BASW Program
College of Social Work
Assessment Plan and Report
2015-2016

Methods

This cycle reports assessment efforts for the 2015-2016 academic year. Assessment methods utilize the field practicum (considered the signature pedagogy of social work education) evaluation and provide a student based assessment as well as an evaluation by the field instructor who directly oversees the student’s work in practicum so multiple measures are used to evaluate the program. All measures use the same Likert scale: 1 [no demonstration of competency] to 5[consistently exceeds demonstration of basic competencies]. The benchmark for assessing student competency is achievement of a minimum of 3 mean score per competency and each practice behavior with a minimum of 70% of the students assessed reaching benchmark.

Measures

The assessment measures employed are:

(1) **Field Instructor Field Placement Evaluation**: This direct assessment measure is organized to correlate with each Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) competency and its operationalized practice behaviors. The evaluation tool is sectioned into competency blocks. Students are assessed according to their level of performance of each individual practice behavior according to the Likert scale described above. The program assessment data are gathered at the close of the final field placement (SW 445) when the field instructor (with any assistance requested from the seminar instructor) completes the field placement evaluation and assesses the student on his or her ability to implement each practice behavior in the field setting.

(2) **Student Field Placement Evaluation Self-Assessment**: This measure is structured exactly the same as the Field Instructor Placement Evaluation described above. However, to increase the likelihood of receiving accurate data, the form includes a reminder to students that their answers on the self-assessment will not in any way influence their grade. Students rate their perception of level of competence in performing each practice behavior in the field education. They complete this measure at the end of the semester and submit it to the instructor in their SW 445 practicum class.

Student Learning Outcomes
The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) prescribes 10 competencies that accredited programs are required to address. These are operationalized by practice behaviors and are assessed here according to the aggregate competencies:

1. Identify oneself as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and economic justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10. Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; assessed in four separate components:
    - Engagement:
    - Assessment
    - Intervention
    - Evaluation
Results

Means and Percentage of Students Meeting Competencies at Benchmark (M ≥ Benchmark: Aggregate mean scores of > 3.0; 70% or more of students achieving benchmark)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>SW 445 Field Instructor (n = 60)</th>
<th>SW445 Field Student (n = 47 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Professional Identity</td>
<td>4.31 100%</td>
<td>4.33 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Ethical Practice</td>
<td>4.36 100%</td>
<td>4.16 98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Critical Thinking</td>
<td>4.09 98%</td>
<td>4.02 98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Engage Diversity</td>
<td>4.28 100%</td>
<td>4.34 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5 Advance Rights</td>
<td>4.25 100%</td>
<td>4.02 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6 Research</td>
<td>4.07 100%</td>
<td>3.88 97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.7 Theory Application</td>
<td>4.17 98%</td>
<td>4.05 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.8 Policy Practice</td>
<td>3.96 98%</td>
<td>3.57 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.9 Respond to Context</td>
<td>4.29 100%</td>
<td>3.98 98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Practice: Engagement</td>
<td>4.33 100%</td>
<td>4.43 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Practice: Assessment</td>
<td>4.37 98%</td>
<td>4.09 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Practice: Intervention</td>
<td>4.22 100%</td>
<td>3.92 98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Practice: Evaluation</td>
<td>4.13 98%</td>
<td>3.91 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results Summary

Students who were assessed or participated in the assessment were social work seniors enrolled in SW 445, their field practicum, with a total of 58 students. The cohort of students met or exceeded the benchmarks of achieving a minimum of a mean score of three (consistently met basic requirements of the practice behavior) per competency and each practice behavior with a minimum of 70% of the students assessed reaching or exceeding the mean benchmark score.

Although all scores met benchmarks for the College, some areas had scores that were lower than average. Similar to last year, competencies that showed lower mean scores or percentages of students obtaining the benchmark mean score across multiple measures this year were: EP 2.1.6 Research, EP2.1.8 Policy Practice, EP2.1.9 Respond to Context, EP2.1.10Int Practice: Intervention and EP2.1.10Ev Practice: Evaluation.

Research (2.1.6) yielded lower results relative to scores obtained on other competencies in this assessment, but continues to show improvement in three of five areas of scores and higher percentages of students reaching the mean compared to last year’s results. Policy (2.1.8) was lower than last year and reflects ongoing faculty concern and discussion regarding the policy curriculum with consideration of changing the policy course to focus more on analysis. Both Practice Evaluation (2.2.10) and Respond to Context (2.1.9) were again among the lower scores obtained this year ranked by students; however, they had only one method of evaluation below the mean score of four (indicating consistently meets and occasionally exceeds practice behavior) and both demonstrated an improvement in scores compared to last year. Practice Intervention is lower than the previous year and, along with policy, represents the biggest dip in scores. It should be noted that supervisors scored students higher in these categories so some of the scoring by students could be attributed to lack of confidence or awareness of skill related to subjects that are some of the most challenging in the social work curriculum. All of the remaining competencies remained fairly stable compared to last year.

