

Assessment Plan and Procedures

Building on the processes specific to courses, the faculty has developed a system of continuous assessment of student learning. As such, designated course assignments along with other developed instruments (e.g., Qualifying Review and field evaluations) are used to measure each of the program's outcomes. Effective 2008, a *Program Assessment and Continuous Improvement Report* has been generated yearly by the MSW Curriculum Committee for engaged faculty analysis. This process allows for continuous quality improvement and ensures the ongoing educational effectiveness of the MSW Program. Please refer to the sections below for a complete description of our assessment plan and yearly outcome results.

Assessment Strategies

Since its inception, the LLU Department of Social Work and Social Ecology has routinely gathered outcome data. Evaluation strategies have traditionally consisted of student surveys, alumni surveys, employer surveys, field instructor surveys, field instructor evaluations, and an oral qualifying review.

Evaluation strategies have been adapted for the current evaluation cycle to include the CSWE core competencies, changes in standards, and lessons learned since our last yearly report. Attempts have been made to triangulate data from multiple sources whenever possible. The self-report surveys have been augmented with more objective measures, such as performance in core assignments and/or courses. It was decided not to use data from several data sources that were deemed to be more subjective, less helpful or had a considerable amount of missing data (e.g., employer survey). We have also attempted to assess outcomes at different points in time (i.e., after completion of foundation courses, after completion of advanced practice courses, and post-graduation). The result of this approach is the beginning of a 'developmental' perspective of the Program's performance.

For the 2012-2013 evaluation cycle, five primary evaluation methods were used to assess the performance of the MSW Program. A description of each measure used in this evaluation cycle is provided in the next section. For a sample of select measurement tools see appendix B (the qualifying review is a protected academic process and is therefore not included and the assignments are described below).

- Qualifying Review
- Field Evaluations
- Student Surveys
- Alumni Surveys
- Core Assignments and/or Courses

Overview of Measures

Qualifying Review

The *Qualifying Review* has been administered since the inception of the Program. It is an oral exam that is administered following successful completion of the foundation practice curriculum. A full-time student generally takes the *Qualifying Review* at the end of the first year following the completion of 39 quarter units. The *Qualifying Review* is designed to measure the extent to which students have integrated the content of the foundation curriculum and can demonstrate the competencies of generalist practice. To show these competencies, students are required to demonstrate an understanding of an ecological practice perspective through presentation of a biopsychosocial-spiritual assessment and plan, in response to one of several vignettes prepared for each year's review process. As a part of this review, students are expected to respond to 12 questions with the aim of:

- identifying significant intra- and inter-personal problems;
- identifying family and community interactions that provide a deeper understanding of the client's situation;
- reflecting on diversity issues affecting the case, including gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, and racial issues;
- demonstrating application of systems theory and relevant supporting psychosocial theories;
- illustrating professional judgment in evaluating risk factors (e.g., child abuse, suicide, or homicidally);
- identifying legal and ethical issues that may have significance in the case; and
- identifying the appropriate micro, mezzo, and/or macro interventions and goals that support a person-in-environment approach.

The passing score for the *Qualifying Review* is 36 out of 48 possible points, which is an average score of 3 on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The broad objectives of the *Qualifying Review* process are to (a) assist faculty in assessing students' individual strengths and areas for improvement, (b) provide feedback to students, (c) promote an environment of students' individual self-evaluation, and (d) heighten participation of students in their individualized academic planning and professional development during the advanced year of the MSW Program.

Field Evaluations

Field supervisors complete field evaluations at the end of each quarter for each student in field placement. For the purpose of program evaluation we are using field evaluations at the end of spring quarter, thus capturing performance at the end of the foundation curriculum year or the end of the advanced concentration year.

Evaluation surveys capture performance in multiple domains (see description below). Field supervisors rate students' performance on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating 'no evidence of understanding of the concept or demonstrating of the skill' and 5 being indicative of 'consistent understanding of the concept or application of the skill.'

The foundation curriculum *Field Evaluation* measures performance in 6 domains:

- (1) Understands, respects, and integrates the ethics and values of the social work profession (5 items);
- (2) Demonstrates motivation in the role of the learner (11 items);
- (3) Demonstrates knowledge of the agency's mission, goals, organizational structure and the community served (6 items);
- (4) Demonstrates responsible work management skills (6 items);
- (5) Demonstrates skill in completing a biopsychosocial history utilizing a systems theory framework (7 items); and
- (6) Demonstrates a basic range of generalist practice skills and interventions reflecting the continuum of social work practice: information and referral, advocacy, case management, crisis intervention, short-term intervention, and long-term intervention (10 items).

