



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
COMMERCE

MSW

Field Practicum

Manual

**Field Practicum Manual
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Introduction

This field practicum manual is designed to provide information and material regarding the field practicum portion of the MSW program at Texas A&M-Commerce. The manual is intended to provide general information about the design, process and purposes of field practicum education. It does not supercede any policy enacted by Texas A&M University-Commerce, or the Texas A&M University System. Any questions or conflicts should be referred to the field instructor or the field practicum director

We welcome you to the field practicum educational experience, whether as a student, field instructor, or field faculty liaison. The field practicum program is central to social work education, and has historically been one of the most distinctive and vital parts of professional education. We hope that you find the experience challenging and meaningful, and we hope that the materials in this manual are useful to you in completing the program.

Social Work Department

MSW Program

Mission Statement of the Social Work Department

“The department of social work promotes and enhances the education and development of professional social workers who seek to improve social, economic and environmental conditions for diverse populations.”

This mission of the Master of Social Work program is to prepare competent, effective professional social workers who are committed to social and economic justice. Social workers are dedicated to the use of research-based knowledge in their assessments and interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Particular attention is given to the development of practitioners for autonomous practice, who are committed to the shaping and improvement of the social, educational, economic, health, and environmental conditions that contribute to the oppression of communities and people for whom they work.

MSW Program Goals and Objectives

M1. To provide students with the knowledge, values, and skills of advanced generalist social work practice.

M 1.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking using systematic approaches to advanced generalist practice interventions with all levels of client systems

M 1.2 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of environmental contexts for effective practice

M 1.3 Students will demonstrate the knowledge, values and skills needed for autonomous practice.

M 1.4 Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to provide supervision and consultation in practice settings.

M2. To promote the use of evidence-based theoretical frameworks for practice and research consistent with social work values and ethics.

M 2.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in evidence-based practice as both consumers and developers of research to inform and evaluate practice which includes cultural and ethical considerations.

M 2.2 Students will evaluate research in the selection of knowledge and methods appropriate to the environmental context of advanced generalist practice with client systems

M 2.3 Students will demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning to remain current with empirically based knowledge and skills.

M3. To socialize students to the profession of social work.

M 3.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of social work values and ethics in interactions with clients and colleagues

M 3.2 Students will demonstrate cultural competency in practice with all types and levels of client systems

M 3.3 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and purposes of social work, and the current issues confronting the profession

M4. Prepare graduates who have the capacity to promote social and economic justice through the development of policies and services.

M 4.1 Students will demonstrate an ability to critically analyze the relationship between policy and social and economic justice.

M 4.2 Students will demonstrate understanding of the strategies used to combat the effects of poverty, oppression, and discrimination on client systems

M 4.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and influence social policies and programs affecting both rural and urban client systems.

Educational Model of the MSW Program

The Texas A&M University – Commerce MSW Program utilizes the generalist/advanced generalist model with an emphasis on diverse populations of Northeast Texas. Campbell & Shepherd (1990) describe the advanced generalist model as one that uses a holistic approach with multiple levels of systems and multi-role interventions. The overall MSW program, curriculum, goals, and course of study are designed to prepare students for advanced generalist practice consistent with the standards established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) for master’s level of social work education.

Definition of Advanced Generalist Practice

The A&M University-Commerce, Master of Social Work program is the advanced generalist model with an emphasis on diverse populations of Northeast Texas. This model has been shown in numerous studies to fit well in rural programs in social work (Schatz, 2000; Schatz, Jenkins & Sheaf or, 1990; Campbell and Shepherd,, 1990; Gibbs, Locke, and Lehman, 1990). Campbell and Shepherd (1990) suggest the central premise of the advanced generalist model, that of the use of holistic approaches to multi level systems interactions and multi-role interventions is well suited to train graduate level social workers to meet the needs of the areas in Northeast Texas in which they work.

Four assumptions guiding an advanced generalist curriculum are:

1. MSW practice requires in-depth research-based learning opportunities;
2. Advanced generalists must be able to apply knowledge across fields and interventions with multiple client system levels;
3. Advanced generalists practice within the person-situation-environment paradigm;
4. Advanced generalist social work practice is a logical expression of preferred practice approaches for Northeast Texas.

Foundation of Social Work

Students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills which enable them to inductively apply this model regardless of the setting or context of practice.

During the foundation year, students are provided with:

1. a generic foundation and knowledge of the used of multi-level problem-solving methodology;
2. a theoretical orientation including an ecological systems model that recognizes the interrelatedness of human problems, life situations, and social conditions;
3. a knowledge, values, and skills base that is transferable between and among diverse contexts, locations, and problems;
4. an open assessment process that utilizes various theoretical and intervention approaches;
5. an understanding of how to select strategies and roles for intervention based on the problem, goals, and the system.

Specific competencies include the ability to engage in interpersonal helping; the ability to manage the change process and use multilevel intervention modes with multi-sized systems; the ability to perform varied practice roles; the effective use of supervision; and professionalism within an agency.

During the concentration year, the advanced generalist model is applied. With the advanced generalist model, students are taught the knowledge, skills, and techniques to assess and intervene in client situations, holistically, using multiple social work roles. Multilevel intervention approaches are utilized rather than a single response. A key concept

of this model is the high level of sophistication and competence required of the practitioner because of the attention to an analysis of the social context of the client problem.