Interestingly, field instructors scored students above 4.0 (occasionally exceeds basic competencies) on all competencies except policy which was also the lowest scores assigned by the students. In contrast to field instructors, students were more critical and scored themselves below a four in five of the 13 areas measured meaning while basic competencies were met, students were less confident about exceeding basic competencies.

Improvement Action Plan

The Council of Social Work Education oversees accreditation for all social work programs in the United States. The College of Social Work will go through the re-affirmation process with a self-study to be submitted in 2018. They have released new standards so part of the self-study process has been a complete review of all curriculum related to meeting the new competencies. That process started this summer with recommendations made by a subcommittee of faculty; currently those recommendations are in the process of review by the curriculum committee and it is anticipated a full faculty review will occur next spring. A
significant portion of those proposed changes are directly related to program assessment. New recommendations related to program assessment include:

- There will be an Assessment Day for each cohort in the graduating semester; that day this fall is December 8th.
- Planned standardized program assessment for each graduating cohort; the Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT) will be administered at the end of the semester prior to graduation.
- Dean’s Chat: the College will begin a lunch with graduating seniors that serves as a type of exit interview for graduating students. Strengths and challenges of the social work program will be assessed from the student’s perspective. Student comments will help understand the data.
- By Fall 2017, all social work course content, syllabi and assignments will reflect the new competencies from CSWE.

**Research (E.P. 2.1.6), Intervention (2.1.10Int) and Practice Evaluation (2.1.10Ev):**

In order to address lower scores in the aspects related to critical thinking, assimilation of information and application of evidence informed intervention strategies, the College of Social Work proposes the following:

- Identify and implement opportunities for students to experience introductory research activities earlier in their social work program and better integrate research across the social work curriculum (e.g., enhance literature review assignments, discuss research activities in relation to practice, etc.) Teaching discussion forums/presentations will be arranged throughout the academic year open to all faculty and targeting part-time and TA instructors (primary instructors in the BASW program) that focus on writing across the curriculum, and integration of evidence based information in assignments and pedagogy.

- Review SW 450 (research) to intensify statistics related content in response to the changes made to STA 210 since UK Core was implemented and the course transitioned from STA 200.

- Review suggested changes to the research-focused project students complete in SW 445. A proposal has been made to add a second research class during the final semester so that students can apply research in the social service agency setting. Currently the project is included in field and does not include analytics. The proposed change would result in a project with analysis that informs the agency. Resulting products will focus on
refining skills related to literature review and synthesis and reinforcing understanding of research design and application of material learned previously in the program.

- Continue to articulate the tie/link of evaluation to interventions (and the use of evidence supported interventions) in practice discussions in SW 300, SW 350, and SW 400.

**Policy Practice (E.P. 2.1.8):**

- Content of SW 430 (policy) has been modified so that the policies discussed include those that directly connect with students’ interests (along with key social concerns) and ones related to social work professionalism or practice. In addition, the large signature assignment in the SW 430 course was broken up into four writing phases and spread across a longer period of time during the semester. Students are able to engage in a draft-rewrite-process with the instructor in order to strengthen their ability to apply content. This is a change implemented this fall so will take a cycle to determine if beneficial or not.

- Students also appear to have minimal opportunities to connect policy with their field work; the College will explore how to further focus on the relevance and impact of policy on practice in field practicum and seminar and create opportunities for policy application in activities to enhance this aspect of the field experience.

- The field practicum workbook activities and Field Education Report were revised- the related FER more fully connected policy to field and allowed for more comprehensive application of knowledge and skills in this area.

- Continue to increase opportunities in other social work courses (e.g., SW 430 & SW 400) to apply policy knowledge and skills.

**Respond to Context (EP 2.1.9):**

- Although scores were lower in this area compared to other competencies obtained this assessment cycle, positive shifts were noted. Plan is to continue to focus on leadership aspects of this competency to assist students in identifying how this practice behavior translates at the BASW level in terms of skill and knowledge expectations addressed across the curriculum.

- Encourage instructors to relate current social events with course content to identify how the current context affects perceptions, involvement, social response and media portrayal.
• **Other Actions:**
  
  Continue with targeted feedback on writing—emphasizing APA style and academic integrity. Also maintain expectations (and evaluate through quizzes, reading guides, etc) that students complete readings and other class preparations prior to class (**Critical Thinking** (2.1.3) and **Professional Identity** (EP 2.1.1)). To assist with professionalization of the classroom, a face-to-face mandatory orientation was implemented in order to address common professional aspects of courses. Also, all pre-social work course instructors were asked to devote at least one class period specifically to instruction in APA and writing at the beginning of the semester and reinforce these expectations throughout the year to introduce students to these expectations early.

  • Continue to monitor student performance in SW 422 and explore if the content is too much and precludes teaching theory in-depth (**Human Behavior and Environment**- EP 2.1.7). Continue to look for opportunities for application of content. Consideration of moving Ethics so that the semester’s materials are not as dense as having 422 and 435 together.

  • Faculty will consider a proposal to add an additional research course to help with application of research methodology and enable students to develop own project within the field agency.

  • Return emphasis of 430 to policy analysis; content had shifted in last two years to include substantial APA content and review of social welfare policy.