Department of Social Work

BSW Field Manual

2026-2027

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Message from the Director of Field Education

Dear Social Work Students, Agency Personnel, and Field Education Faculty,

Welcome to the field education component of WCU's Social Work program! Our Department Head, BSW Program Director, Director of Field Education, BSW Placement Coordinator, and entire faculty are committed to a field education program that serves the needs of our students, agency partners, and the people and communities of Western North Carolina.

The field experience allows social work students to apply their classroom learning to a real-world setting in a safe, supported environment. Our partner agencies offer students a wide variety of experiences working with individuals, children, families, groups, organizations, and communities, and support them in developing professional skills sets at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

This manual serves as a guide to students and field instructors as they begin working with the field education program, a reminder of policies and procedures throughout the field experience, and a glossary of terms specific to social work education. We hope that you will contact us with any concerns or questions you may have after reading through the manual, and look forward to working with you throughout the field education process.

Thank you,
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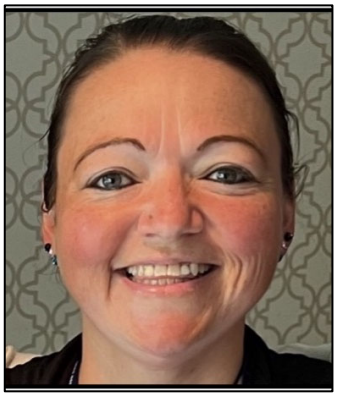

Beth Harmer, DSW, LCSW, LCAS, CCS
Department Head

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Director of Field Education

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BSW Field Placement Coordinator

Introduction

The purpose of the BSW Field Manual is to provide information regarding the process of setting up and completing field placements for students in WCU's Master of Social Work (BSW) program. The field experience allows students to synthesize their classroom learning and begin to apply their theoretical knowledge to professional practice.

This manual is not exhaustive, and some questions or concerns that arise in relation to field placements are best resolved in collaboration with the Director of Field Education or other social work faculty. This manual will be updated for each academic year, and the current version will be made available through the departmental website at www.wcu.edu.

Basic Requirements

BSW students are required to complete between 400 and 450 hours in a block field placement during their final semester in the social work program.

Guidance on Required Hours and Schedules

The Council on Social Work Education requires that BSW students complete a minimum of 400 hours in their field placement. In order to offer the flexibility needed to appropriately individualize for each student's field experience, we provide a range of hours which are acceptable for BSW field placements. Over the course of the 15-week semester, students should complete a minimum of 400 hours, but no more than 450 hours in field.

Students are encouraged to develop a schedule with their agencies that includes approximately 32 hours, or four 8-hour days, per week, which would give them a total number of hours at the higher end of the acceptable range. This will allow students some flexibility for sick days, bad weather, and other days missed throughout the course of the semester while still meeting the minimum requirement.

Field placements are offered every fall and spring semester, but are not offered during summer semesters. In order to enter the field portion of the BSW program, students must have completed all required coursework, including liberal arts courses, core social work courses, and electives. Students will complete a field seminar course concurrent with the field placement.

Basis of the Field Curriculum

The field curriculum is based on the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE's) Educational and Policy and Accreditation Standards. The nine core competencies of a social work education are:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior
2. Advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
3. Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice
5. Engage in policy practice

6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Mastery of each competency is displayed through a series of observable behaviors, which are outlined in the Learning Contract and Field Evaluation forms. More information about the Council on Social Work Education and the 2022 Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards can be found at www.cswe.org.

Glossary of Terms

Throughout this manual and other field documents, we use language that is specific to the field experience component of a social work education. A list of frequently used terms follows.

Faculty Liaison: The faculty liaison is a member of the social work faculty who serves as a point of contact between the Department of Social Work, the student, and the field agency. The faculty liaison conducts one or more field visits with the student and field instructor, and teaches the student's field seminar course.

Field Instructor: The field instructor is the student's supervisor at the field agency. The field instructor is generally an employee or, occasionally, a board member or volunteer with the field agency. The field instructor is responsible for conducting weekly supervision meetings with the student as well as completing the student's field visit, learning contract, and mid-term and final evaluations. Criteria for selection of field instructors is outlined later in this manual.

Field Seminar: The field seminar is a course designed to help students reflect on, synthesize, and connect their field experiences with their classroom learning. Field seminar sections are taught by each student's faculty liaison.

Learning Contract and Evaluation Form (LCEF): This living document serves as a plan for each student's individual learning experience in their field placement, and relates the tasks, activities, and projects in which the student will engage to the CSWE competencies and behaviors. The contract is developed and agreed upon by the student, field instructor, and faculty liaison, and forms the basis for mid-term and final evaluations.

Task Supervisor: In some field placements, the student will work closely with an agency representative who is not the field instructor. This person may or may not have a degree in social work or meet other criteria for field instructors. Day-to-day supervision can be provided by a task supervisor in conjunction with the field instructor. While the field instructor retains final responsibility for completion of the Learning Contract and Evaluation Form, the task supervisor can provide input into these documents as well.

Preparing for Field

Preparation for field begins the semester before a student completes their field placement, and occurs through completion of the course SOCW 396: Field Preparation and Professional Development.

Admission Requirements

Students who have been formally admitted to the social work program must receive additional approval to begin the field placement process. Approval is communicated by the student's advisor to the Director of Field Education and is based upon:

- Continued compliance with eligibility criteria for the social work program
- Maintenance of a 2.5 GPA
- Completion of all required coursework before entering field

The Placement Process

During the semester before the student enters a field placement, they will participate in the following process. Due dates for each step in the process will be communicated by the Director of Field Education or the BSW Field Coordinator.

- Students create an online field education profile using Exxat's Prism software. This profile communicates each student's preferences for client population and geographic location of the field placement, as well as letting the Director of Field Education know if the student is planning to complete a certificate, stipend, or collaborative program. Students can use this program to request interviews with specific agencies.
- Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator communicates with students about recommended placement sites. This communication may happen in person, through Zoom, by phone, or via email.
- Students interview for field placement opportunities. The Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator will connect students with potential field agencies, with whom they can set up in-person or virtual interviews. Field placements can be competitive, and students should present themselves as they would for professional employment.
- Students are offered field placement opportunities. When a student and an agency agree that a good fit has been found, the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator will approve the placement. If a student is not offered a placement after their initial interviews, they will be allowed to set up interviews with additional agencies, up to a total of four interviews. If a placement has not been obtained after the student has applied to or interviewed with four agencies, the student will be asked to meet with the BSW Field Coordinator and their advisor to discuss barriers to entering field, and may not be able to begin their placement as scheduled.
- Students complete all required paperwork. Before field placements begin, students must complete and pay for a background check through the College of Health and Human Sciences, as well as any additional requirements of the field agency. These can include, but are not limited to, TB tests, drug screens, and provision of immunization records and are the student's responsibility to complete and pay for as required.

