student’s performance as related to the educational outcomes in the learning plan and the final evaluation instrument. Outlines for some of these assignments can be found in Appendix C. Methods of evaluation include (but are not limited to):

1. **Observation**
   Direct observation of a student allows for direct assessment on all aspects of a student’s interviewing skills. While students may feel uncomfortable at this prospect, most realize that it is an invaluable opportunity to gain feedback. One suggestion is to phase in observation by starting with the student observing the field instructor and processing what took place, then conducting a joint interview followed by discussion, and, finally, the field instructor observing the student conducting an interview.

2. **Role Play**
   Simulating placement-specific situations can be used to identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses. A role play can be used to deal with challenges and obstacles that confront a student in practice. For a role play to be most beneficial, it should be carefully planned and structured. Some field instructors use role play situations to develop benchmarks for specific skills and to determine assignment of student tasks.

3. **Case/Task Summary**
   The student’s ability to apply social work knowledge, skills, and values to practice can be assessed through a written case/task summary. Multiple summaries over time offer an opportunity to view how the student gathers and organizes information, makes assessments, sets goals, and identifies appropriate interventions. Through a written summary, the student’s writing abilities, familiarity with professional style, and ability to be clear and concise while highlighting significant data can be demonstrated. A case/task summary may be required agency practice or requested specifically by the field instructor as a method of student evaluation.

4. **Process Recording**
   This type of recording is specifically used for teaching purposes. Most of the time it is not placed in agency records. The process recording is a verbatim documentation of an interaction between the student and a client or a transaction between the student
and another worker (e.g., information gathering on a project). It requires the student to write down both the verbal and non-verbal communications of the student’s interactions along with the student’s reflections and analysis. Although somewhat tedious, the process recording is a very effective method for assessing the student’s professional skills, knowledge, and values. The student engages in self-assessment and, in addition, receives feedback from the field instructor. Two or three process recordings per semester are suggested.

5. **Video/Audio Taping**
The use of video and audio taping allows for an extensive evaluation of the student’s performance by the supervisor and provides an opportunity for self-evaluation. Both strengths and weaknesses can be identified. A student may be asked to submit a self-evaluation with the actual tape prior to the supervisor’s critique. Clearly, field instructors must be selective about the transactions students are allowed to tape. The student must follow agency protocol in securing client permission to video or audiotape. Such protocol must include the acknowledgement of voluntary client participation in taping with continuation of receiving services not contingent upon participating, the educational purposes of taping, and tape disposal.

6. **Forms, Reports, Professional Letters, and Additional Disseminated Materials**
A student’s ability to write clearly and professionally, retrieve information from a variety of sources, and organize material in writing is intrinsic to the process of evaluating a student’s performance. It is helpful to offer opportunities for the student to write, in full or in part, court reports, grants, reports to funding sources, intakes, newsletter articles, program/agency descriptions for brochures/ websites, informational handouts for clients, letters, etc. Although field instructors may be able to complete forms by rote, this is a new task for the student. Having the student fill out forms can provide the field instructor with information about the student’s knowledge of the agency, ability to gather data, basic writing skills, and ability to focus on purpose of the task.

7. **Written Assignments**
In addition to the variety of written items as part of routine agency practice, the field instructor may ask the student to complete a written assignment in order to assess the student’s knowledge, values, and/or skills. Such assignments may be in addition to any assignments the student must complete for field seminar. A student and field instructor may agree to use a required field seminar assignment (e.g., agency summary, critiques of articles, daily/weekly logs, process recording) for evaluation purposes as well.

8. **Staff Presentation**
The student’s ability to gather, organize, and verbally present information can be evaluated through the student’s participation in agency meetings (e.g., staff, program, committee) and community opportunities (e.g., meetings, special events/projects, collaboratives). As an active participant, the student is not only able to increase
his/her understanding of the agency, the community, and their interrelatedness, but is able to enhance his/her sense of professional self and connection to the agency.

9. **Supervisory Conference**

Weekly formal supervision enables the student to process his/her tasks and field experiences on a regular basis. Initially, the field instructor may set the structure for the supervisory conference, but eventually the student should take on more responsibility in preparing an agenda and identifying challenging situations. Through the supervisor’s support and constructive criticism, there should be evidence of the student’s professional growth. It is recommended that both the supervisor and the student maintain written summaries of supervisory sessions to be used in completing the student’s final written evaluation.

10. **Feedback from Others**

Most students have the opportunity to work with agency staff in addition to the primary field instructor. Some students may be assigned task supervisors. Other students may work on a joint project with a professional from another agency. In any case, a student will benefit from being given the opportunity to work with others, each with his/her own professional style. In addition, feedback from these other professionals can be useful in assessing student performance. The field instructor should build in a mechanism for obtaining such feedback.

11. **Student Self-Report**

The student’s ability to recognize his/her strengths and limitations, personal biases/prejudices, and areas of professional growth are critical to the educational process. The final evaluation form may be used as a pre- and post-test measure to observe how the student evaluates his/her performance over time in the field placement. The supervisor may ask the student for a written self-assessment separate from the final evaluation.

