

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs

Unit: Social Work

Date: May 15, 2008

Unit Head Approval: _____

Section 1: Past Assessment Results – MSW Program

The School of Social Work has engaged in a number of valuation activities since 2000. The Outcome Assessment Plan was revised July 2, 2002 with a modification to one of the items in 2004. This brief summary covers results from all of these assessments. The School implemented a survey of recent graduates in 2001. This survey was sent to students who graduated in 1999 and 2000. We repeated this bi-annual survey in 2003, 2005 and 2007. A large component of the survey asks students to rate how well the program accomplish a) MSW program general learning objectives and b) specialization learning objectives. These learning objectives are linked to our accreditation standards and our curriculum. They are listed on the 2002 revised Outcome Assessment Plan. Students rate both their classroom learning experiences and their internship experiences for how well they helped them achieve each learning objective.

Results of the survey have been shared with all faculty and are reviewed by both the MSW Program Committee and each Specialization Committee. They have resulted in several changes in course material and the curriculum. For example, Mental Health specialization students commented on needing more advanced clinical preparation in their coursework. A new course was created “Advanced Clinical Assessment and Interviewing Skills” and was made a required course for all mental health students going into clinical practice. Another example is the creation of a new substance abuse course, “Substance Abuse Treatment Methods in Social Work”. The School Social Work specialization did not create new courses, but undertook a substantial update of their existing courses to reflect more clinical content to reflect the increasingly clinical nature of that field of practice. Similarly, the Child Welfare specialization this year decided to broaden their scope. This specialization has been renamed “Children, Youth, and Family Services”. This involves a substantial revision of one of their courses, SOCW 516, and offering students two tracks within the specialization. The two focus areas are: a) clinical and b) policy and administration. Finally, we used ICES ratings, the survey of recent graduates, and focus groups to guide substantial revisions to our field/internship seminars. We now focus less on traditional classroom learning and have placed more emphasis on online activities accompanied by interactive chat discussion boards.

These seminars provided us with another assessment opportunity. In the 2002 revised plan we stated that a small set of evaluation exercises for the six MSW goals would be developed and placed on the WebBoard for these seminars. The MSW Committee revised this part of the plan. In 2004-2005 we developed Problem Based Learning case scenarios for each specialization. These cases are given as a class assignment toward the end of students’ internships and are graded by the instructor. Instructors then provide a sample of these to the Specialization committees who in turn discuss their findings with the MSW Program Committee. These student products have been evaluated the past three years. We are proposing a revision in these student products in the next section.

Parts of the 2002 plan that were not implemented were the use of the university survey of alumni and evaluation of student performance by field instructors. We found that our own survey gave us much more comprehensive information than the university survey, which is primarily directed at undergraduates. While student internship evaluations are reviewed by our field education faculty, we have not systematically reviewed these evaluations at the MSW Program Committee. This is addressed in the revised plan in the next section.

Additional data that we have used but that does not appear in the 2002 plan are licensure exam results and job placement results. Our survey of recent graduates has shown that the majority of our students have employment offers prior to graduation and over 90% are employed in a social work position within 6 months of graduation. We review licensure exam results on an annual basis. Our graduates pass rates on the licensure exam is consistently above the national average.

Past Assessment Results – Ph.D. Program

The 2002 plan included a series of indicators that were intended at that time to be used to monitor Ph.D. Program performance. These have been substantially revised as the School recently has developed new measures in the context of the University’s more recent strategic planning initiatives. We therefore will report on two of the measures included in the 2002 plan, and then describe the newer measures on which the School will be collecting data for strategic planning purposes. Our goal is to be able to present a consistent series of measures in future years for use in this report, strategic planning reports to the University, and our own internal planning and monitoring.