The advanced generalist curriculum is designed to:

1. ensure students acquire a deeper, broader and more complex level of knowledge and skills in working with individuals, families, small groups, organizations and communities;
2. facilitate students' ability to address complex practice situations, including supervision, administration, and policy and program evaluation techniques;
3. enhance students' abilities to use greater specification, sophistication and integration of knowledge, values, and skills;
4. enable students to engage in practice-based research and theory building; and
5. prepare students for autonomous professional practice.

Overview of the Field Curriculum

The Field Practicum is an essential element of Texas A&M University-Commerce's graduate social work education. The design of the Field Practicum Program facilitates the integration of classroom theory with agency-based practice and provides support to students as they engage in this dynamic process.

The Field Practicum prepares students to apply the generalist/advanced generalist practice model. This model is reinforced through the knowledge and skills content of the social work courses. Therefore, regardless of the field setting, students should be familiar with this frame of reference and its application in social work practice. Students utilize critical thinking skills to apply the advanced generalist model in various settings or contexts of practice.

Goal & Objectives of the Field Practicum

The primary goal of the Field Practicum is to provide students with opportunities to gain experiential knowledge of generalist/advanced generalist practice. The Field Practicum provides students the opportunity to accomplish the program objectives in a professional practice setting. The program goals & objectives are:

MSW Program Goals & Objectives

M1. Provide students with the knowledge, values, and skills of advanced generalist social work practice.

M 1.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking and systematic approaches, based on the generalist perspective, to advanced generalist practice interventions with all levels of client systems.

M 1.2 Students will demonstrate skills and knowledge as change agents for effective functioning within organizations and various environmental contexts.

M 1.3 Students will demonstrate the knowledge, values and skills needed for autonomous practice.

M 1.4 Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to use and provide supervision and consultation in practice settings.

M 1.5 Students will demonstrate professional written and oral communication skills in all aspects of social work practice.

M2. Promote the use of evidence-based theoretical frameworks for practice and research consistent with social work values and ethics.

M 2.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in evidence-based practice as both consumers and developers of research to inform and evaluate practice which includes cultural and ethical considerations.

M 2.2 Students will use empirically-based theories and knowledge to understand human development and behavior cross the lifespan and interactions among and between all levels of client systems.

M3. Socialize students to the profession of social work.

M 3.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of social work values and ethics in interactions with clients and colleagues.

M 3.2 Students will demonstrate sensitivity, knowledge, competency, and respect for all aspects of client diversity.

M 3.3 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and purposes of social work, and the current issues confronting the profession.

M4. Prepare graduates who have the capacity to promote social and economic justice through the development of policies and services.

M 4.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between policy and social and economic justice.

M 4.2 Students will demonstrate the ability to apply strategies used to combat the effects of poverty, oppression, and discrimination on client systems to promote social and economic justice.

M 4.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze, develop and influence social policies and programs affecting both rural and urban client systems.

Structure and Design of the Field Practicum

The Field Practicum consists of 900 hours of field practicum experience. The first agency field practicum in the two-year program, called Foundation Field Practicum (FFP), consists of 260 hours to be completed during the student's second semester of the Foundation Year. The second field practicum (Advanced Generalist Field (AGF), required of both two-year and advanced standing students, consists of 640 hours over three semesters. All field practica provide opportunities for students to apply theory, knowledge, skills, and values across multiple levels of systems (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Concurrent coursework provides students with the educational foundation to apply the problem-solving model across client systems. Assignments throughout the curriculum, required for classes and for the practicum, allow students to demonstrate competency in working with various systems.

Administration of Field Practicum

The Field Coordinator has the overall responsibility for directing the Field Practicum Program and reports directly to the MSW Program Director. The Field Coordinator has the following responsibilities:

1. Develop, utilize, and evaluate field placement agencies;
2. Screen and place students;
3. Develop, implement, and evaluate field policies;

4. Develop databases and reporting systems;
5. Evaluate field program activities;
6. Develop and evaluate field instructor training;
7. Coordinate the assignment of Faculty Field Liaisons and the involvement of other faculty who interface with various aspects of the field program; and
8. Monitor the overall quality of the field practicum.

Expectations for the Field Practicum as a Learning Experience

The Field Practicum is an integral part of students' social work education. The University is dependent upon community agencies to carry out this component of the learning process. Because social work is a practice-based profession, students learn by doing. By working under the supervision and instruction of a competent professional social worker, students can initially observe the skills and processes and then demonstrate their own ability to provide social work services.

The Field Practicum provides opportunities for students to integrate classroom learning and skill development through closely supervised social work practice in a variety of situations. The Field Practicum allows students to engage in both short term and long term client contact, a range of client situations, varied practice approaches, and diverse agency activities. While there are many societal changes that influence the service delivery system (such as managed care systems, increased specialization, professional liability, accreditation standards, etc.), the Field Practicum continues to offer a somewhat insulated experience where the emphasis and priority are on maximizing the student's learning opportunities.

Field Instructors need to be creative and flexible in structuring the placement for their assigned student to ensure the student is able to receive the fullest range of experiences - perhaps even allowing the student to become involved with other agencies or programs in order to fulfill this need. The Field Practicum also needs to provide experiences that assist students in completing their assignments for their concurrent practice classes.

Responsibilities of Faculty Field Liaisons

Faculty Field Liaisons function as a part of the graduate social work education team to provide linkage between the university, the student, and the field agency. There will be designated Faculty who serve as Field Liaisons for the program, who utilize their professional experience in the field to assess students' abilities in integrating theory with practice. Liaisons will monitor and evaluate students' progress and performance in the field, based on input from the Field Instructor, and will assign the student's grade for the semester.

