

# IWU MSW Program Field Education Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. Why is Field Education Important for Social Workers?

- Field education has been designated the Signature Pedagogy of Social Work education. This means that it is seen as equal in importance for the training and development of social workers as their time in the classroom. After all. The field is where real life practice takes place.
- In the field, students have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate competencies in the integration and application of knowledge, values, and skills in live practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

## 2. What is the IWU MSW Manual for Field Instruction and how can it help me in the field?

- The MSW Manual for Field Instruction provides all the information students and field agencies need regarding the Field Practicum and Experience. The manual includes descriptions of the IWU online MSW program mission and goals, goals of Field Instruction, field application, site selection and approval process, roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the field experience, policies and procedures related to Field Education and core assignments expected of students during the course of their practicum.

## 3. What are the CSWE Core Competency Areas?

The Council on Social Work Accreditation (CSWE) is the accrediting body for all social work programs. In order to ensure that MSW programs are providing the highest quality education and that students are learning the essential skills, knowledge, values and behaviors needed for effective social work, CSWE defines 9 areas of core competency that all programs must include in their curriculum and measure for success. These include the following.

Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) – Core Competencies	
Competency 1	Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
Competency 2	Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
Competency 3	Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Competency 4	Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
Competency 5	Engage in Policy Practice
Competency 6	Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 7	Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
Competency 8	Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

# IWU MSW Program Field Education Frequently Asked Questions

Competency 9	Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
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**4. What is the difference between a Field Instructor, Field Supervisor, Task Supervisor and Field Liaison?**

- The Field instructor is the designated onsite supervisor for the student at the agency. The Field Instructor must hold an MSW from an accredited University and have 2 or more years of post-graduate experience. The Field Instructor is required to meet with the student a minimum of 5 times during each eight week field seminar cycle and sign all formal documents required in the program.
- A Task Supervisor may be appointed by the Field Instructor to provide more frequent monitoring, oversight or supervision of the student. The task supervisor is not required to hold an MSW.
- The Faculty Liaison is the designated IWU Faculty member who serves as the point of contact for the student and Field Instructor during the practicum. The Faculty Liaison is also the seminar instructor for the student and reviews all submitted assignments. The Faculty Liaison will contact the Field instructor early in the placement to introduce him or herself and answer additional questions.

**5. What's the difference between the Foundation Year / 1<sup>st</sup> Year Practicum and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, Advanced Clinical Practicum?**

- The Foundation Year practicum is the first practicum experience taken by the MSW student during the first year of classes. The focus of the Foundation year is on building generalist practice knowledge, skills, values and behaviors. The foundation year practicum requires 400 hours to be completed at the placement.
- The Advanced Clinical Practice practicum is the 2<sup>nd</sup> practicum completed by the MSW student. The focus of this practicum is on development of specialized and advanced practice skills, knowledge, values and behaviors. The IWU online MSW program focuses this specialty year on clinical practice skills and includes integration of specific theories into practice over the course of the placement including trauma informed care, grief and loss, cognitive behavioral and solution focused theory, family theory and addiction theory. The practicum requires 500 hours to be completed at the placement.

**6. How many weeks is the field practicum and how many hours a week will the student spend at the field agency?**

- The practicum for both the Foundation and Advanced Clinical Practice years is 32 weeks long. Foundation year students must complete 400 hours of time in their placement or about 12 hours per week. Advanced Clinical Year students must complete 500 hours of

# IWU MSW Program Field Education Frequently Asked Questions

time or about 15.5 hours per week. During the course of the practicum, students attend 4 back to back eight week field seminars to ensure application of learning to the field.

## 7. What is the Learning Contract and how does it guide student learning in the field?

- The Learning Contract is the primary learning tool that guides the student over the course of the practicum. The learning contract requires that students, with the guidance of their Field Instructors, identify 1 or more learning activities in each area described within the 9 CSWE Competency areas defined in the Learning Contract tool. The student writes activities in the form of goals with targeted deadlines to ensure completion. Learning contracts are updated at the beginning of each field seminar. The Learning contract tool also serves as the tool for student evaluation at the mid-point and end of the field seminar.
- A media presentation explaining the Learning Contract is sent to the Field Instructor in advance to help explain this process

## 8. How often does the Field Instructor meet with the Student and what should this look like?

### What is the Student Record of Supervision?

- The Field Instructor must meet with the student a minimum of 5 times for each eight week field seminar. The Student Record of Supervision is a required IWU tool that asks the student to come prepared for the supervision meeting with identified items of discussion from a variety of areas. Upon completion of the supervisory meeting, the student documents discussion, follow up actions required and strengths and growth areas identified by the Field Instructor. The Student and Field Instructor sign the document and the student submits the final version to their IWU Field Seminar course as proof of supervision.
- A media presentation explaining the Record of Supervision is sent to the Field Instructor to help explain this process