Areas of Focus

Currently, the Department of Social Work offers students the opportunity to complete two optional programs to supplement their BSW education. It is not required that students choose an area of focus. However, each of the programs listed below requires that the student's field placement be related to a specific area of study, so students should communicate with the BSW Placement Coordinator well in advance about their intentions to complete any of these optional programs. More information about each program can be found at socialwork.wcu.edu.

Child Welfare Education Collaborative: The North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative is a program designed to provide educational support both undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in working in public child welfare in North Carolina upon graduation. The "Collaborative" seeks to strengthen public child welfare services in North Carolina by increasing the number and diversity of well-trained and highly-committed BSWs and BSWs employed in local Department of Social Services (DSS) offices. The Collaborative provides special educational opportunities emphasizing public child welfare practice for selected social work students who commit to a field placement/ internship in child welfare in a North Carolina county Department of Social Services office.

For more information about the Child Welfare Education Collaborative, contact Tonya Westbrook at twestbrook@wcu.edu.

Culturally-Based Native Health Certificate Program: The Culturally-Based Native Health Program provides a new approach to training for health professionals serving Native peoples, grounded in a tribal community, and integrated into the core of Western Carolina University.
We provide an **undergraduate and graduate certificate program** for health professionals who serve American Indian populations in the South and the East as well as training opportunities for Native youth through mentoring, summer programs, and research opportunities – training which will open career paths for young students.

For more information about the Culturally-Based Native Health Certificate, contact Lisa Lefler at llefler@email.wcu.edu.

Criteria for Approval of Field Agencies

Field agencies are selected based on their ability to meet the educational needs of social work students, their interest in supporting students, and their commitment to participation in the field education process. Every effort is made to provide students with a wide and rich variety of opportunities for field placements. Agencies represent clients from diverse ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds, and provide opportunities to explore the many roles that social workers play around the region.

Agencies are assessed by the Director of Field Education in person, if possible, and through remote communication and review of agency materials when necessary. When agencies are

approved for field placements, an Educational Affiliation Agreement is signed by the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services and an appropriate agency representative.

The Department of Social Work maintains a database of information about field agencies in Western North Carolina with whom we have active contracts. Students who would like to complete placements in agencies not already in the database should contact the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator to propose a new agency, providing as much detail as possible regarding the agency's contact information and potential field instructors.

Criteria for Approval of Field Instructors

The Council on Social Work Education strongly prefers that field instructors working with BSW students have a degree in social work and at least two years of relevant full-time work experience. In addition, field instructors should have sufficient experience in their current positions to be familiar with agency policies and procedures. Field instructors should have the capacity to commit to weekly supervision with the student and regular communication with the faculty liaison.

If the field instructor and the student have a pre-existing professional or personal relationship, this information must be shared with the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator in writing before the placement is approved.

Supplemental Supervision Provided by the Department

In rare cases, a field agency may meet all of the above criteria and be able to provide excellent learning opportunities for students, but may not have a field instructor available with a degree in social work. In these cases, a field instructor may be identified with a degree in a related field and an appropriate amount of relevant experience, and the Department of Social Work will take responsibility for providing additional supervision to students to reinforce the social work perspective. Supervision will be provided by a faculty member with an MSW, and may be provided in an individual or group format. Supplemental supervision plans will be approved by the BSW Program Director and the Director of Field Education. Please see Appendix F, Sample Supplemental Supervision Form, for additional detail.

Payment for Field Placements

WCU and the Department of Social Work allow, but do not require, paid field placements for social work students. Please see Appendix D, CSWE Statement on Department of Labor Regulations for Internships, and Appendix E, Statement on Paid Placements, for additional detail regarding paid and unpaid internships.

Employment-Based Placements

Sometimes, students are interested in completing a field placement in an agency where they are already employed. While it is important that field placements offer new and different learning opportunities for students, the Department of Social Work does allow students to

complete placements at their place of employment with approval from the Department. In order for an employment-based placement to be approved, the following criteria must be met:

- The placement must provide appropriate educational experiences that are linked directly to the social work competencies and the appropriate level of practice (i.e., tasks that would normally be assigned to a social worker with the degree the student is working toward.) Generally, this means that some tasks, activities, and projects outside of the student's current scope of work will need to be incorporated into the student's experience.

- A field instructor must be identified who is NOT the student's work supervisor and has no authority over the student's employment status. The field instructor must additionally meet the criteria outlined above.

- The student must have been employed by the agency for long enough to complete any orientation, initial training, or probationary periods required for their position. Generally, this means employment for at least six months by the proposed placement start date, although exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- Students choosing employment-based placements acknowledge that any interruption to their employment may also impact their field experience; students who are terminated from or leave employment are not guaranteed alternative field placements during the same semester or academic year, and may need to complete their field placement at a later date. Decisions regarding next steps and timelines in these situations will be made by the Director of Field Education and the BSW Program Director, in consultation with the student and faculty liaison.

Interested students should complete the Employment-Based Placement Proposal and submit it to the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator by the date specified each semester (by October 15th for January start dates and April 15th for August start dates.) The proposal form includes an outline of how the proposed field placement will meet the social work competencies at the appropriate level of practice, a job description for the student's current position, a resume or CV from the proposed field instructor, and signatures of all involved agency personnel. Proposals will be reviewed by a committee of social work faculty.

Please see Appendix G, Sample Employment-Based Placement Proposal Form, for additional detail.

Credit for Work Experience

Students cannot receive credit or field placement hours for work experience obtained prior to entry into their field placement.

Field Placements Outside of Western North Carolina

Occasionally, students will request approval to complete a field placement which is outside of the region traditionally served by the Department of Social Work (generally defined as Western North Carolina counties within 90 miles of the Cullowhee campus or Asheville instructional site.) Interested students should complete the Distance Learning Field Placement application and submit it to the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator by the due date specified each semester. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of social work faculty.

Distance placements may be approved at the committee's discretion when the placement provides an educational opportunity that is not available in Western North Carolina, and/or the student has articulated a compelling reason to relocate to another region in their application. Approval by the committee will be contingent upon the identification and vetting of an appropriate field agency, a successful interview, and the signing of an Educational Affiliation Agreement between the College of Health and Human Sciences and the identified agency. The committee's decision will be final, and no late applications will be accepted.

All students approved for distance-learning placements will be required to complete at least one interview with an agency within Western North Carolina as a backup plan, in case an appropriate agency cannot be identified or issues arise with vetting and/or putting contracts in place with a new agency.

Please see Appendix H, Sample Distance Placement Application Form, for additional detail.