Faculty Field Liaisons are responsible for:

1. Monitoring and evaluating students through the appropriateness of students' job descriptions and learning contracts; assessing the required written assignments, individual contact with agencies, the students and Field Instructors (at least twice a semester); and reviewing the students' performance in the field as reflected in the verbal and written evaluation processes;
2. Providing support and training to Field Instructors in the effective use of Supervision with field students;
3. Participating in faculty meetings related to curriculum development, coordination, assessment, screening and review of field students; and other planning issues;
4. Communicating with the Field Coordinator on students' progress in their field agencies, including any problems, issues, or concerns which need to be addressed by the field program.

Each student is assigned to one of the Faculty Field Liaisons for a given year. Students and their respective Field Instructors are notified in writing of the assigned Liaison; conversely, the assigned Liaisons are informed of all agencies and students for whom they are responsible. Liaisons schedule their assigned visits to the agencies in advance, based upon the schedules of students and Field Instructors. After completing their field visits, Liaisons are responsible for submitting Field Visit forms to the Field Coordinator, summarizing their observations and indicating recommendations from visits to the Field Coordinator

Areas of Competency

Students are expected to develop levels of competency, relative to their educational and field experiences. All MSW students are expected to develop competencies in the following areas of social work practice:

1. Knowledge of field agency and agency systems;

2. Skills in working with individuals;
3. Skills in working with families;
4. Skills in working with groups;
5. Skills in working with organizations;
6. Skills in working with communities;
7. Development of the professional self and self-awareness;
8. Development of cultural competence
9. Ability to apply social work values, ethics, and promote social justice
10. Ability to evaluate practice

The Field Practicum provides opportunities for students to gain experiences in all of these areas. The levels of desired achievement and competencies are delineated in the Learning Plan and Student Evaluation.

Selection of Field Agencies

Field agencies provide students the opportunity to apply classroom theory in practice settings. Students, in turn, provide agencies with new ideas and challenges to service delivery. To become affiliated with A&M-Commerce Graduate Social Work Program, agencies must meet the following criteria:

1. An agency's philosophy of service should be compatible with the philosophy, values and ethics of the social work profession. The primary purpose of the organization (or program) must be to address human needs.
2. Services provided by the agency must be appropriate for MSW advanced generalist social work practice. There should be sufficient opportunities for learning experiences across all levels of systems, including work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
3. An agency must be able to designate an individual to provide appropriate and approved MSW supervision, licensure preferred, and will serve as the Field Instructor for the student.
4. Agencies must support the field education process by providing release time for Field Instructors to carry out field instruction responsibilities and to attend field-related meetings.

5. Agencies must provide students with adequate work space, office supplies, access to a telephone, agency-related transportation or travel reimbursement and information regarding transportation policies & liabilities, and access to client and agency records appropriate for the learning experience.
6. Agencies must not engage in discriminatory practices in the hiring of personnel, the acceptance of students, or providing service to clientele regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, age, religion, or sexual orientation.
7. Agencies must agree to participate in various processes of the field program, including field orientation, periodic field agency updates, interviews with prospective field students, and communication with the University field faculty.

Field practicum contracts may be initiated by either the university or the agency. The affiliation process begins with a phone conversation between the agency and the Field Coordinator to determine if the agency meets the above stated criteria. The Field Coordinator completes an “Initial Eligibility for Field Practicum Site” form. If the agency is appropriate as a field site, an agency application form, a biographical data form for the field instructor(s), and an affiliation agreement with the University are sent to the agency. The Field Coordinator reviews the completed forms, and upon approval of the agency as a field placement site, an Affiliation Agreement is signed by authorized representatives of both the agency and the University.

Because A&M-Commerce students come from such a widespread geographic base (as far as 100 miles from campus), the University has contracts with a large number of field agencies in order to best meet the needs of the social work field students. Depending upon the number of students in field and their geographic preferences, some agencies may not have students placed with them every semester. However, all active field agencies receive an Agency Profile form to be updated every semester in order to provide the Field Program with current information.

Responsibilities of Field Agencies

As an approved field agency, affiliates shall be committed to the educational process of social work students. Through agency experiences and supervision, students have the

opportunity to learn and become socialized into the profession. Agencies are expected to provide designated field instructors and other resources stated in the criteria for agency selection. Field agencies are asked to work cooperatively with the Social Work Field Program (and Faculty Liaisons) in creative problem-solving and in efforts to enhance the learning experience for field students.

As an approved affiliate with TAMU-Commerce Field Program, agencies agree to:

1. Participate in the placement process, including an interview with the prospective field student and feedback (or evaluation) to the Field Coordinator of the appropriateness of a respective student for that agency;
2. Provide opportunities for students to participate in agency programs and activities to enhance students' learning experiences;
3. Appoint appropriate personnel to serve as field instructors, provide agency support for field instructors to provide necessary supervision and attend field orientation and training provided by the University as well as participate in all other field-related functions (supervision, evaluation, conferences, etc.);
4. Provide students the use of facilities necessary to successfully complete required field assignments, including office space, office supplies, access to a telephone, and access to client and agency records appropriate to the learning experience;
5. Inform the Field Coordinator as soon as possible regarding staff or organizational changes affecting the field placement;
6. Provide sufficient opportunities for learning experiences across all levels of systems, including work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Work in partnership with the University Field Faculty to maximize the field education of social work students

Selection of Field Instructors

Field Instructors play one of the most critical roles in the educational process of the field practicum. In order to be approved by the University as a Field Instructor, agency staff shall meet the criteria listed below. Exceptions to any of the following criteria must be granted by the Field Coordinator.