There are two field evaluations measuring performance at the advanced level: (a) the Clinical Practice Field Evaluation; and (b) the Policy, Planning and Administration Field Evaluation. The evaluations measure performance across similar domains, but might have additional items reflecting the knowledge and skills required for the particular concentration. The *Clinical Practice Field Evaluation* measures performance in seven domains. During the advanced concentration year, students are expected to move from a focus on assessment skills to development, delivery, and evaluation of a treatment plan. The domains are as follows:

Domains for the *Clinical Practice Concentration* are as follows:

- (1) Understands, respects, and integrates the ethics and values of the social work profession (6 items);
- (2) Demonstrates motivation in the role of learner (14 items);
- (3) Demonstrates knowledge of the agency's mission, goals, organizational structure, and the community served (6 items);
- (4) Demonstrates responsible work management skills (5 items);
- (5) Demonstrates skill in developing an appropriate case/treatment plan based on the biopsychosocial assessment and diagnosis (when applicable) (11 items);
- (6) Demonstrates awareness of self and the impact on the helping process (3 items); and
- (7) Demonstrates skill in managing and maintaining the intervention process (12 items).

Domains for the *Policy, Planning and Administration Concentration* are as follows:

- (1) Understands, respects, and integrates the ethics and values of the social work profession (6 items);
- (2) Demonstrates motivation in the role of learner (14 items);
- (3) Demonstrates knowledge of the agency's mission, goals, organizational structure, and community which is served (6 items);
- (4) Demonstrates responsible work management skills (5 items);
- (5) Demonstrates basic understanding of the agencies' service role within its community context (4 items);

- (6) Demonstrates knowledge of planning, program development, and evaluation (6 items);
- (7) Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of relevant policy on the delivery of services to populations at risk (5 items); and
- (8) Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of a variety of administrative issues affecting organizations (5 items).

For evaluation purposes, we deliberately chose items or scales from the foundation *Field Evaluation* and advanced concentration *Field Evaluations* to gain a developmental perspective of how students progress as they transition through the MSW Program.

Student Surveys

Student Surveys are sent out every year at the end of the academic school year to solicit feedback from graduating students. The *Student Survey* consists of 25 close-ended and 4 open-ended questions. Students provide responses to close-ended questions on a 5-point Likert-type Scale ranging from '1-strongly disagree' to '5-strongly agree.' The *Student Survey* measures program effectiveness in multiple domains ranging from theoretical knowledge to practice skills to overall perceptions about our MSW Program.

Alumni Surveys

Alumni Survey data is generally collected every three years at the end of the academic year and the 2011 alumni surveys are included on this evaluation. The *Alumni Survey* solicits feedback from students about our curriculum and program. The *Alumni Survey* consists of 39 close-ended and 3 open-ended questions. Alumni provide responses to close-ended questions on a 5-point Likert-type Scale ranging from '1-strongly disagree' to '5-strongly agree.' The *Alumni Survey* measures program effectiveness in multiple domains ranging from theoretical knowledge to practice skills to overall perceptions about our MSW Program. Qualitative data was also solicited from alumni to obtain more detailed information about their accomplishments, professional involvement, and volunteer activities.

Core Assignments and Courses

SOWK 513 Human Behavior in a Cross-Cultural Environment

Child or Adult Development Project

The purpose of SOWK 513 Human Behavior and Cross-cultural Environment is to provide students with the basis for understanding human development and life transitions throughout the life span within an ecological perspective. This person-in-environment perspective emphasizes knowledge of individuals as they develop over the life span and have membership in families, groups, organizations, and communities. To demonstrate this knowledge students are required to design a research and theory based professional educational guide for parents of children/adolescents, or a mid-life/late-life adult.

SOWK 514 Social Welfare Policies and Services

Midterm Examination

The midterm examination assesses students' understanding of the historical foundations of the social work profession, including its influence in the development of the United States system of social welfare. It further assesses students' understanding of societal perspectives and contradictions, which have affected the development and evolution of contemporary social policies and services in the United States. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding the role of race, gender, and perception of human needs in shaping social policy.