Disclosure of Physical and Mental Health Concerns

In addition to our responsibilities to BSW students, the Department of Social Work has an ethical obligation to our partner agencies and the clients and communities they serve. Occasionally, a student has a physical or mental health condition that may affect their capacity to work in some social work settings. Examples can include, but are not limited to, physical disabilities, communicable diseases, and past or current mental health concerns or substance use disorders.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Field Education to match students with agencies that allow them to complete the expectations of the field education program without exposing clients, patients, or consumers of the agency to undue risk. Students are required to share any relevant information with the Director of Field Education and BSW Placement Coordinator in writing before scheduling any interviews with potential field agencies. When this information is disclosed, the student, BSW Placement Coordinator, and Director of Field Education will develop a plan for supporting the student in obtaining and completing an appropriate placement. This plan may include collaboration with the BSW Program Director, representatives of the field agency, and, if appropriate, the Office of Accessibility Resources. Accommodations for placements must be discussed and requested through the Office of Accessibility Resources.

Please note that academic accommodations may not be appropriate for field placements, so students who require reasonable accommodations for their placements must request these separately from any academic accommodations. All students must be able to meet the Technical and Professional Standards for Social Work Students (see Appendix C) with or without reasonable accommodations.

Disclosure of Criminal Records

The Department of Social Work requires students with prior convictions (felony or misdemeanor) to inform the Director of Field Education and their academic advisor of such convictions in writing prior to scheduling any interviews with potential field agencies. If an arrest or conviction occurs during a student's time in the BSW program, this information must be provided to the Director of Field Education and the student's assigned advisor in writing within two business days of the incident, or before returning to the field placement, whichever is sooner. When information about an arrest or conviction is shared, the Director of Field Education may also share this information with the Program Director and/or Department Head as needed.

Laws governing work with children and individual agency policies may preclude students with criminal records from working in certain agencies or situations. Each student will be required to complete a comprehensive criminal background check before the end of the semester prior to their first field placement, and the results may be shared with the field agency at the field instructor's request. Students who fail to complete their criminal background check by the specified deadline may face consequences ranging from a delayed start date to dismissal from the BSW program. Please see Appendix A, the College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) Criminal Background Screening Policy for Students, for more information.

Students who fail to inform the Director of Field Education of a prior conviction before scheduling field placement interviews will face disciplinary consequences up to and including termination of the field placement and dismissal from the social work program.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

All social work students receive and sign the CHHS Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy for Students (Appendix B.) This policy allows the Department of Social Work to require a drug screen based on reasonable concerns expressed by any WCU faculty or staff, or field agency personnel. Reasonable concerns include, but are not limited to, observation of a change in behavior, comments or statements relating to use of alcohol or drugs, and observation of alcohol or drug-related paraphernalia in a student's possession. If a student produces a positive drug screen, they may face disciplinary consequences, which could include termination of the field placement and removal from the social work program. Students who wish to contest the results of a drug screen may obtain another screen of the same type at their own expense, within 24 hours of receiving the initial results.

In addition, any criminal charges as a result of drug or alcohol use that occur while a student is in attendance at WCU may result in disciplinary action, including termination of a field placement and removal from the social work program.

Conflicts of Interest

No student may be placed in an agency where they or an immediate family member has been a client or field instructor during the previous five years. Since the Department of Social Work does not obtain specific client information from agencies, it is the responsibility of the student to decline (or not request) a placement based on this requirement. Students who are interested in a field placement where there may be a conflict of interest are required to discuss the specific situation with the Director of Field Education prior to completing an interview with the agency in question. Students who fail to comply with this policy will face disciplinary consequences which could include termination of the field placement and removal from the social work program.

Acceptance of Field Placement

When a student is offered a field placement, and accepts that placement either verbally or in writing, that student has made a commitment to the agency partner to complete their internship as planned. Changes to field placements after acceptance are rare, made only in exceptional circumstances, and must be approved by both the Director of Field Education and the BSW Program Director. A request for such a change must be made in writing to the Director of Field Education and BSW Program Director, and must be approved before the student notifies any agency of their request to change placements. Requests for changes to a field placement after acceptance will not be considered within 45 days of the planned start date.

Professional & General Liability Insurance

All students will be covered by a professional and general liability insurance policy purchased through the College of Health and Human Sciences for each academic year. A certificate of insurance will be provided to students by the Director of Field Education before the first day of each semester; students should share this certificate with their field instructors or agency human resources personnel upon request.

Additional Agency Requirements

Some field agencies require students to complete additional pre-employment procedures, including drug screens, tuberculosis (TB) tests, fingerprinting, and provision of immunization records. Meeting these requirements according to the agency timeline, including any associated fees, is the responsibility of the individual student.

During the Field Placement

The Department of Social Work expects students to have a thorough orientation to their field agency before becoming involved in direct or indirect practice activities. It is also expected that students will be provided with a variety of micro, mezzo, and macro practice activities that

reflect the nine CSWE competencies outlined earlier in this manual. In addition, students should be given workloads that allow for the regular processing of their experiences, both through regular supervision and at other times as appropriate.

Required Paperwork

Students and field instructors will be asked to complete and submit the following forms during the course of the field placement. Deadlines for each will be provided at field orientation.

- Learning Contract and Field Evaluation Form (Part 1 – Learning Contract): This form defines the scope and focus of each student's individual field experience. At the beginning of the field placement, the student and field instructor list the tasks, activities, and projects in which the student will engage, and relate each to the CSWE competencies and behaviors. Students complete this form as a Word document and then submit it through Exxat for approval. *Submitted through Exxat at the end of the third week in field.*
- Learning Contract and Field Evaluation Form (Part 2 – Mid-term Evaluation): Mid-way through the field placement, the student and field instructor complete a mid-term evaluation to rate the student's rate the student's performance at each task listed on the learning contract. *Submitted through Exxat by the Friday before fall/spring break.*
- Learning Contract and Field Evaluation Form (Part 3 – Final Evaluation): At the end of the field placement, the student and field instructor revisit the mid-term evaluation and update the student's scores based on their continued learning and development. *Submitted through Exxat by the last day of classes for the semester.*
- Online Evaluation Survey (students): At the end of the field placement, students will complete an online evaluation of the field education program, including the process for obtaining a field placement, the performance of the Director of Field Education or BSW Placement Coordinator, and the field agency in which the student was placed. This evaluation is in addition to the standard WCU course evaluation. A link to this evaluation will be provided via email from the student's faculty liaison.
- Online Evaluation Survey (field instructors): At the end of the field placement, field instructors will complete an online evaluation of the faculty liaison with whom they worked and will provide feedback about the process for placing students with the agency and communicating with the Department of Social Work. A link to this evaluation will be provided via email from the Director of Field Education.

Performance Standards for Students

In addition to agency policies and procedures, students are expected to adhere to the Department of Social Work's Technical and Professional Standards (Appendix C) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. The complete Code of Ethics can be found at www.socialworkers.org. Violations of the Technical and Professional Standards and/or NASW Code of Ethics can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the BSW program.

Virtual Field Visits

At least once during each semester of a field placement, the faculty liaison will complete a virtual field visit with the student, their field instructor, and other agency personnel as appropriate. The purpose of this visit will be to review the student's progress in achieving the objectives laid out in the learning contract, clarify the student's goals for the remaining portion of the field placement, and trouble-shoot any concerns the student or field instructor may have. Field visits should not be completed during the first or last month of the field placement, but will be scheduled at the convenience of all involved parties during the middle part of each semester.