1. MSW degree from an accredited social work program.

2. Current social work license (LMSW) preferred.
3. At least two years post-MSW work experience preferred, and employment full-time at the Field Agency for at least six months.
4. Willingness to supervise and instruct graduate social work students.
5. Familiarity with the advanced generalist social work educational model and philosophy of A&M-Commerce Graduate Social Work Program.
6. Commitment to work cooperatively with Field Faculty and the Field Program.
7. Demonstrated professional social work values, knowledge, skills, and behaviors in relation to clients, agency co-workers, and social work interns.

There may be unique situations where agencies do not have MSWs available to provide direct supervision, but they do have qualified professionals with the interest, expertise, and ability to provide supervision of social work tasks. Such individuals will be designated as On-Site Supervisors and will be eligible to provide direct oversight of the daily educational activities of the student. On-Site Supervisors must be approved by the Field Coordinator based upon their educational background, values and ethics, supervisory ability, an understanding of graduate social work education and practice principles, and work experience. However, students working under these circumstances **must** have direct supervision from an assigned MSW from another program within the agency or assigned by the Field Program. The designated MSW Field Instructor must provide a minimum of 2 hours per week of direct supervision with the student. The On-Site Supervisor and Field Instructor will work collaboratively in designing student assignments, guiding student activities, and evaluating student performance.

Responsibilities of Field Instructors

Field Instructors engage in the dual role of agency practitioner and social work educator. Since the primary goal of field instruction is social work education rather than agency service, the primary role of the Field Instructor is that of *teaching*. Conversely, the reciprocal role of the field student is that of *learning* rather than serving.

The specific responsibilities and duties of the Field Instructor will include:

1. Placement Interviews and Assessment of Prospective Students - Field Instructors are asked to meet with a prospective student to discuss what a practicum at their agency would entail and to assess the student's appropriateness for that setting. Field Instructors are expected to complete a post-interview evaluation form which provides feedback for placement decisions.
2. Orientation of Field Students - Field Instructors are responsible for orienting the assigned field student to their agency.
3. Establishment of a Learning Contract and Job Description - Field Instructors are expected to work with the assigned field student in the development of a Learning Contract and Job Description for their field practicum. Input from the Field Instructor is critical to the identification of realistic and appropriate expectations for the placement. Communication with the student about roles, responsibilities, duties, and accountability during the field practicum can be facilitated by these assignments.
4. Supervision of Field Student - Field Instructors shall provide at least two hours per week of direct supervision. While most Field Instructors spend much more time than this each week working directly with students, there is a need for a designated time strictly set-aside for discussing and processing the student's learning needs, identifying strengths and areas for work, updating learning goals, and giving feedback on the student's performance.
5. Serve as a Professional Role Model - Field Instructors should reflect and model professional social work values, skills, and behavior. Field Instructors should be open to discussing questions the students may have regarding different communication styles and contexts, agency politics, and balancing "real life" dynamics compared to text-book ideals.
6. Provide Appropriate Learning Experiences - Field Instructors should structure the students' learning experience in such a way that students are exposed to a wide range and variety of opportunities, including but not limited to direct client contact, work with families and groups, agency staffing and staff meetings, board meetings, community meetings, and court hearings.

Students should be increasingly challenged in their role and involvement as the semester progresses, beginning with observational roles and working towards direct responsibility for specific experiences (intakes, intervention, group facilitation, etc.). In addition, the Field Instructor is responsible for coordinating the student's involvement with other agency staff that function in various roles. The Field Instructor must ensure the student receives a range of experiences consistent with advanced generalist practice.

7. Evaluation of the Student - Field Instructors should provide the students with ongoing feedback regarding their work and progress. The evaluation process includes completion of the evaluation forms at mid-semester and the end of the semester. Field Instructors are responsible for completing the forms and discussing it with their students in conjunction with the Faculty Liaisons' field visits during the semester. Field Instructors may elect to have students complete self-evaluations as well in order to compare perceptions. Regardless of the format chosen, Field Instructors should regard evaluation as an integral part of the field instruction process and a critical component to the student's learning experience.
8. Participation in the Field Program - Field Instructors are required to attend a field orientation provided at the beginning of each year. In addition, Field Instructors are encouraged to provide feedback to the Field Faculty and Field Coordinator on suggestions to enhance or improve the quality of the program
9. Communication with Field Faculty - Field Instructors should contact the assigned Field Liaison as soon as possible should problems arise in the field setting. In addition, Field Instructors are asked to communicate with the Field Coordinator regarding any agency changes which may impact the placement.

Field Instructors receive .5 CEU's for social work licensing requirements for each semester they supervise an intern. In addition, they may receive a courtesy card that enables them to use the resources available through the TAMU-Commerce library.

Teaching Methods for Field Instruction

Since Field Instructors are typically agency practitioners, they may have developed approaches to field instruction based on their educational backgrounds and experiences. Field Instructors should be sensitive to the diversity of learning styles and characteristics of field students and utilize the most appropriate approach for the particular student. The following methods are listed as suggested tools for Field Instructors to utilize to meet the educational needs of their field students.