Policy Analysis Paper

Each student taking SOWK 514 must research and analyze a policy issue and integrate the major facets into a solid and comprehensive paper. The selected issue must be relevant to a social policy and social work practice. This paper is designed to measure students' ability to analyze and evaluate social policies that have been designed to resolve or prevent social and human problems, and formulate recommendations for the improvement of social policies and service delivery systems.

SOWK 517 Foundation Practice I: Individuals

Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Assessment

This assignment requires students to complete a biopsychosocial-spiritual assessment following the viewing of a 1-hour video presentation of a client system. This assignment tests not only students' writing skills but also their ability to effectively convey their impressions and assessments of a case. As such it is used to measure students' written as well as clinical communication skills (PO: 1.7). Data are available for the last two years (2006 and 2007). Data for year 2005 was not retrievable as the instructor did not use the University's Blackboard grading system to store students' grades.

SOWK 518 Foundation Practice II: Groups

Proposal for a Specialized Group

This is the second course in the Foundation Practice Sequence and is designed to introduce students in the application of a generalist practice perspective with mezzo systems. Here students learn group work methods, including different theories, research, worker roles, and techniques applicable to these methods of practice. The proposal assignment requires students to develop a plan for a specialized group, one that addresses the needs of a population-at-risk (e.g., children in foster care, a court-mandated substance abuse treatment group for adolescent mothers, victim of domestic violence, etc.). The paper is to demonstrate a literature search and critical thinking in the integration and synthesis of findings and to utilize developmentally appropriate strategies that are evidence-based.

SOWK 519 Foundation Practice III: Organizations and Communities

Community Organization Paper

This course is the third course in the Foundation Practice Sequence. The course introduces the generalist social work approach in organizational and community settings. Each student is required to complete a community organization paper. The paper is intended to assist students in integrating theory and practice through a combination of classroom, library, and investigative field experiences. This assignment requires that students: (a) identify a contemporary social problem; (b) obtain proper documentation for the problem from the literature; (c) interview professionals working with the problems or associated problems; (d) explore their own values and the values of others [professionals and other students] regarding the problem; (e) propose a community organizing plan of action to deal with the problem; and (f) identify sociological, psychological, political, and economic benefits and/or restrictions that may result from the identified community organizing plan. This assignment is used to measure students' ability to identify organizational structures, service delivery systems and mechanisms for systems change.

SOWK 521 Global Practice

Global Practice Paper

This course examines the current and emerging role of professional social work in a global context. Emphasis is placed on analyzing and applying social work strategies and practice methods to address global social issues and needs, social problems theories. In completing this paper students present a global social work issue that includes: (1) an overview of the country's general approach to development; (2) factors that enhance or impede development efforts; (3) how same issue is addressed in the US; (4) the roles of social workers in the country studied; (5) a critical assessment of intervention strategies that have already been attempted to address the issue; (6) proposed intervention strategies to address the issue; (7) justification of the proposed intervention strategies; (8) how each of the elements fit the recovery paradigm; and (9) lessons for social workers in the US.

SOWK 548 Research Methods

Research Proposal Project

Every student taking *SOWK 548 Research Methods* has to complete a research proposal that tests students' analytic and critical thinking skills. As cited in the syllabus "the purpose of the proposal is twofold: (1) Students will learn what is known about the effectiveness of interventions or programs with a population or problem of interest, and (2) students will learn how to design an evaluative research study." Successful completion of this project presupposes an understanding of the literature as well as quantitative research methods, which then must be applied discriminately to a particular area of interest. This is a challenging project for students, which clearly tests their ability to think critically.

SOWK 613 Psychopathology, Psychopharmacology and Diagnosis of Behavioral Health Conditions

Course Grade

This course focuses on the understanding and application of the DSM-IV-TR and Mental Status Examination as organized by a person-in-the-environment perspective. The course integrates recovery and a review of psychopharmacology into the diagnostic process while enhancing awareness of sociocultural needs and issues of populations at risk. Students reinforce their analytic writing and verbal skills via presentations based on the biopsychosocial-spiritual perspective of psychopathologies to be encountered as a clinical social worker.

SOWK 661 Psychodynamic Therapy

Psychodynamic Case Formulation

This assignment involves viewing a video interview of a client and writing a comprehensive psychodynamic formulation of the case. It is used to measure students' ability to engage in critical thinking within the context of professional social work practice.

