Memo

To: BASW and MSW students in Seattle & UW Tacoma
From: Emiko A. Tajima, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Date: Jan 31, 2012
Subject: Overview of Program Evaluation Activities

The following memo outlines the various program evaluation activities which the SSW undertakes on an on-going basis, many of which center around the assessment of social work competencies. Below, we provide an overview of assessment activities, a rationale for our plan for assessing competencies, and implications for students. The evaluation activities described below represent structured assessment activities, but as always, we welcome input from students at any point.

Q & A

Q: Why do we have competencies?

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) which accredits all schools of social work in the US has shifted its emphasis to competency-based education. CSWE describes competencies as “performance-oriented measurable practice behaviors” and has articulated a set of core competencies that represent the knowledge, values and skills learned in the class and in field, that are the basis of effective, professional social work practice. Importantly, a competency-based outcomes approach for social work education reflects a shift from a focus on input (what we teach) to a focus on outcomes (what graduates know and what they can do). CSWE requires all schools to target these 10 core competencies and assess the extent to which students have achieved the competencies. CSWE identified the ten core competencies and suggested practice behaviors which our faculty have adapted to fit our curricula and social context. These practice behaviors represent the observable knowledge, values and skills that we expect our graduates to have.

Q: What are the 10 core competencies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency 1.</td>
<td><strong>Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency 2.</td>
<td><strong>Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency 3.</td>
<td><strong>Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency 4.</td>
<td><strong>Engage diversity and difference in practice.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency 5.</td>
<td><strong>Advance human rights and social and economic justice.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Competency 6. **Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.**

Competency 7. **Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.**

Competency 8. **Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.**

Competency 9. **Respond to contexts that shape practice.**

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


**Q: How does the UW SSW evaluate its curriculum and programs?**

Our school is committed to a responsive curriculum through ongoing curriculum evaluation and revision. As the faculty has articulated, “*We have attempted to craft a living curriculum within which faculty and students collaboratively engage in the challenging task of preparation for social work practice in a rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, and deeply inequitable global environment. We fully anticipate continuing to refine and rework the curriculum in response to both these changing external demands and to formative evaluative feedback from students and faculty.*” Our program evaluation aims to assess not only core competencies, but also elements of what CSWE calls the “implicit” curriculum, such as the learning environment and our student advising supports. To do so, we have a range of program evaluation activities across the year to gather feedback and input from students and faculty.

**Q: How do students contribute to program evaluation?**

Students are a vital source of data for evaluating our educational programs. Our evaluation plan includes student surveys, regularly scheduled feedback sessions across all our programs, and input from the Student Advisory Council. Key annual student surveys include the: 1) **Student Self-Assessment of Competencies** (a 10-15 minute survey completed at the end of the program and at the end of Foundation coursework for MSW students), 2) **Student Satisfaction survey** (also completed at the end of the program and at the end of Foundation coursework), 3) Field education surveys, including the: a) **Field placement survey**, b) **Student Evaluation of practicum placement**, and c) **Evaluation of Field Faculty and Placement Process**. Other surveys may be conducted as needed, such as to evaluate curriculum revisions, get feedback on events, or to help plan student activities or curricular offerings. Student participation in program evaluation is critical to informed program revisions and we greatly value student input.
**Q: How does the UW SSW assess the core competencies?**

The 10 core competencies articulated by CSWE have been broken down into sets of practice behaviors which define the knowledge, values, and skills that we expect UW SSW graduates to demonstrate. We use multiple measures and multiple sources to assess whether we are meeting our objectives regarding students’ mastery of the practice behaviors. As shown in the figure below, our three major sources of data are Field Instructors, Classroom Instructors and Students. Field Instructors complete quarterly evaluations, classroom instructors rate a subset of the same items, and students self-assess their own mastery by completing a required survey at the end of the year/program. These data are combined and compared against benchmarks for student achievement. The results are reported to faculty and students and used to improve curriculum, instruction, and field education.

**Q: What does assessment of competencies mean for students? What do students need to do?**

Student self-assessment of competency is a critical component of our program evaluation, which is why it is a requirement for progressing in the program and for graduation. CSWE requires that we have multiple sources of data to assess our programs and we believe that data from students themselves is particularly important. Students will assess their own competency on a five-point scale for each of the practice behaviors. MSW students are required to complete a survey at the
end of their foundation coursework and at the end of their MSW program. BASW students are
required to complete the self-assessment at the end of their program. Students will receive an
email notification to complete the survey using STAR.

Q: What will classroom instructors assess?
Classroom Instructors teaching required courses are asked to rate each of their BASW or MSW
students on a small subset of the practice behaviors relevant to their course. This rating is
completed for each individual student in the class. Ratings are aggregated and used for program
evaluation purposes and do not become part of the student’s permanent record.

Q: Why are classroom instructor assessments of students confidential?
Our assessment process is designed to provide information on the effectiveness of our overall
educational programs and to inform ongoing program development and improvement. Some
components of the data collected for program evaluation also function to provide feedback to
students (e.g., quarterly Field Evaluations) and to provide students with an opportunity for self-
reflection (e.g., the student self-assessment survey). We hope that confidential evaluation by the
classroom instructor will provide a third data point for program evaluation that is independent of
instructor-student processes that may contribute to grade inflation. We will triangulate the data
to estimate overall competency outcomes and to evaluate the consistency of ratings by
instructors, students and field instructors. Instructors are welcome to fold evaluation of given
practice behaviors into their regular assignment and grading process. In addition, if any instructor
has concerns about a student’s performance/behavior in relation to any dimension of professional
practice – nothing prevents them from informing the student of their concern.

Q: Do students have a right to see the instructor’s assessments?
No -- consistent with the policies on student privacy and access to information for both the UW
and CSWE, students don’t have a right to the ratings, because these evaluations will not be
included in students’ permanent records and will only be analyzed at the program level. After data
entry, students’ identifying information will be separated from the instructor evaluation data and
the original reporting form will be destroyed to maintain the students’ anonymity. Individual
students will not be identifiable in the program evaluation dataset and the evaluation of individual
students will not be kept in any permanent student or school records.

Q: How can students see the findings of the program evaluation?
We are committed to sharing program evaluation findings with constituents, including students.
We report program evaluation findings to students in multiple ways and offer opportunities to
discuss results with them. 1) The annual summary report is posted online for constituents to view.
The link is: http://socialwork.uw.edu/students/program-evaluation 2) Program evaluation
findings are presented at the MSW and BASW Program Committee meetings (both of which have
student representation) in the fall, and form the basis for setting priorities for the year. Student
representatives on those committees are typically active in subcommittee work in response to
program evaluation findings. 3) The SSW administrators hold regular ‘drop in’ feedback sessions
where students can raise concerns and those session s offer a forum for sharing and discussing evaluation findings.