



Learning Contracts in Social Work Field Education

Presented by the
Field Education Department


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Outline

- Introduction: Competencies and Practice Behaviors
- Constructing a Well-Written Learning Contract
- The Role of Supervision
- Evaluation
- Q and A





Questions?

Staff in the Field Education Department are available to answer your questions!


Email us at sw-field@buffalo.edu.



Introduction: Competencies & Practice Behaviors

“In social work, field education is the signature pedagogy.”

*Educational Policy & Accreditation Standards,
Council on Social Work Education*

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- Field education is where our profession **socializes students** to perform the role of practitioner.
- Field Education **connects the theoretical and conceptual contribution** of the classroom to the practice setting.
- Field Education is where **competencies are best demonstrated**.

(Excerpted from Accreditation Review Brief, 2008)


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Field is where competencies are best demonstrated.

- Field Education becomes increasingly important with the Council on Social Work Education focus on the attainment of competencies.
- **Competency based education** emphasizes the measurement of **skill attainment** as the primary focus of training, and **student readiness for practice** is measured against a set of core competencies.

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"Anatomy" of a Learning Contract



Competency #1: Identify as a professional social worker, apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice and conduct oneself accordingly.

Practice Behaviors / Expected Outcomes

- a) Identify and demonstrate the value base of the social work profession, its ethical standards, and relevant laws including the NASW Code of Ethics.
- b) Demonstrate adherence to professional social work roles and their boundaries
- c) Engage in self-reflection and monitoring
- d) Identify professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication
- e) Seek supervisory input and manage authority in relationships in a professional manner to enhance your professional growth and development
- f) Accept constructive criticism from others to enhance social work skills, and to promote professional growth
- g) Identify the importance of self-care in professional social work practice, and develop a self care plan
- h) Identify and manage personal values such that professional values guide practice
- i) Identify means of improving client access to social work services

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- Each individual **competency** is the overarching goal or objective.
- The **practice behaviors** associated with each competency are components, or ingredients.

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Competence is what students are reaching for.

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The Learning Contract/Evaluation Form

[Learning Contract Evaluation Form](#)



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The Learning Contract Form

- a) Is developed by the student and educator in partnership.
- b) Ensures that expectations for students are explicit.
- c) Provides criteria for assessment.
- d) Defines the boundaries of what is possible to accomplish in two semesters.



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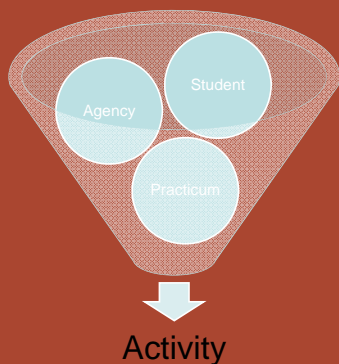
Faculty Field Liaisons are available to assist!



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Constructing a Well-Written Learning Contract

- I. Identify student interests and abilities, and areas for professional growth, and align these with agency opportunities.
- II. Keep agency mission, vision, areas of service provision in mind, and consider practicum requirements.



Helpful Questions

What specific competencies are required for professionals in my setting?

What competencies would I hope to observe in a well-trained colleague...

...and then,

...what competencies would a student be expected to have developed at the end of their placement?

Also, Ask Yourself...

1. How can we individualize and tailor activities to the needs of the community being served?
2. What will I observe the student doing (behavioral-see, hear) once they are competent in an area?



Tailoring to the Needs of the Community Being Served

- Can students be compiling a list of community resources for staff use? For consumers?
- Can students extend agency outreach and education efforts?
- Are there policies that can be researched? A literature review on best practices? On available assessment tools?



Activities should be *behaviorally explicit*.



- Have to measure and evaluate; How will you know when goals are met?
- What do you see, or hear? What evidence is there that lets you know the student has been successful?




Helpful Verbs

- *interview, write, observe, role play, participate, accompany, attend, summarize, co-lead*
- *develop, understand, utilize, be able, distinguish between, interpret, formulate, demonstrate, examine, take initiative*

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Example:


Student will **co-lead** a social skills group, **demonstrating the ability to engage** effectively with individual group members, **exhibiting positive regard and openness**, and will reflect on progress in **supervision**.

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Importance of Depth

- Multiple Ingredients (A soufflé versus an omelet)



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Multiple Ingredients: *Running a Support Group*

- Consider the work a student must do prior, i.e. recruiting participants, obtaining parent permission, practicing associated skills, *...and then*
- Consider also how a student might evaluate their success at the end of a session, or at group termination, i.e. measuring member progress on key indicators, measuring participant satisfaction.



Revised Activity: Multiple Ingredients

- Student will utilize existing evaluation tools (specify) to assess the effectiveness of a group intervention with students. Individual progress on student goals, and student feedback on process should be considered. A summary of results will be reviewed in supervision.

This revised activity would fit nicely as an activity under Competency 5, "Engage in research informed practice, and practice informed research."




The Role of Supervision

- Think about the big picture...not task for "task sake".
- Bring learning contract in to supervision; use it as a reference point.
- Supervision can bring the contract to life.
- Explore how particular skills/ practice behaviors transfer to other settings, i.e. the ability to network.



Evaluation (briefly)

- Evaluation is accomplished using the Learning Contract / Evaluation Form
- What will they be able to *do* ...evidence of accomplishment
- Rating descriptions can be found on page 2 of the Learning Contract.


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Tips & Resources

- [Learning Contracts](#)
- [Web Search of Activities](#)
- [Helpful Definitions & Tips](#)
- Your Field Faculty Liaison is a resource, too!

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