Requirements for Field Seminar

BSW students are required to participate in a seminar course concurrent with their field placements. Seminars are taught on Fridays in Cullowhee, and field instructors should not expect students to be available during their class time. The primary purpose of the seminar course is to support students in processing and reflecting upon their experiences in field. Assignments will serve as a review of the social work curriculum, with an emphasis on applying classroom knowledge to the agency setting. Each student's faculty liaison also serves as the instructor for their seminar course; students and/or faculty liaisons can provide copies of the course syllabus at the field instructor's request.

Disguise of Confidential Practice Material

When students use case material from their agency (e.g., process recordings, case studies or presentations, meeting minutes, group recordings) for assignments related to their seminar or other courses, they are required to observe confidentiality carefully by changing or removing client names, staff names, or other identifying information that could compromise an individual's identity.

In cases where agencies are regulated by HIPAA, FERPA, or other federal or state regulation of confidential information, field instructors are responsible for providing appropriate training to students.

Disclosure of Student Trainee Status

In accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics, social work students must identify themselves as student trainees to patients/clients either verbally or through the use of nametags, and in signing notes in records/charts and all other documents produced by students for or on behalf of the field agency.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to know and follow agency policies regarding procedures for requesting vacation, time off for illness, or personal days. Students are not guaranteed time off for University breaks and should request this time off through the appropriate channels and well in advance.

Students are expected to arrive at the assigned location of their placement in a timely manner, according to their agreed-upon schedule. Students should work around their class schedule when developing their field schedule, and should neither request time off from a placement in order to complete classwork, nor miss class in order to attend their field placement.

Extended absences (more than 3 consecutive days) must be discussed with the student's faculty liaison. When disruption of the field experience due to repeated or protracted absence is determined to interfere with the student's learning and/or services to clients, a decision regarding the student's continuation in the field placement will be made in accordance with the problem resolution process outlined in this manual.

Possible Injury During Field Placement

Students should note that medical services required due to injuries occurring while performing duties related to field placements are not covered by the University nor, unless stated otherwise, by the field agency. The student's own medical insurance may or may not provide coverage depending on the individual plan. This is in accordance with the Educational Affiliation Agreements signed by the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences and each field agency.

Transportation

Students are responsible for transportation to and from their field agency, and may not count their commute time as hours in placement. Many field placements offer community-based services and require students to use a personal vehicle for home or community visits. Students should inquire during the interview process about any such requirements, including whether or not mileage reimbursements are available.

In some cases, students are asked to drive agency vehicles and/or transport clients in their personal vehicles. Western Carolina University **does not provide** automobile insurance for students in these situations. Agencies are responsible for ensuring that students have a valid driver's license and are covered under any applicable agency policies.

Evaluation and Grading

Students receive grades on a scale of A+ to F for SOCW 486. The basis for the final evaluation of a student's performance in their field placement will be the satisfactory completion of the tasks, activities, and projects outlined in the student's learning contract; the student's ability to meet the expectations and policies outlined in this manual; and assignments completed for seminar classes. For both the mid-term and final evaluations, students will first complete a self-evaluation, which they will submit to their field instructor.

Students should be evaluated based on the degree they are seeking and an understanding of their developmental level; that is, a BSW student in field should be evaluated based on having knowledge, skills, and abilities that are appropriate to a new BSW graduate, not a seasoned

professional. The following chart offers guidelines for how students and faculty should interpret letter grades in the field context.

Grade	Definition	Sample Behaviors
A	A student who earns an A in field has demonstrated exemplary social work knowledge and values and made significant progress towards the development of social work skills at the appropriate level. This student is an ideal representative of the department, University, and social work profession.	• Taking initiative to co-create meaningful learning experiences within the placement setting • Actively seeking out and integrating positive and constructive feedback from agency staff and faculty • Proactively completing all required paperwork, including timesheets, learning contracts, and evaluations, ahead of deadlines and without reminders • Taking initiative to schedule and set an agenda for supervision with agency staff • Proactively requesting support from field instructor and faculty liaison as needed
B	A student who earns a B in field has demonstrated social work knowledge and values and made acceptable progress towards the development of social work skills at the appropriate level. This student represents the department and University professionally in the community.	• Following instructions from field instructor and other agency staff and successfully completing assigned tasks • Being receptive to and learning from positive and constructive feedback from agency staff and faculty • Regularly submitting time sheets, learning contracts, and evaluations on time • Attending and being well prepared for supervision with field instructor and class meetings with faculty liaison
C	A student who earns a C in field has demonstrated social work knowledge, values, and skills at a minimally acceptable level. They have completed the requirements of the field placement.	• Following most instructions from field instructor and other agency staff and successfully completing most assigned tasks • Accepting positive and constructive feedback from agency staff and faculty • Submitting time sheets, learning contracts, and evaluations, with some inconsistency or late submissions • Attending supervision with field instructor and class meetings with faculty liaison
D/F	A student who earns a grade of D or F has not passed their field placement.	• Any behavior that contradicts the Code of Ethics and/or the Technical and Professional Standards • Failure to complete the required number of hours • Failure to submit required paperwork, including learning contracts, timesheets, and evaluations

Note that for undergraduate students, + and – designations can be used along with letter grades to indicate performance that falls between two of the letter grades described above. These designations are not used in the graduate school.

Final grades for the field placement are assigned by the faculty liaison based upon

- Adherence to the technical and professional standards;

- Assignments completed in class, including field logs, class participation, and other assignments as outlined in the relevant syllabus; AND
- Information gathered from the student and field instructor throughout the placement, including ratings and comments included in the mid-term and final evaluations, information obtained during the field visit, and the student's self-reflection.

Resolution of Problems and Concerns

While most field placements are completed to the satisfaction of the student, agency, and the Department of Social Work, occasional problems do arise that need to be addressed by these three parties. Problems tend to fall into one of the three following categories: **situational**, **environmental,** or **performance-related**. Each is addressed below.

Steps for Resolving Situational Problems:

- Situational problems can include illness, personal crisis, or other unexpected occurrences which would result in a student's prolonged absence from or inability to complete their field placement.
- If an unexpected situation arises that will compromise the student's attendance or ability to complete their field placement, the student is expected to notify their field instructor and faculty liaison as soon as possible.
- The student, field instructor, and faculty liaison will negotiate a plan for resolving the situation, taking into account the timing of the occurrence, the student's performance to that point in time, and other relevant factors.
- The faculty liaison will document the plan using the Student Concern Form and submit the completed form to the Director of Field Education.