## 9. How does the Student Field Evaluation process work and how often does it occur?

- Evaluation of student progress including skills, knowledge, values and behaviors related to the nine CSWE competencies specific to their practicum year is required at the mid-point and end of the practicum experience. At these points in time, the student will arrange a meeting with the Field Instructor to review the learning contract and complete the evaluation component. The Field Instructor will rate each competency area of description using the five point Likert scale provided and provide comments within each competency area regarding strengths or continued areas of improvement needed. Students are not expected to receive ratings of all 5's in any category at the evaluation time as it is expected that students are continuing to learn and develop their abilities.
- A media presentation explaining the evaluation process is also sent to the Field Instructor in advance to help explain this crucial process

# IWU MSW Program Field Education Frequently Asked Questions

10. What is a **Process Recording** and how does it help students in the field? How often are they completed?

Process recordings are detailed written accounts of a social work student's professional interactions with client(s), group participants, or community group stakeholders. Key elements of the recording are the student's self-reflection on the interaction, thoughts and feelings about the interaction and use of self, and identification of the competencies the student demonstrated or is developing. The process recording also asks students to identify course material and peer reviewed sources to support their conclusions. Foundation year students are required to write at least 3 clinical and/or group process recordings per 8 week field seminar and a minimum of 12 over the course of the practicum. Advanced Clinical Students are required to write at least 4 clinical and/or group process recordings per 8 week field seminar and a minimum of 16 over the course of the practicum.

11. What is the **Student Observation** tool and how often do observations occur at the placement agency?

All students are required to ensure completion of observations of their direct practice with an individual client, family or group over the course of each field placement. Foundation year students will be required to complete one observation during the completion of each field seminar while Advanced Clinical year students will be required to ensure completion of two observations during the completion of each field seminar. Each observation must be completed by an identified observer which must be the field instructor, another designated supervisor on site, or an experienced master's level staff person with two or more years of practice experience. The identified observer rates the student in areas including development and use of collaborative relationships, appropriate response to client(s) toward general content, communication and feelings, focus of the interview / interaction, responding to the presenting problem, assessment skills, strengths-based approach, collaborative goal setting, and demonstration of cultural competence. The student must review each completed observation tool for additional feedback during individual supervision with the field instructor.

12. What is the student **Practicum Portfolio** and what is my role as a Field Instructor?

- The student Practicum Portfolio is a required final assignment for both Foundation and Advanced Clinical year students. The portfolio for each year requires specific information to be included to ensure students demonstrate competency in each of the nine CSWE competency areas and their descriptions for the specific placement year. A description of these requirements can be found in the Manual for Field Instruction. Students should seek to identify and include possible portfolio items in their learning contracts and actively collect possible items for inclusion over the course of the placement. During the final field seminar for each year, students will be required to submit the required items as well as two additional items demonstrating competence in each of the nine competency areas. The Field Instructor can provide guidance to the student on activities that may be suitable for a specific competency area.

# IWU MSW Program Field Education Frequently Asked Questions

## **13. What is the NASW Code of Ethics and where can I find a copy?**

- The NASW Code of Ethics is the required code of ethics for social workers and social work students to follow. Students are expected to be familiar with and integrate the ethical values and standards in their field placement experiences. Students regularly reflect on ethical issues through course assignments and should bring ethical concerns for discussion to their Field Instructor. A copy of the Code of Ethics is provided in the IWU MSW program Manual for Field Instruction.

## **14. What should I do if there are problems or concerns at the placement site?**

- When concerns or problems arise in the field pertaining to the student or the student relationship with the field instructor or placement setting, the field instructor should first inform the faculty liaison of any difficulties in completing the listed areas of responsibility or with the student's performance. Students may also discuss concerns with the faculty liaison at any time. If the problem cannot be resolved or is of a significant nature, the faculty liaison will arrange a meeting to attempt to resolve the problem with the student and field instructor. When a resolution or agreement on the problem has been reached with the student and/or through contact with the field instructor, the faculty liaison will document the problem and its resolution and send a copy to the field instructor and the student, acknowledging that each understands and agrees to the action plan for resolution. A copy of the document is also be forwarded to the Director of Field Experiences. If the problem is not able to be resolved after this meeting, the Director of Field Experiences will contact the Field Instructor to determine the best course of action.

## **15. How do I communicate with the Faculty Liaison?**

- The Faculty Liaison will also be the Field Seminar Instructor for students while completing the practicum. Faculty Liaisons can be reached by email and meet bi-weekly with groups of students through live video conferencing to monitor student progress and review and discuss issues and practice work in placement settings.