SOWK 662 Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies

CBT Simulation Session – Video (Engagement Section)

As one of the core courses in the cliental concentration, this course provides students with an understanding of the theory and practice of cognitive-behavioral therapies. The video assignment is designed to assess students' practice skills including their ability to establish rapport and conduct a CBT session.

SOWK 663 Crisis and Trauma Interventions

Crisis Simulation Video and Paper

This assignment requires students to demonstrate three interventions and appropriate interactive structures for crisis intervention. Each interview is videotaped, and impressions and discussions of the video are captured in a paper. The assignment is used to measure students' ability to engage in self-critical analysis for the purpose of integrating therapeutic use of self with diverse client populations and assesses both engagement and intervention skills.

SOWK 672 Theories of Organizations and Systems

Organizational Analysis

This advanced course is taken by students in the Policy, Planning, and Administration Concentration. It explores the complexities of large organizations and bureaucratic

systems, examining formal and informal structures, communication patterns, and philosophical approaches as they affect the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. Each student is required to write an *Organizational Analysis*. Students are expected to select an organization, study it throughout the quarter, analyze it, create their own organization, and present the project at the end of the quarter. The assignment is used to measure policy students' knowledge, values, and skills in the "design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of effective service delivery systems".

SOWK 675 Supervision

Supervisory Model Paper

Part of the Advanced Culminating Curriculum for students in the Clinical Practice Concentration, this course examines the supervisory process in relation to clinical, administrative, educational, and supportive functions. The assignment gives students an opportunity to discuss effective models of supervision, building on literature and their own experiences as interns and employees. The assignment is used to measure students' ability to engage in cooperative and collaborative intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary practice.

SOWK 676 Human Resources Planning and Development

Term Paper Project

Also part of the Advanced Culminating Curriculum, this course is taken by students in the Policy, Planning, and Administration Concentration. The aim of this course is to deepen students' exposure to discussion on the legal and ethical aspects of human resources management and contemporary issues affecting morale and productivity in the human services. A research term paper is used to evaluate students' ability to consider inter- and intradisciplinary aspects of practice. The paper requires the identification and definition of a problem/issue related to human resources planning and development and extensive literature work to substantiate the discussion.

SOWK 682 Legal and Ethical Aspects in Health and Mental Health Services

Course Grade

Taught as part of the Advanced Conjoining Curriculum, this course focuses on teaching students about legal and ethical issues in health and mental health practice (e.g., legal mandates, sources of legal authority, judicial system, legal standards, and consent to treatment). Students are expected to gain an understanding of the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and practice accordingly.

SOWK 683 Advanced Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis Paper

This advanced level course is part of the Policy, Planning, and Administration Concentration. As such, it is designed to deepen students' understanding of both the conceptual and analytical requirements of policy analysis. Students gain experience in structuring and defining policy problems, establishing criteria for policy choices, mapping alternative strategies, and applying appropriate analytical and research methods to policy questions. In this assignment, each student is required to choose a social policy for in-depth review and analysis. This paper is used to assess students' critical thinking skills and to ensure that students demonstrate understanding of both the conceptual and analytical requirements of policy analysis.

SOWK 684 Advanced Policy Projects

Course Grade

This is a selective course that is aimed at enhancing students' understanding of the interconnections between politics, policy-making, and policy analysis through first-hand participation in a political-action campaign. All policy students are strongly encouraged to participate. Course grade is based on attending Lobby Days and completion of course assignments.

SOWK 695A Advanced Research Methods

Single Subject Design Project

Part of the Advanced Curriculum Nucleus and the first *Advanced Research Methods* course in the advanced curriculum year, this course focuses on single subject design with the ultimate aim to teach students to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions with individual client systems. This assignment asks students to develop an evaluation plan for a single case to assess change over time. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

Course Grade

Part of the Advanced Curriculum Nucleus and the first *Advanced Research Methods* course in the advanced curriculum year, this course focuses on single subject design with the ultimate goal of teaching students to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions with individual client systems. This course asks students to develop an evaluation plan for a single case to assess change over time. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. This course assesses students' ability to evaluate their own practice interventions.

SOWK 695C Advanced Research Methods

Course Grade

The third course in the *Advanced Research Methods* sequence and part of the Advanced Curriculum Nucleus, the final comprehensive exam in this class is used to test students' ability to apply concepts of program evaluation. Students' knowledge in this area is tested

via multiple choice, essay questions and a project. The course is used to measure students' ability to conduct a program evaluation.