Steps for Resolving Environmental Problems:

- Environmental problems can include a lack of appropriate learning opportunities, a lack of sufficient supervision, or an inappropriate work or learning environment at the field agency, including instances of sexual or other harassment by agency staff or clients.
- If a student feels that they are experiencing an environmental problem within their field agency, they should immediately inform their faculty liaison. The faculty liaison is required by WCU policy to report allegations of discrimination or harassment based on a protected class, and any allegations of sexual misconduct, to the WCU Title IX Coordinator, who will be consulted prior to any conversations with the field instructor.
- The faculty liaison will be responsible for mediating conversations between the student and the field instructor with the aim of resolving the environmental problem. The faculty liaison will document attempts to resolve the problem in Prism and inform the Director of Field Education of all efforts made.
- If the problem persists, or is so severe in nature as to prevent the student from obtaining an appropriate learning experience from their field placement, the student, faculty liaison, and the student's academic advisor and/or Program Director will meet with the Director of Field Education to determine next steps. This meeting, and the plan for moving forward, will be documented using the Student Concern Form.

Steps for Resolving Performance-Related Problems:

- Performance-related problems arise when a student is unable or unwilling to meet the expectations of the field agency and/or Department of Social Work. These could include poor professional behavior, lack of ability or low motivation to learn identified social work skills, disrespect for co-workers or clients, actions that jeopardize clients or violate agency policy, or violations of the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Field instructors should follow agency policies regarding verbal and/or written warnings to address student behavior, and should additionally inform the faculty liaison of the concerns and steps taken to address them. When this communication occurs, either in writing, in person, or over the phone, the faculty liaison will document it using the Student Concern Form and submit the completed form to the Director of Field Education.
- If the agency is willing to continue the student's field experience, the faculty liaison, field instructor, and student will negotiate a plan for addressing and correcting the identified problems. This meeting, and the plan for moving forward, will be documented using the Student Concern Form. This plan should include:
    - Specific behaviors that need to be demonstrated
    - Goals to be reached and indicators of progress toward these goals
    - Criteria for assessment of progress
    - Target dates by which goals should be met.
- If problems persist, or if the field instructor and agency make the decision to dismiss the student from their field placement, the student will receive an F for both the field placement and the field seminar. The student may not change agencies due to performance-related problems.
- Depending on the nature of the problem, the Director of Field Education may request that the student's case be reviewed by a committee of social work faculty. This committee will recommend disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal from the social work program.
- A student who is not successful in completing their field placement may be required to re-apply to the social work program at the discretion of the Graduate Program Director. A student who has two unsuccessful field placements, for whatever reason, will not be allowed to re-enroll in the field placement or field seminar courses and will be dismissed from the BSW program.

Tips for General Problem-Solving in Field Placements:

- *Identify problems early*. Discuss concerns of any type with the individuals involved and work towards resolving problems before they increase in size or scope.
- *Keep supervision notes*. Students and field instructors can benefit from having written records of issues or concerns discussed in weekly supervision meetings.
- *Communicate clearly*. Written and verbal communication should be professional, thoughtful, and strengths-based.

- *Keep everyone in the loop*. The student, field instructor, and faculty liaison should all be aware of any concerns and attempts to address concerns at all times.
- *Make the evaluation process transparent*. While problems should be documented on mid-term and final evaluations, the evaluation should not be the student's first notification of the problem.
- *Use the Director of Field Education for consultation, reflection, and advice*. Students, field instructors, and faculty liaisons all have access to the Director of Field Education as a problem-solving resource at all times.

Acknowledgement of These Policies

In order to begin the field placement process, students must read and agree to the policies contained in this manual, and give permission for the Director of Field Education to share relevant information with potential field agencies. Students should print and sign the final two pages of this manual (Appendix J, Student Information Release Form, and Appendix K, Policy Acknowledgment Form) and upload them to their student profile in Prism. Real signatures are required for these documents; students can print and sign the forms or use an approved digital signature. Typed names will not be accepted as signatures.

Appendix A: Criminal Background Screening Policy for Students

Policy Statement

Western Carolina University and the College of Health and Human Sciences (College) is committed to the safety of the campus community and the agencies, clients, and patients we serve. All students who are formally accepted into undergraduate or graduate programs that require clinical internships* in the College of Health and Human Sciences must participate in a criminal background screening prior to placement in the clinical internship. The individual degree program(s) will determine initial and subsequent criminal background screening requirements and deadlines. Students who do not comply with the program requirements may delay their clinical placement, delay their progression within the program, and/or may be dismissed from the program.

*Exceptions to this Policy (do not require clinical internships):

Environmental Health
Online EMC program
Undergraduate Communication Sciences and Disorders
Undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics

Procedures:

1. Initial criminal background check (CBC) will be performed by a third-party vendor under contract with UNC/WCU/College of Health and Human Sciences (e.g., Certiphi), with the results of the Investigation sent to the College of Health and Human Sciences Dean's Office for review and judgment in accordance with applicable College policies and procedures.

2. All initial, additional and subsequent required criminal background screenings will be at the student's expense.

3. The program designee will submit student names and the deadline for when the CBC must be completed to the Dean's Administrative Assistant (DAA). The DAA in the College of Health and Human Sciences will monitor completion of the CBC and report incomplete screenings to the appropriate Program Designee prior to clinical placement. If CBC information is not available at a designated time, the student's matriculation through the program may be negatively impacted as clinical sites can make the ultimate decision on pass vs. fail of a CBC; therefore; clinical placement is not assured.

4. If a CBC indicates a criminal history that could impact the student's ability to be placed in a clinical setting, progress in the specific program, and/or successfully complete the specific program, the DAA will notify the College Dean, the College Associate Dean, and Program Designee of the students' identity. The Program Designee will then notify the student that the CBC Review Committee will be reviewing his/her case. The Associate Dean will assemble the CBC Review Committee; an ad hoc subcommittee of the College

Clinical Education Committee composed of five members including the Program Designee and the College Associate Dean who will serve as ex officio (non-voting) chair of this committee.

5. At the request of either the student or the CBC Review Committee, the student may present additional information to the CBC Review Committee. Additional information must be made available to the College Associate Dean within 5 calendar days following notification to the student that the CBC Review Committee will be reviewing the case.

6. Once all information is available, the CBC Review Committee will make a recommendation based on criteria listed in Appendix A, and any materials presented by the student. The College Associate Dean will communicate the committee's recommendation to the student, the Program Designee and the College Dean.

7. The College Dean shall have access to all information regarding the student, including but not limited to all information made available to the CBC Review Committee. In addition, the College Dean may request new information from the student, which must be presented within 5 calendar days of the request. The College Dean will either accept the recommendation of the CBC Review Committee or make an alternative decision. The Dean's office will notify the appropriate Program Designee and the student of the final decision.

Note: Confidentiality of Records

Criminal background check records are confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than (1) faculty/staff involved in the review as indicated above, including the CBC Review Committee membership, and (2) with the agencies or hospitals that request them pursuant to applicable law and policy.

Individual Courses

On occasion students who take particular courses, but are not yet accepted into any programs within the College, are required to submit a CBC to participate in an "observation activity" at a particular agency that requires background screening. In these cases the results will be submitted to the agency/hospital setting for review as appropriate. Those students who are unable to participate in the activity due to activity discovered on their CBC will be required to withdraw from the course or receive a failing grade.