1. Assign, evaluate and discuss process recordings
2. Review and discuss case documentation
3. Allow student to observe Field Instructor's client interaction and discuss
4. Directly observe field student's client interactions and discuss

5. Videotape client interactions (individual, family, group, etc.)
6. Conduct role plays with the student
7. Allow student to observe and participate in agency staffings
8. Ask student to visit other agencies to gather information
9. Arrange for student to participate in various staff roles (receptionist, intake worker, therapist, direct-care staff, administrator, etc.)
10. Assign films and readings and discuss their relevance with student

These are just a few suggested teaching methods. Field Instructors are free to utilize other approaches that are effective for them.

Evaluation Processes

Students are expected to assume responsibility for evaluation as a part of their professional development and growth. The tools utilized to guide students in developing evaluation skills are the learning contract, the portfolio, the performance evaluation, and the evaluation of the field agency. Learning contracts allow students to establish measurable goals and facilitate supervisory conferences and self-evaluation. The portfolio allows students to document their various activities and assignments completed during the practicum that reflects their knowledge and skills. Students take an active role in the completion of their performance evaluations through the critical assessment of their performance and discussion of self-perceptions with those expressed by their Field Instructors. Students are asked to complete evaluations of their Field Agencies and Instructors at the end of the semester. This provides feedback to the University regarding the field site and allows students to have input into improving the quality of field program. Students are asked to evaluate their Faculty Liaisons to provide feedback regarding the quality of involvement during the placement.

Field Instructors are encouraged to regard the evaluation forms and process as tools for supervision as well as measurement of progress. Field Instructors and students complete the Field Evaluation forms at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. Field Instructors may find it helpful to complete evaluations with their students or to ask students to complete

self-rating forms and compare them with the Field Instructors' ratings. Attention is given to evaluating how well the students have performed according to their Learning Contracts and the quality of their portfolios. When On-Site Supervisors are assigned to work with students, they have involvement and input into the evaluation process of the student.

Field Liaisons contact and/or visit assigned students at their agencies at least twice during the semester, usually at the mid-term and the end of the semester. These visits provide opportunities for faculty Liaisons to visit with Field Instructors and students, review evaluations, and discuss any related issues. This process is designed to enhance the learning and growth of the student. Additionally, the Field Liaisons visit agencies or have phone conferences if Field Instructors or students have particular concerns needing to be addressed.

Field Instructors are asked to rate students on their performance as objectively as possible and to provide recommended grades at the end of the semester to the Field Liaison. Field Instructors are also asked to complete evaluations of Field Liaisons at the end of the semester. These evaluations provide information to the Field Coordinator regarding the quality of involvement provided by Faculty Field Liaisons with students, Field Instructors and agencies.

Field Liaisons assess and evaluate students based on information from the students' portfolios and feedback from Field Instructors. Field Liaisons also complete evaluations of Field Instructors (and On-Site Supervisors, if applicable). These evaluations provide constructive feedback to agencies and Field Instructors regarding the quality of the supervision and placement, and provide useful information to the Field Program in monitoring the quality of field placements.

The following diagram depicts the evaluation model used by the Social Work Department at Texas A&M University – Commerce. The model reflects the interactive nature of the evaluation process and the various entities involved. The evaluation forms completed by students, Field Instructors, and Field Liaisons are reviewed by all of the relevant players, including the Field Coordinator. The Field Coordinator discusses areas of need or change with the Field Committee; conversely, the Field Committee may propose concerns or suggestions for the Field Coordinator to implement in the field system.

Admission of Students to the Field Practicum

In order to enroll in the Field Practicum, students must have completed all prerequisite courses, be enrolled in required concurrent classes, and attend a Field Orientation.

Foundation Year students apply for SWK 553 during the fall semester after completing:

SWK 501: Generalist Practice with Individuals & Families

SWK 511: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I

SWK 521: Policy

SWK 531: Research

Second Year students apply for SWK AGP Field during the semester after completion of the foundation year or admission to the advanced standing program.

Student Assignment Process

Foundation year students:

1. Students attend the Orientation to the Foundation Field Practicum during the fall semester.
2. Students complete field applications and submit them to the Field Coordinator by the designated deadline.
3. The Field Coordinator interviews individual students who are applying for SWK 553: Foundation Field Practicum to discuss their areas of interests and learning needs and suggest possible placement options for them.
4. Students are given “tentative assignments” to a designated field agency.
5. Prospective agencies are sent copies of assigned students’ field applications.
6. Students interview at assigned agencies.
7. Students and Field Instructors submit evaluations of the interview to the Field Coordinator.
8. If the evaluations indicate that both the students and the Field Instructors are interested in the assignment, the Field Coordinator confirms and finalizes the assigned placements, notifying both the students and agencies in writing.
9. If either students or the Field Instructors express concern about the assignment, other options for placements are pursued.

Advanced Standing: Field Assignment Process

1. Students attend the Orientation to Advanced Generalist Field during the spring semester.
2. Students complete field applications, ranking their top three preferences for field assignments.
3. The Field Coordinator designates “tentative assignments” based on the students’ preferences.
4. Prospective agencies are sent copies of assigned students’ field applications and students interview at assigned agencies.
5. Following the interviews, students and Field Instructors submit evaluations of the interviews to the Field Coordinator.
6. If the evaluations indicate that both the students and the Field Instructors are interested in the assignment, then the Field Coordinator confirms and finalizes the assigned placements, notifying both the students and agencies in writing.
7. If either students or the Field Instructors express concern about the assignment, other options for placements are pursued.