**SUPERVISORY METHOD: INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE**

**FORMAT:** Individual Conference

**MATERIALS:** Written materials on practice situation:
May be case materials (summary of situation and/or session(s), verbatim process recording of interaction(s), psychosocial summary, intake or assessment information, genograms, ecomaps, etc.) OR

Summary of group, community, or organizational practice situation, OR

Reflection exercise, critical incident report, communication skills checklist, OR

Taped recording of client interaction, AV or Audio playback

**FOCUS:**

May vary: May focus on analysis of practice situation, planning or of interventions, outcome evaluation, or tracking of interpersonal communication and/or intervention skills.

**FEATURES:**

- Conducted according to a regular schedule of planned sessions, providing follow-through in intervening time and to next session.
- Involves preparation by both student and instructor, e.g. materials should be prepared and submitted in advance for instructor to review before the conference.
- Consistent with adult learning/self-directed inquiry, giving student opportunity for self-assessment, assisted by consultation with instructor.
- Quality control: Instructor has direct access to the student’s work.
- Can be used to supervise practice at all levels (individual, family, community).
- Can utilize a wide range of process materials/methods.
- Provides direct feedback designed to improve understanding and performance.

**LIMITATIONS:**

- Vulnerable to the power differential between instructor and student and can feel threatening to the student.
- Limited by the quality of the preparation of the written materials and preparation of the participants.

**SUPERVISORY METHOD: CLINICAL CASE CONFERENCE**

**FORMAT:** Individual or Group Conference

**MATERIALS:** Written materials on practice situation:
May be case materials (summary of situation and/or session(s), verbatim process recording of interaction(s), psychosocial summary, intake or assessment information, genograms, ecomaps, etc.) OR

Summary of group, community, or organizational practice situation, OR

Reflection exercise, critical incident report, communication skills checklist, OR

Taped recording of client interaction, AV or Audio playback

**FOCUS:**
May vary: May focus on analysis of practice situation, planning or of interventions, outcome evaluation, or tracking of interpersonal communication and/or intervention skills. Choices about materials prepared should be determined by questions for which the consultation/supervision is sought (see attached outline for questions that may be raised in the Case Conference.)

**FEATURES:**

- Presentation is organized, focused.
- Involves preparation by student, other group members, and instructor, e.g. materials should be prepared and submitted in advance for supervisor and other group members to review before the conference.
- Consistent with adult learning/self-directed inquiry, giving student opportunity for framing questions, focusing the presentation.
- Quality control: Supervisor has direct access to the student’s work.
- Can utilize a wide range of process materials/methods for case material (see attached guidelines for case presentations.)

**LIMITATIONS:**

- Student must risk and can be vulnerable to power differential in supervisory relationship.
- Limited by the quality of the preparation of written materials and preparation of the participants.

**POTENTIAL QUESTIONS IN CASE DISCUSSIONS**

1) What are your impressions of this client and the client’s “world”? What do you like about the client? What do you see as the client’s strengths? What is unique, impressive, or interesting about the client?

2) How does the client want their life to be different? What does the client want to change? What does the client want instead of what is happening now?

3) How do you think the client sees you? What do you think the client is wanting or expecting from you (in general and in specific interactions)? How do you want the client to perceive you?

4) What is the dominant feeling you have about this client when you are anticipating seeing the client, when you are with the client, or when you are thinking about the client? What does that tell you about your “beliefs” about the client or your relationship with the client?

5) Theoretically, what are the ideas that are shaping the way you see this client and your interventions in this session (or in general) with the client? What do you know and what do you need to know in order to understand the situation better and to develop some alternative hypotheses and plans?

6) What are the dominant patterns in this case: patterns of personality or behavior? Life events? Interaction with others? Interaction in the session?

7) What was the major focus, dominant theme, and subtext of this session? What are some alternative meanings you can imagine for these?

8) What are you wanting the client to do or not do? What are you wanting to happen next? What can you imagine as the next small step for the client in getting “on track” toward the goals you have set together?

9) What are you going to do next with this case and what ideas underpin your plans? How might your plans empower or threaten to disempower the client? What meanings might the client give to your plans and how will you identify cues for those meanings?

SUPERVISORY METHOD: ROLE PLAY

FORMAT: Individual conference most frequently but may be adapted for Group Conference.
MATERIALS: Appropriate space: private area with limited distractions, protected from intrusions while role play is in progress.

FOCUS: Instructor and student’s co-creation of possibilities in practice situation through rehearsal of potential interaction, skill-building for student, the “voice” of the client or others in the role play situation.

FEATURES:
• Requires comfort with spontaneity, risk taking, and imagination of instructor and student
• Requires relationship of trust between instructor and student
• May provide launching point for discussion of broad range of professional issues
• Encourages student to think “on his/her feet”
• Providing rehearsal desensitizes student to taboo topics that may be anxiety producing for student to broach with client (or others)
• Encourages student to try out new possibilities
• Encourages application of theories, methods (moving concepts from descriptive to application/integration levels of knowing)
• Engages affective and psychomotor as well as cognitive domains of learning
• Bring the client’s “voice” actively and vividly into the supervisory session
• Encourages and intensifies identification with and empathy for the client’s world, feelings, and perspective

LIMITATIONS:
• Student must risk and be vulnerable to having instructor learn about ideas, concerns, questions, and (often) about issues troubling to the student
• Student’s ability to think and process information beyond the descriptive level