The CBC Review Committee will review the student's CBC for the following felonies. A conviction or plea of guilty or no contest to any of the felonies noted below may disqualify the student from participating in a clinical learning experience in the College. Additionally, this may preclude a student from being admitted or completing an academic program within the College.

a. Homicide

b. Kidnapping and abduction
c. Assaults with weapons or inflicting serious injury
d. Rape or other sex offense
e. Abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, disabled adults or elder adults

Other types of felony or misdemeanor convictions, including sale, possession, distribution or transfer of controlled substances, robbery or larceny, program specific offense as supplied by the program to the College Dean, or questionable criminal histories will be reviewed by the CBC Committee in accordance with the following criteria:

a. Would the student pose a threat to the health and safety of the university community and any patient or client?
b. Discipline expectations and requirements (e.g. program-specific offenses).
c. Discipline received from external sources (e.g. courts, administrative agencies, etc.)

Appendix B: Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy for Students

I. University Policy Statement

Western Carolina University (the "University") is committed to maintaining a drug-free workplace and academic environment in compliance with the federal Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and in accordance with University Policy #38, Illegal Drugs, and University of North Carolina Policy 1300.1, Illegal Drugs. Further, the University is committed to provide campus experiences for its students that are safe, legal, and responsible, in accordance with University Policy #81, General Campus Policy for Alcoholic Beverages, and the University Code of Student Conduct.

II. University Interests

The University recognizes its responsibility to provide for a safe learning environment for University students and personnel, as well as a safe clinical/internship setting for patients and employees of affiliated agencies. The use of alcohol and/or drugs, lawfully prescribed or otherwise, which interfere with the student's judgment or motor coordination poses an unacceptable risk to the aforementioned. For the foregoing reasons, the College has adopted this policy to further the following interests of the University:

1. To prevent the possession, consumption or distribution of illegal drugs, which violates applicable federal and state law, University Policy #38 and/or the University Code of Student Conduct and substantially adversely impacts the efficacy and integrity of the Programs;

2. To promote the safe, legal, and responsible purchase, consumption or possession of alcohol, in accordance with University Policy #81, General Campus Policy for Alcoholic Beverages;

3. To cooperate with affiliated agencies by ensuring, to the extent possible, that students comply with agency policies, rules, and regulations pertaining to the placement of students in clinical/internship experiences, including agency alcohol and drug testing policies;

III. Definitions

1. Drug testing means the scientific analysis of urine, blood, breath, saliva, hair, tissue, and other specimens of the human body for the purpose of detecting an illegal drug or alcohol.

a. Pre-placement drug testing means drug testing conducted prior to a student engaging in a learning experience at an affiliated agency if the agency requests such testing.

b. Reasonable suspicion drug testing means drug testing conducted on a student because individualized and objective evidence exists to support the conclusion that a student (1) has engaged in the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs in violation of applicable policies, laws, and regulations; or (2) appears to be impaired. Facts that could

give rise to reasonable suspicion include, without limitation: observed possession or use of illegal drugs or alcohol; the odor of alcohol or drugs; impaired behavior such as slurred speech; decreased motor coordination; difficulty in maintaining balance; marked changes in personality or academic performance or behavior; reports of observed drug or alcohol use; an arrest or conviction for a drug or alcohol related offense; positive pre-placement or other drug tests; or newly discovered evidence of drug test tampering.

c. Repeat drug testing means a drug test that is repeated following a positive test. This test will be conducted within 5 days following notification of a positive test and will test the broadest spectrum of drugs.

d. Random drug testing means drug testing where employees or students of affiliated agencies are tested randomly at the discretion of the agency without reasonable suspicion.

2. “Impaired” means that a person’s mental or physical capabilities are reduced below their normal levels (with or without any reasonable accommodation for disability). An impaired student, by virtue of his/her use of alcohol, illegal or legal drugs, exhibits deteriorated motor/psychomotor function, reduced conceptual/integrative/synthetic thought processes, and/or diminished judgment and attentiveness compared with previous observations of the student’s conduct and performance. For purposes of this policy, the term impaired shall also mean addiction and/or physical or mental dependence upon alcohol, illegal, or legal drugs.

3. “Illegal drug” means (1) any drug or substance whose use, possession, and manufacture are regulated by the Commission for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services pursuant to Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes (the “Controlled Substances Act”); or (2) a drug whose use is strictly controlled by a physician’s prescription or other order and such use is inconsistent with the prescription or other order.

4. “Legal drug” means any drug or substance that is available without a prescription and/or any drug or substance that has been prescribed by a physician.

5. “Program” means all degree granting programs in the CHHS.

6. Each program will have one or more “Program Designees” that will oversee student affairs issues.

IV. College Procedural Requirements

A. Prohibited Conduct and Duty to Notify of Charges/Convictions

1. All conduct specified in University Policy 38 Illegal Drugs and Illegal Use or Abuse of Alcohol (Policy 38) and University Policy 81 Alcoholic Beverages (Policy 81) is expressly prohibited. The

terms of Policy 38 and Policy 81 shall be made a part of this policy. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit or otherwise constrain the terms of Policy 38 or Policy 81.

2. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit or constrain the terms of any agency drug testing policy or scheme.

3. Under no circumstance should a student participate in Program courses or educational experiences while he/she is impaired.

4. Under no circumstance should a student manufacture, consume, possess, sell or distribute illegal drugs or alcohol in violation of applicable federal and state laws and/or applicable Program and University policies, including the University Code of Student Conduct.

5. Students have an affirmative duty under this policy to report any criminal charges, convictions or plea agreements that are related to the manufacture, use, possession, sale or distribution of an illegal drug, or to the purchase, consumption or possession of an alcoholic beverage. Such violations, if substantiated, will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Program, in accordance with established Program disciplinary policies and procedures. Such violations will also result in a referral to the Department of Student Community Ethics ("DSCE") for investigation and University discipline if warranted.

6. A student who violates any provision of this Section IV.A will be deemed to be unable to meet the essential functions and technical standards of their Program and will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Program.

7. A student should be aware that a positive drug test may impede his/her ability to part-take in clinical/internship experiences and therefore may impede his/her ability to progress in a Program.

B. Agreement to Submit to Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. A student entering or progressing in a Program that requires a drug test(s) as a condition of enrollment must submit to the said drug testing as required by the Program.

2. A student participating in a Program must agree to submit to pre-placement drug testing; reasonable suspicion drug testing when circumstances warrant such testing; and/or repeat drug testing as required by the Program.

3. All students shall sign an acknowledgment and consent form (Attachment A) that evidences the student's consent to: (a) comply with University, College, and Program policies pertaining to alcohol and illegal drugs; (b) comply with all policies and regulations of affiliated agencies pertaining to alcohol and illegal drugs; (c) submit to all drug testing as described in this policy; and (d) authorize the disclosure of drug testing results to the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) or his/her designee. Refusal to sign the acknowledgment and consent

form shall be grounds for non-placement in clinical/internship experiences and subsequent dismissal from the Program.

