Developmental Stages of Students in Field

Stage 1: Beginning
“High Anxiety”

**Characterized by:**
- Learning field placement expectations and requirements

**Critical Questions:**
- Can I meet the learning goals of the internship?
- Can I deal with all of this?

**Students Need:**
- Permission to be learners; to understand learning styles
- To build self-awareness of strengths and limitations
- To identify support systems
- To discuss feelings and questions with field instructor
- To be introduced at the agency, to have a place to sit, to leave coat, papers
- Clarification of roles, expectations, and policies
- An orientation plan
- A plan to focus goals and meet general requirements
- To individualize placement
- To understand how to use supervision in planning and reviewing work
- Skills to start work assignments

**Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 1:**
- Learn:
  - Role
  - Agency
  - Unit Responsibilities
  - Specific Internship Tasks
  - Client Population and Needs
  - Community

- Work Through:
  - Feelings about clients, authority and responsibilities
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Stage 2: Reality Confrontation
“Engagement”

Characterized by:
• Becoming engaged with the agency

Critical Questions:
• Will I like it here?
  • Is this agency for me?
  • Can I get my needs met here?
  • If I don’t like something, should I keep it to myself?

Students Need:
• To talk with peers, field instructor, and faculty liaison about doubts and fears
• To reflect on how they handle stressful situations; to use stress management skills
• To examine their expectations of themselves
• Permission to make mistakes and take risks
• To identify discomforts with agency, field instructors, social work profession
• Assistance with major problems, crises, and decisions
• To explore feelings about support, authority, independence
• To build a solid supervisory relationship with field instructor
• Effective supervisory conferences
• Skills in feedback

Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 2:
• Learn:
  - To Use Information
  - Carry Out Internship Tasks
  - Make Decisions
  - Engage Clients and Resources
  - Basic Skills
  - Use Supervision
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Stage 3: Relative Mastery
“Basic Mastery”

Characterized by:
- Able to perform core internship tasks well
- Identify and analyze problems
- Recognize when methods are not achieving desired results

Critical Questions:
- Can I continue to get my personal and professional needs met here?
- What’s next?
- Can I make an impact?

Students Need:
- To take more initiative in own learning, become more self-directed
- To explore new challenges
- To continue building relationship with field instructor
- To evaluate more concrete feedback
- To evaluate own practice
- To build on strengths and interests
- To identify what learning they still need
- To find ways to contribute to the agency

Processes/Tasks to Complete Stage 3:
- Learn:
  - To work as a Team Member
  - Organizational Influence Skills
  - Specific Skills Needs for Functional Independence
  - Specialized Knowledge Needed for Practice Competence
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Stage 4: Closure
“Termination”

Characterized by:
• Feeling ambivalent about ending
• Reappearance of self doubt

Critical Questions:
First Year Students
Can I meet next year’s higher expectations?

Graduating Students
Can I really do this work now?

Being distracted by new demands (job search, license exams, relocating)?

Students Need:
• To reflect on past experiences with endings; identify patterns
• To share feelings with seminar members and field instructor
• To start closure process early
• To develop an ending plan
• To reflect on their growth and learning
• To use learning to develop new goals and future plans

Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 4:
• Learn:
  - Advanced or Specialized Skills
  - Preparation for new Roles

• Work Through:
  - Own Professional Goals
  - Balance of Personal and Organizational Needs