Benchmarks

The faculty have extensively discussed appropriate benchmarks for each measure. Ideally, one hopes to set target benchmarks that are meaningful for evaluating whether a program meets performance standards. Given the lack of agreed upon benchmarks in the field, we have had to rely on experience and observation in deriving our benchmarks. This will continue to be a focus of discussion and revision as our Program gains more experience in evaluating its performance along multiple domains. Below is a discussion of benchmarks as it pertains to each measure.

Qualifying Review

Students' performance on the *Qualifying Review* is rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Students pass the exam if they reach an average score of '3' overall.

QUALIFYING REVIEW EVALUATION SCALE

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1 Student shows little evidence of understanding the concept | 2 Student demonstrates an incomplete and inconsistent understanding of the concept | 3 Student identifies relevant factors in the case: demonstrates a sound knowledge of the concepts | 4 Student presents a complete discussion of the concepts; demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between concepts and application |
|--|--|---|--|

During the last accreditation, we received praise for the *Qualifying Review* process, and believe it is an important tool in assessing whether students have attained generalist practice skills. In choosing a benchmark, we wanted to express that scores below a '3' are not acceptable. Therefore, rather than choosing the mean score, we chose a percentage cutoff at a score of '3' or above.

**Qualifying Review - Target Benchmark:
70% of students will receive a score of 3 or above**

Field Evaluation

Field instructors evaluate each student's performance in his/her internship on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

PRACTICUM EVALUATION SCALE

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 Student shows <u>no</u> evidence of understanding the concept and/or demonstrating the skill. | 2 Student shows <u>little</u> evidence of understanding the concept and/or demonstrating the skill. | 3 Student shows <u>some</u> understanding of the concept and begins to recognize in hindsight how it might have been applied in practice situations. | 4 Student <u>understands</u> the concept and applies the skill, but performance is uneven. Needs time and practice. | 5 Student understands the concept and applies the skill with <u>consistency</u> . |
|---|---|--|---|---|

While there are many factors that influence the assessment of students' performance in field practicum (taking into consideration multiple factors, e.g., students' prior experience, progress, attitude, engagement of field instructor, etc.), it is expected that students completing the foundation practicum experience receive mostly scores of '3' and '4'. This benchmark demonstrates an appreciation that students are at the first level of acquiring practice knowledge and will continue to grow as they progress into and through the second year of the field practica experience. In turn, at the end of the advanced practicum experience students are expected to score mostly '4' and '5', as evidence that they have acquired the knowledge and skills required of a beginning MSW professional embarking on a career of providing competent services to others.

**Foundation Field Evaluation – Target Benchmark:
70% of students will reach a score of 4 or above**

**Advanced Concentration Field Evaluation – Target Benchmark:
90% of students will reach a score of 4 or above**

Student and Alumni Surveys

Students and Alumni respond to questions on the *Surveys* along a 5-point Likert-type scale.

1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3-neutral; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree

Recognizing that constituent surveys always involve a great deal of selection bias, frequently capturing students who hold 'strong' opinions, both positive and negative, we set the following benchmark.

**Student and Alumni Surveys - Target Benchmark:
85% of students will respond with a score of 4 or above**

Course Grades/Assignments

Students receive traditional grades (A through F) for most assignments and courses (exceptions would be courses where S/U grades are assigned). Across all social work classes, the following grading schema is used:

| <i>A</i> | <i>A-</i> | <i>B+</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>B-</i> | <i>C+</i> | <i>C</i> | <i>C-</i> | <i>D+</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>D-</i> | <i>F</i> |
|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 93-100 | 90-92 | 87-89 | 83-86 | 80-82 | 77-79 | 73-76 | 70-72 | 67-69 | 63-66 | 60-62 | <i>Below</i> |
| % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | 60 % |

In order to receive credit for a course, a student has to receive a minimum of a B- (80%). Individual class assignments are not necessarily held to this standard, meaning that a student could ‘make-up’ a poor performance on one assignment by performing better in another one. However, our target benchmark for all courses/assignments reflects the cutoff of 80%.

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| <p>Courses and Assignments - Target Benchmark: 90% of students will score a grade of B- (80%) or above</p> |
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