C. Actions Following Positive Drug Tests

1. Upon receipt of a positive drug test, the Dean of College of CHHS or his/her designee shall inform the Program Designee of the positive drug test, the student who received the positive test, as well as any other information needed to evaluate the positive drug test. The Program Designee shall notify the student in writing of the result of the drug test; the option to repeat the drug test one time; as well as any disciplinary action imposed. The repeat drug test shall be conducted by a mutually agreed upon qualified vendor and all costs of the repeat test shall be borne by the student. If a student chooses to submit to a repeat drug test, any appeal time-line designed in this policy shall be stayed until the Program Designee notifies the student of the result of the repeat drug test. A student who receives a positive drug test, or a positive repeat drug test, will be subject to disciplinary action.

2. Disciplinary action at the Program level for a positive drug test will be decided by a designated group of Program faculty and may include dismissal from the Program. Program level disciplinary action may be appealed pursuant to Section D of this policy.

3. A positive drug tests will also be referred to Department of Student Community Ethics (DSCE) for investigation pursuant to the Western Carolina University Student Code of Conduct (Code).

4. Students that are dismissed from the University are dismissed from the Program.

5. Any attempt to tamper with, contaminate or switch a sample during any drug test will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Program and will be referred to the DSCE for investigation pursuant to the Code.

6. If a student is permitted to continue in the Program following a positive drug test result, the agency that required the test may handle the issue according to its policy. In the event that the agency refuses to permit the student to continue with the agency an alternative placement will be sought; however, if placement cannot be found the student may not be able to progress through the program, depending on the program's requirements.

D. Program Appeal

1. A student who wishes to appeal the decision of the Program have the option to do so in writing to the Dean of CHHS within five (5) days of notification as specified in Section C.1.

2. The Dean may request in writing supportive information from the student, which must be provided within 5 days of the Dean's request.

3. The Dean will decide on the case within five (5) days of receiving all requested information.

4. The Dean may base his/her decision on any or all information provided and/or learned through investigation conducted him/her self or others.

5. In order to maintain an appeal, a person must remain a student in good standing of the university. All appeal rights terminate with the loss of student status.

E. Pre-Placement Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. Pre-placement drug testing will be coordinated through students' Program and will be conducted by a qualified vendor or as determined by the affiliated agency. The cost of all drug testing shall be borne by the student, unless it is otherwise provided by the affiliated agency. Any positive pre-placement drug test shall be evaluated pursuant to this policy.

2. If a student is permitted to continue in the Program following a positive pre-placement drug test result, the agency that required the test will handle the issue according to its policy. In the event that the agency refuses to permit the student to work with the agency an alternative placement will be sought; however, if placement cannot be found the student may not be able to progress through the program, depending on the program's requirements.

F. Reasonable Suspicion Drug and Alcohol Testing

1. Reasonable suspicion drug testing may be conducted when individualized and objective evidence exists to support the reasonable suspicion that a student (1) has engaged in the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs in violation of applicable policies, laws, and regulations; or (2) appears to be impaired.

2. Evidence of a student's use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs or impairment may be provided by any individual, including employees of affiliated agencies.

3. The determination of whether or not reasonable suspicion testing is warranted shall be made by an agency, or by the Program Designee and Dean of CHHS.

4. Reasonable suspicion drug testing will be coordinated through the student's Program Designee, and the cost of drug testing shall be borne by the student.

V. Confidentiality

All drug testing results shall be used, maintained, and disclosed by the College and/or University only as permitted by and in strict compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to confidential and protected health information and student records.

Appendix C: Technical and Professional Standards for Social Work Students

The technical standards outlined below are required for admission, retention, and graduation from the Department of Social Work at Western Carolina University. These standards describe the physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral requirements of social work students. They are designed to provide reasonable assurance that students can participate fully in all aspects of coursework and the field practicum, with or without accommodation, resulting in successful graduation from the program.

1. Observation: Students must be able to:
    - Accurately observe clients to effectively assess their situations.
    - Have functional use of the senses and sufficient motor capability to carry out the necessary assessment activities.
2. Communication: Students must be able to:
    - Communicate effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals, and exemplify a willingness and ability to listen to others.
    - Demonstrate effective communication in oral presentations, written assignments, small group settings, and through electronic means.
    - Perceive and interpret nonverbal communication.
    - Use spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program.
    - Comprehend reading assignments and search and evaluate the literature.
    - Demonstrate competency in writing skills.
3. Sensory and Motor Functions: Students must have sufficient sensory and motor abilities to:
    - Attend class and complete the required number of hours during their field practicum.
    - Maintain consciousness and equilibrium and have the physical strength and stamina to perform satisfactorily in the classroom and in social work agency settings.
4. Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Functions: Students must have the ability to:
    - Think critically, analyze and interpret objective and subjective data, and apply effective problem solving skills. These skills allow students to make proper assessments, use sound judgment, appropriately prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and report client outcomes.
    - Demonstrate skills of recall using long and short term memory, inferential reasoning, application of knowledge, and evaluation of predicted outcomes at appropriate levels in the program.
5. Self-Awareness: Students must exhibit:
    - Knowledge and openness to learning how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships.
    - Willingness to examine and change their behavior when appropriate and work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as with those in authority.
6. Emotional and Mental Stability: Students must demonstrate the ability to:
    - Deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others.

- Effectively use help for medical or emotional problems that interfere with academic and clinical performance.

Professional Performance Standards

The Department of Social Work recognizes that preparation for professional practice requires more than scholastic achievement. The program expects students to exhibit behaviors that are consistent with professional performance. Such behavior is expected not only in the classroom but throughout the University and the larger community. Some specific examples of professional performance standards are outlined below.

Students must demonstrate:

- A commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession, as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The essential values of social work including the respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her right to a just share of society's resources (social justice).
- Behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, professional ethical standards, and societal laws in classroom, field, and community.
- Responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and criticism in a positive manner.
- A commitment to serve in an appropriate manner all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious affiliation (or lack of), gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or value system.

Appendix D: CSWE Statement on Department of Labor Regulations for Internships

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Internships, Department of Labor Regulations, and Social Work Field Education: Setting the Record Straight February 25, 2014

In 2010 the U.S. Department of Labor established regulations regarding internship programs in relation to the Fair Labor Standards Act (http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf)

Over the last several months, interns at several for-profit companies (Fox Searchlight Pictures, Harper's Bazaar, Warner Music Group, and Atlantic Records, to name a few) have filed suit for unfair labor practices. A few courts have decided that the companies were out of compliance with Department of Labor regulations and needed to pay interns for their work.

CSWE is aware that this has raised concern among some social work programs. A number of programs have heard from field site supervisors (or agency human relations personnel) that, based on these cases, they cannot afford to allow social work interns because they would be required by law to pay them. Field education, as articulated in the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, is clearly within the guidelines of the Department of Labor regulations for an educational internship and does not require payment.