The 2002 plan contained a measure on the percent of students in each entering cohort completing the degree with five years. While we are refining this measure for strategic planning purposes, we have collected the five-year measure since the last plan was submitted and summarize it below. It clearly shows that a relatively small minority of our Ph.D. students complete their degrees within this five year period. Because cohorts entering beyond 2003 will not have had five years pass prior to this report, we are including data for 2000-2003 entry cohorts. We include the number entering and completing in addition to the percentage completing, because percentages of completers with such small cohort sizes may be somewhat misleading if considered in isolation.

Percentage of Ph.D. Students Completing Degree within Five Years

Cohort Entry Year	# in Entry Cohort	# Completing in 5 Years	% Completing in 5 Years
2000	6	1	16.7
2001	2	1	50.0
2002	4	0	0.0
2003	7	2	28.6
Total 2000-2003 Cohorts	19	4	21.1

A second indicator included in the 2002 plan was the percent of students taking qualifying examinations with a score of 2.5 (passing) or 3.0 or better on a four point scale. Although we do

not intend to use this measure in future strategic planning, the data are available and are summarized below. The percentage of students who pass the examination is extremely high and the percentage that pass it with more than a marginally passing score (3.0 or more) also is quite high. The cohort years used differ from the previous table because we include cohorts through 2005. Students do not complete qualifying examinations prior to at least two years of study.

Cohort Entry Year	# in Entry Cohort	# Taking Examination	Passed with 2.5+		Passed with 3.0+	
			#	%	#	%
2000	6	4	4	100.0	2	50.0
2001	2	2	2	100.0	1	50.0
2002	4	4	4	100.0	3	75.0
2003	7	7	6	85.7	5	71.4
2004	8	7	7	100.0	6	85.7
2005	4	2	2	100.0	1	50.0
Total 2000-2005 Cohorts	31	26	25	96.2	18	69.2

Section 2: Revised Assessment Plan – MSW Program

(a) Process:

The MSW Committee of the School of Social Work reviewed the 2002 plan as well as feedback from the specialization committees. The committee discussed strengths and weaknesses of the current plan throughout the year and agreed to the following revisions. The development of core competencies was done by the MSW Curriculum Committee. Advanced competencies will be addressed in a faculty retreat at the beginning of the Fall 2008 semester, and will be completed by the Curriculum Committee. The overall assessment plan was written by Associate Dean Barry Ackerson who also serves as the Director of the MSW Program.

(b) Student Outcomes:

Core competencies: Ten core competencies were developed and approved in 2008 by our accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). We have further refined these core competencies for our MSW program and have listed them in the Appendix. Advanced competencies for each specialization in the MSW program will be developed in early Fall 2008. Licensure: Demonstrate competent knowledge and skills following graduation on standardized social work licensure exams.

(c) Measures and Methods Used to Measure Outcomes:

Survey of recent MSW Graduates: The current survey will be substantially revised to reflect the new core competencies as well as advanced specialization competencies. Revision of the survey will occur in Fall 2008. It will be piloted as an online survey in Winter/early Spring 2008-2009. Results will be reported by the end of the Spring 2009 semester.

Evaluation of performance in field placements/internships: All students undergo a two semester field placement/internship. Evaluations are performed by field instructors in their host agencies

using a standard form developed by our Field Education Office. A sample of 5% - 10% of these evaluations will be reviewed by the MSW Committee and specialization committees. Once the advanced specialization competencies have been developed, the field evaluation forms will be revised to reflect both the ten core competencies and the advanced specialization competencies.

Evaluation exercises/Field seminars: Under the current plan students have been completing hypothetical problem-based learning exercises at the end of their final semester in their field seminar classes. These have been graded assignments with each instructor selecting a sample of “outstanding”, “average” and “below average” from their classes for review by the specialization committees followed by review at the MSW Committee. We are replacing these hypothetical exercises with evidence based practice exercises based on the students’ actual internship experiences. These exercises will be completed as part of the field seminars. Assignments, along with grading metrics, will be developed for implementation during the 2008-2009 academic year. A sample of these completed assignments (5-10%) will be reviewed by the MSW Committee and specialization committees.