Concurrent Practice Classes

The social work foundation content is designed to engage students in an educational process that ensures the development of the professional social work identity and the acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and values for entry-level generalist practice. During the foundation year, students complete courses that prepare them to demonstrate: the ability to engage in interpersonal helping; the ability to manage the change process and use multilevel intervention modes with multi-sized systems; the ability to perform varied practice roles; the ability to effectively use self-evaluation; and the ability to function within an agency. Students have completed prerequisite courses or are concurrently enrolled in courses that allow them to demonstrate generalist practice social work competencies.

Foundation Year Courses:

- SWK 501 Generalist Practice with Individuals, Families & Groups
- SWK 503 Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities
- SWK 511 Human Behavior in the Social Environment I
- SWK 513 Human Behavior in the Social Environment II

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SWK 521 Foundations of Social Welfare Policy

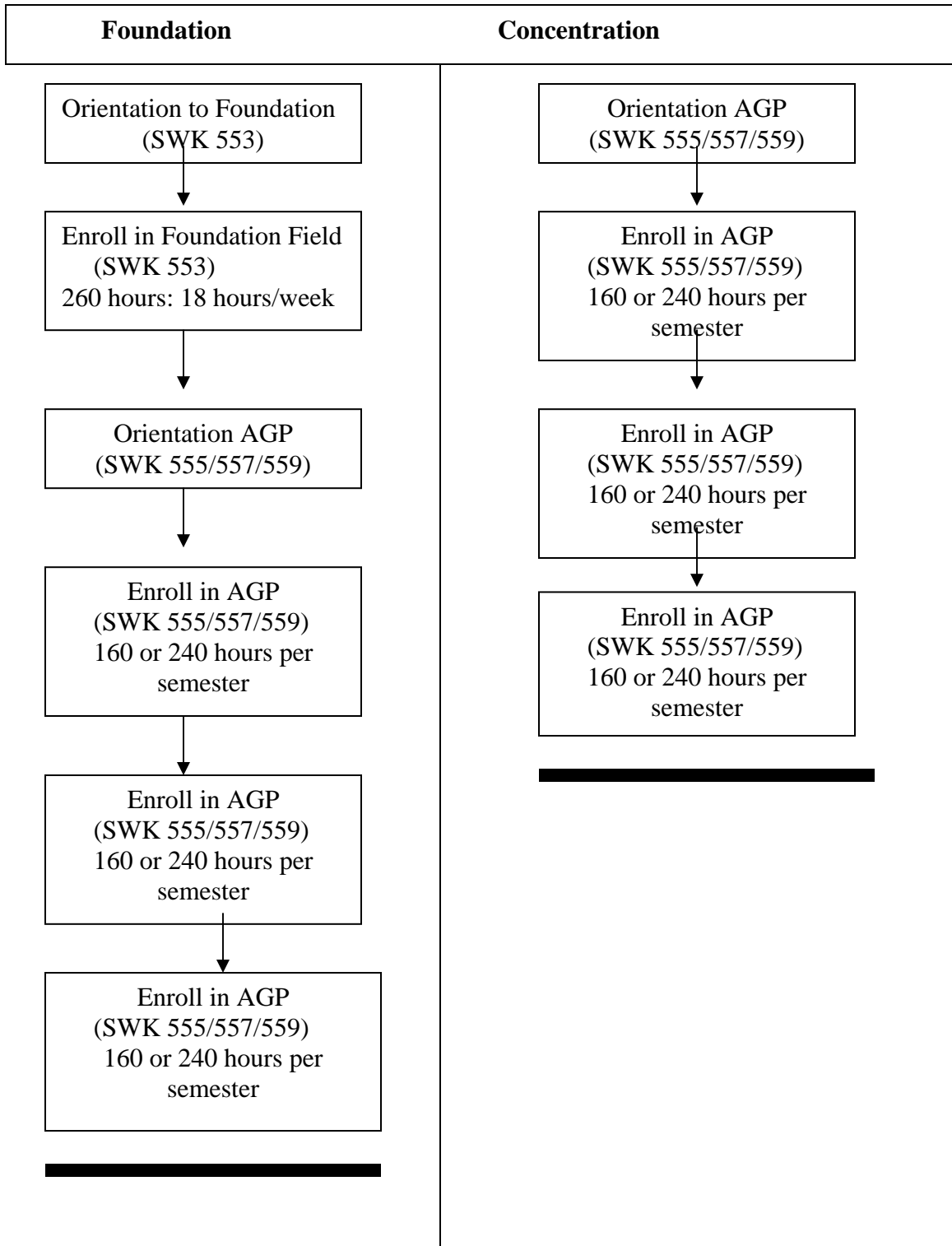
SWK 531 Research for Practice

SWK 541 Social Justice

SWK 553 Foundations Field Practice

During the concentration year, students receive an advanced generalist curriculum. This model, especially appropriate for practice with diverse population of Northeast Texas, provides greater specification, sophistication and integration of knowledge and skills taught at the generalist level. The curriculum presents greater complexity and depth in the knowledge, theory, and skills required for intervening with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Concurrent classes focus on theory development and knowledge application through the completion of various assignments (such as social histories or case studies, process recordings, group work, agency analysis, community needs assessments, research projects, etc.) to be completed in the field setting. Students completing the Advanced Generalist Field Practicum (SWK 555, SWK 557 and SWK 559) are expected to demonstrate advanced levels of competencies.