Licensure exams: Results of the national licensure exam administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) pass rates for graduates from our school will be compared to the national pass rates. Results of the School Social Worker certification exam administered by the Illinois Certification Testing System (ICTS) will be reviewed for % passing the exam.

Revised Assessment Plan – Ph.D. Program

Our metrics for assessing the Ph.D. program have been revised in conjunction with University strategic planning initiatives. We plan to use these metrics in future unit assessment plans for consistency purposes. We have begun collecting data on our new metrics during the current year with plans to have complete initial data in 2008-2009. Those PhD metrics that address student outcomes are as follows:

1. One year, three year, and five year retention rates within each cohort
2. Number and percentage of each cohort completing degrees within 5 years and within 7 years
3. Annual number of journal articles published by students in refereed journals.
4. Annual number of peer reviewed papers presented at professional conferences
5. Number and percentage of students in each entering cohort who receive teaching experience
6. Number and percentage of graduates who obtain positions in research universities
7. Number and percentage of graduates who obtain positions in other U.S. universities
8. Number and percentage of graduates who obtain positions in international universities or international research organizations

These measures have been developed to provide us with on-going digestible data concerning student accomplishments and training while in school and student placements upon Ph.D. completion. They were developed by the PhD Program Committee of the School of Social Work.

Appendix

Core Competencies - UIUC School of Social Work

- 1. Identify with the social work profession, its mission and core values, and conduct oneself accordingly. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. advocate for client access to services
 - b. practice self-reflection and self-correction
 - c. engage in life-long learning and professional growth
 - d. attend to professional roles and boundaries
 - e. use supervision and consultation as needed

- 2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. make ethical decisions by applying standards of the NASW Code of Ethics and apply international standards of ethics
 - b. recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice
 - c. tolerate ambiguity and cultural differences in resolving ethical conflicts
 - d. apply ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions

- 3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities and colleagues
 - b. critically appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom
 - c. analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
 - d. use various methods of technology to search for information, critically interpret evidence, and communicate with others

- 4. Engage diversity and difference in practice. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. understand diversity in a broad sense that includes an appreciation for both differences and similarities and social change over time
 - b. recognize the ways in which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or enhance privilege and power
 - c. appreciate the ways in which diverse cultures may foster strength and resilience
 - d. gain sufficient self-awareness to minimize the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups
 - e. recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of differences and similarities in shaping life experiences
 - f. view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants

- 5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
 - b. advocate for human rights and social and economic justice
 - c. engage in practices that advance social and economic justice
 - d. describe international human rights issues

- 6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. use research evidence to inform practice
 - b. use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
 - c. understand the process of evidence-informed practice
 - d. conduct systematic research reviews
 - e. demonstrate basic understanding of research design, methods, and statistics

- 7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the process of assessment, intervention, and evaluation
 - b. critique and apply knowledge to understand the reciprocal interactions between people and their environments

- 8. Engage in policy practice to address social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. analyze, formulate and advocate for policies that advance social well-being
 - b. collaborate with colleagues, clients, administrators, policy makers and legislators for effective policy implementation and action

- 9. Respond to contexts that shape practice. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging social trends to provide relevant social services
 - b. provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services

- 10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.**

- 10(a). Engagement. Students will demonstrate the ability to:**
 - a. substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
 - b. use empathy and other interpersonal skills
 - c. develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes

10(b). Assessment. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- a. collect, organize, and interpret client data
- b. assess client strengths and limitations
- c. develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives
- d. select appropriate evidence informed intervention strategies

10(c). Intervention. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- a. initiate actions to achieve organizational goals
- b. implement prevention interventions that enhance client capabilities
- c. help clients resolve problems
- d. negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
- e. facilitate transitions and endings

10(d). Evaluation. Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- a. critically analyze, monitor and evaluate social work interventions