Flow Chart of Placement Process



Advanced Generalist Concentration Courses:

- SWK 505 Advanced Generalist Practice with Individuals
- SWK 506 Advanced Generalist Practice with Families
- SWK 507 Advanced Generalist Practice with Organizations & Communities
- SWK 508 Social Work Supervision & Administration
- SWK 509 Advanced Generalist Practice with Groups

- SWK 555 Advanced Generalist Practice Field I Practicum
(emphasis on individuals and families)
- SWK 557 Advanced Generalist Practice Field II Practicum
(emphasis on groups, organizations & communities)
- SWK 590 Advanced Generalist Practice Seminar
- SWK 595 Research Literature & Techniques
- SWK 597 Elective

General Expectations, Responsibilities, and Requirements for the Field Practicum

Field students are expected to assume responsibility for their own learning, engage in self-evaluation, communicate with co-workers and supervisors, provide critical feedback regarding field placements, complete the required hours, adhere to their job descriptions, and fulfill their learning contracts. Part of the learning experience that takes place during the practicum is experiencing the frustration which may occur when working in an organizational structure, working with different personalities, or working under a supervisor (the Field Instructor) who may not be what the student thinks he/she should be. Therefore, students are expected to demonstrate maturity and utilize good communication and problem-solving skills when encountering challenges in the placement. *The most difficult situations do not usually involve clients; they involve agency staff.* Therefore, learning to effectively operate within an agency is an important part of the Field Practicum experience.

Hours:

The Field Practicum consists of 900 hours of field practicum experience. The first agency field practicum in the two-year program, called Foundation Field Practicum (SWK 553), consists of 260 hours to be completed during the student's second semester of the Foundation Year. The second field practicum (Advanced Generalist Field (SWK 555, SWK557 and SWK 559), required of both two-year and advanced standing students, consists of 640 hours over three semesters. All field practica provide opportunities for students to apply theory, knowledge, skills, and values across multiple levels of systems (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Concurrent coursework provides students with the educational foundation to apply the problem-solving model across client systems. Assignments throughout the curriculum, required for classes and for the practicum, allow students to demonstrate competency in working with various systems.

Learning Plan and Job Description:

All field students are expected to develop Learning Plans and Job Descriptions as a part of their field placement. This assignment is done by students with input from their Field Instructors. The Learning Plan reflects mutually-agreed upon learning goals for the semester and opportunities for demonstrating the desired competencies. The format for the Learning Plan is included in the Forms section of this manual. The Job Description reflects the duties and responsibilities of the field student at the agency. Both of these documents are utilized as a part of the evaluation process with the Faculty Liaison. The Learning Plan is updated at the beginning of each semester in the field.

Activity Log:

Students are expected to maintain documentation regarding their weekly field experiences. Students complete the weekly Activity Log utilizing the format included in the Forms section of this manual.

Field Seminar:

Students enrolled in the Field are expected to participate in field seminar as a part of their field hours. These hours do not count towards completion of field hours. The time and frequency of the seminar is established at the beginning of the semester.

General Field Practicum Policies

Completion of Hours and Attendance

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Students are responsible for verifying their field hours by completing a weekly Activity Log. Students are expected to demonstrate professional work habits, such as being punctual and regular in work attendance. In the event a student must be late or absent from their regularly scheduled field hours, he/she should call their Field Instructor. Excessive tardiness or absences are considered a serious problem and may necessitate a conference with the Field Liaison.

If students must miss their regular field hours, they may schedule make-up time with the approval of their Field Instructor. If students get seriously behind on their hours due to circumstances beyond their control (illness, personal emergency, death in the family, etc.), they should discuss this with the Field Instructor and Field Liaison in order to work out a solution.

Students may not receive an incomplete for the Field Practicum.

If the required hours or assignments are not completed by the end of the semester, students may receive an "F" and be expected to repeat the field practicum (usually at another agency). Exceptions to this policy are made for only the most extenuating circumstances and must be approved by the Field Coordinator and MSW Program Director.

Change of Placement

The Field Liaison should be contacted if problems arise in the placement. Most concerns can be resolved through a conference with the Field Liaison, student and Field Instructor. Changes in the field placement are only made when agency changes dictate the termination of the placement (programs closing, Field Instructors leaving the agency, etc.) or when problems between the student and the placement are determined to be irreconcilable by the Field Liaison. If circumstances necessitate a change in placement, the Field Coordinator should be contacted as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for the student's placement. Hours may be transferred from the initial placement to the new placement, with the approval of the Field Liaison and Field Coordinator.

Resolution of Problems in Placement

A student may be removed from the field agency at any time by request from the Field Instructor and/or agency for unprofessional conduct or for significant lack of progress in achieving field practicum learning objectives. If a student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory, the Field Instructor will contact the Field Liaison immediately to discuss the situation and set up a conference between the student, Field Liaison and Field Instructor. The Field Faculty also may remove a student from the field for unprofessional conduct or lack of progress or participation. The grounds for removal of a student from field may include, but are not limited to: failure to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics; attempts to harm oneself or someone else; repeated tardiness or absences at the agency; repeated changes in scheduled field hours without approval; and/or other behavior that is incompatible with accepted professional conduct. The final decision to remove a student from field is made, after consultation with the social work faculty, by the Field Coordinator, with documentation from the Field Instructor, agency, or Field Liaison, and may be based on objective and/or subjective professional judgment.

Safety Issues

Field agencies shall be aware of safety issues related to the activities of the field student. Students should not be expected to engage in any activity when there are safety concerns.

Students should be thoroughly oriented to the agency's policies and procedures to ensure their health and safety during their practicum.

Malpractice Liability Insurance

Students have coverage for malpractice liability insurance from the American Professional Agency (designated provider by the National Association of Social Workers), purchased through the Social Work Department. Documentation is available upon request.

Credit for Work Experience

Students will not be given academic credit, including credit towards the field practicum, for prior work or life experience, as stipulated by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE).

Field Placement at Place of Employment

MSW students are encouraged to modify their work requirements to allow them to complete the requirements for the Field Practicum in settings that maximize their learning experience. Foundation year field practicum students must complete their field practicum (SWK 553 – Foundation Field) in a setting other than their place of employment.

Concentration year students or advanced standing students may request their Field Practicum be completed at their place of employment. In order to ensure the field practicum is educationally focused, the following conditions must be met:

1. A student must complete a Petition for Field Practicum at Place of Employment form as a part of his/her application for the concentration year field practicum.
2. Student work assignments/duties **MUST** differ from those associated with the student's employment.
3. The employing organization must be able to provide the student with learning opportunities different from the student's paid job description. Continuing the student's usual work assignments does not qualify as "a learning opportunity".
4. The student must receive weekly field instruction from a qualified MSW other than

the supervisor of the paid work assignments. The Field Instructor is responsible for ensuring that the field practicum is *educationally focused* and integrates theory from the classroom with practice experience in the field.

5. Specific tasks and requirements must be clarified for both the paid employment and field practicum. Should a student (or agency) violate the specified agreement regarding the separation of field and employment, the student will be required to complete the practicum in another setting.

The Field Coordinator is responsible for approving a student's Petition for completing a practicum at his/her place of employment. If the Field Coordinator does not feel the placement meets the conditions stated above, or is not appropriate for the field practicum, the student will be placed at another agency which matches the student's interest and learning needs.

Should a student be offered employment at their assigned agency while completing the practicum, the above policies will apply. This policy applies to salaried employment, not to placements that may offer stipends or financial compensation for practicum hours.

Night and Weekend Placements

Many traditional social service agencies do not have qualified supervisory staff available during non-traditional hours. Students should plan to complete their field hours when their Field Instructor or other professional staff are available for supervision. However, efforts will be made to be flexible in approving students' schedules as long as the program's educational objectives and the quality of the student's practicum experience are not compromised.

Student schedules should be established in advance, with the approval of the Field Instructor and Field Liaison.

Travel and Mileage Reimbursement

Students are responsible for securing reliable transportation to and from field placements. It is also their responsibility to provide their own automobile liability insurance coverage for agency-related travel. Reimbursement for agency-related expenses, such as travel, should be the responsibility of the agency and should be congruent with the agency reimbursement policies and rates for regular staff. The agency policies and procedures for travel

compensation should be discussed with field students as a part of their orientation. It is the responsibility of the Field Instructor and agency to verify that the student's vehicle insurance coverage is adequate for the job required before allowing the student to engage in agency activities involving transportation.

Holidays

Students are entitled to observe holidays as designated by the University and their field agency. However, if students' regular field hours occur on a holiday, they are still responsible for completing those hours on another day. Students should communicate the University's holiday schedule to their Field Instructor and make plans accordingly.

Sick Days

If students are unable to attend field due to personal illness or the illness of a dependent family member, they should contact their Field Instructor and assume responsibility for rescheduling any appointments or work requirements. The student shall make up any missed hours at a time agreed upon by the student and Field Instructor. If the student's absence exceeds 24 hours (3 full field days), the student should notify the Field Liaison and propose a plan to make up the time missed.

Conflicts of Interests

Students, Field Instructors, field agencies, and field faculty should all be aware of potential conflicts of interests. Field students and Field Instructors, particularly, should make known to the field faculty any potential conflicts of interests. Field students shall not be placed at agencies where relatives or family members are employed or serve on the Board of Directors without the approval of the Field Coordinator.

Requests for Documentation

The Social Work faculty may request that students applying for Field or participating in the Field Practicum provide documentation regarding their physical or mental health, drug or alcohol use, or provide information for a criminal background check. Such information will be requested if required by the agency or when it is deemed necessary to ensure the well-

being of the social work student and/or clients in the field. Decisions related to the information obtained will be made on an individual basis.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

The University offers support services to eligible students with disabilities through various campus departments, the Texas Commission for the Blind, and the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (Texas A&M Commerce Student's Guidebook, 1999-2000, p. 65). Requests from students with disabilities for reasonable accommodations must go through the Academic Support Committee. (For more information, students should contact the Office of Advisement Services, BA 314, 886-5133.) Students with disabilities have legitimate physical or mental conditions that present special challenges to their daily functioning and/or their ability to learn. The Social Work Department will work with students and other support services to enable a student to successfully enter and complete the field practicum. It is recognized that students may choose not to disclose a disability. In such cases, the student may not receive special accommodation in class or field work.

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Social Work Department at Texas A&M-Commerce is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, familial status, political orientation, or perceived socioeconomic status.

Grievance Procedures

The Texas A&M-Commerce Student's Guidebook, 1999-2000, details students' rights and explains complaint and grievance procedures (p. 70). Social work students have the right to appeal course grades and adverse decisions relating to the Field Program according to the appeal process outlined in the Social Work Student Handbook.