Social work field education meets the following stipulations:

- Field education is associated with an academic program at an accredited institution of higher learning.
- Field education is structured around a classroom or academic experience, with articulated learning objectives/competencies.
- The college or university exercises oversight over the internship program and provides educational credit.
- The field education experience is supervised by social work program personnel; there is an agreement between the program and the field site as well as a learning contract between the student and the site.
- The Social Work Field Education program is meant to be solely educational and provide training to prepare the professional social worker. It is not meant to supplant or replace existing employees of social work within the field education program site.
- The field placement is meant to provide an educational and training opportunity to the social worker and is not meant to provide any immediate advantage to the employer or the field site.

Please note that the six criteria included in the DOL regulations must be well documented and defensible for unpaid internship positions. CSWE encourages all field coordinators and program directors to fully understand the Department of Labor fact sheet and share this information liberally with students and field site personnel.

Appendix E: Statement on Paid Placements

Field education is known as "the signature pedagogy of social work education." The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) recognizes the value of experiential, real-world learning for social work students, and requires that all social work students enrolled in BSW and MSW programs nationwide complete field placements as part of their degree programs.

We recognize that there are many barriers to obtaining a BSW or MSW degree, including the cost of tuition and fees, the time required for classroom-based learning, and the time required for field placements. WCU supports many strategies for reducing these barriers, including the NC Promise tuition reductions, scholarships and assistantships, and payment for field placements when available and appropriate.

There are three ways in which students can be paid for field placements. Each is outlined below. Payment for field placements is not guaranteed, and students in need of financial support for their social work education are encouraged to explore resources available through the WCU Financial Aid Office.

- **Employment-Based Field Placements.** If a social work student is already employed by an agency that provides social work services, they may be able to use all or part of their employment as an internship. Students interested in exploring this option should review the policy and proposal form in the BSW or MSW Field Manual and discuss their plans with the Director of Field Education or BSW Field Coordinator.

- **Agency-Funded Paid Internships.** Sometimes, agencies are able to provide hourly payment or stipends directly to student interns. These payments are often grant-funded and may vary in amount and availability from year to year. Students are encouraged to ask about potential payment when they interview with field agencies. However, the Department recognizes that many agencies that offer valuable learning experiences for social work students do not have the financial resources to pay interns.

- **Department-Funded Educational Stipends.** The Department of Social Work actively seeks grant-funded opportunities to provide educational stipends for social work interns. Current examples of these stipends include the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training stipend program ($10,000/year for Specialization students) and the Community Care stipend program ($5,000/semester for students at all levels.) These stipends are generally tied to specific areas of practice, elective courses, and/or internship location requirements as outlined by the funding sources. Funds for these stipends are not guaranteed from year to year, and their availability should not be assumed. Students should inquire about these opportunities during their SOCW 396 course (BSW) or field advising meeting (MSW).

While paid placements can be a valuable source of financial support for social work students, we also reiterate that field education should be centered around learning, not labor. As educational experiences, field placements offer students the opportunity to apply classroom-based learning in real-world settings while working under the licenses or credentials of experienced professionals. The Department of Social Work is committed to increasing access to social work education for interested and qualified students in Western North Carolina, and views payment for field placements as one, but certainly not the only, valuable tool for doing so. Please email Katy Allen, Director of Field Education, at cmallen@wcu.edu with questions or for more information.

Appendix F: Sample Supplemental Supervision Form

Note: this form is provided as a sample. The Director of Field Education will provide a completed form to students for their signatures upon approval of a supplemental supervision plan.

Student Name: Semester/Year:

Proposed Field Instructor: Agency:

If a field agency is able to provide excellent learning opportunities for students, but does not have a field instructor available with a degree in social work, a field instructor may be identified with a degree in a related field and an appropriate amount of relevant experience, and the Department of Social Work will take responsibility for providing additional supervision to students to reinforce the social work perspective. Supervision will be provided by a faculty member with an MSW, and may be provided in an individual or group format. Supplemental supervision plans will be approved by the BSW Program Director and the Director of Field Education.

The following criteria must be met in order to approve placement of a student with a Field Instructor who does not have the appropriate level degree in social work:

☐ A similar placement with a field instructor who does have a degree in social work is not available to the student.
☐ The agency's mission, vision, and values are consistent with social work ethics.
☐ The placement will allow the student to gain experience in all nine social work competencies.
☐ The proposed field instructor has a degree in a related field and two years of relevant post-degree experience. Degree:
☐ The proposed field instructor is aware of the social work competencies and Code of Ethics and agrees to support the student in learning through this framework to the extent of their ability.

Supplemental supervision will be provided for one hour weekly, beginning no later than the second week of the semester, and excluding scheduled University breaks. Meetings will be scheduled based on the availability of the faculty supervisor and the participating students. Students should plan to attend each week of the semester, and should communicate with their faculty supervisor if they need to miss a meeting. Faculty supervisors may ask students to make up missed meetings or complete alternate assignments at their discretion.

Signatures below indicate agreement with the policy outlined above and the plan for providing additional supervision to this student.

Appendix G: Sample Employment-Based Placement Proposal Form

Note: this form is provided as a sample. Students interested in proposing an employment-based field placement should speak with the Director of Field Education.

Before completing this application, please review the policy on employment-based field placements in the BSW/MSW Field Manual. This application should be submitted via email to the Director of Field Education, and will be reviewed by a faculty committee. Any changes to this proposal must be submitted in writing as an addendum.

Student Information

Name:
Date of submission:
Address:
Phone:
Catamount email address:
Level of proposed placement:
☐ BSW ☐ MSW-Foundation ☐ MSW-Specialization ☐ Advanced Standing

Agency Information

Name of agency:
Address of agency:
Program administrator/director
Name:
Phone number:
Email address:

Student's Current Employment Information

Job title:
Hours worked per week:
Start date in current position:
Current work supervisor
Name:
Job title:
Phone number:
Email address:

Current roles and responsibilities (in a bulleted list): *Or, attach your current job description to this application.*

Proposed Field Placement Overview

Program or area of work where placement would take place:

Proposed Field Instructor *(Note: this must be a different person from the employment supervisor listed above.)*

Name:
Job title:
Credentials:
Phone number:
Email address:

Please attached your proposed field instructor's resume or CV to this application.

Summary of proposed roles and responsibilities (in a bulleted list):

How does your proposed placement differ from your current employment?

How will you navigate any role confusion or conflicts of interest that may arise from your dual status as both an employee and an intern at your agency?

Proposed Tasks and Alignment with Social Work Competencies

In order to qualify as field hours, employee tasks must be linked directly to the social work competencies and the appropriate level of practice (ie, tasks that would normally be assigned to a social worker with the degree the student is working toward.) Generally, this means that some tasks, activities, and projects outside of the student's current scope of work will need to be incorporated into the student's experience.

Below, list sample tasks, activities, and projects that align with each of the CSWE competencies for social work students. Indicate whether each is a part of your existing role or will constitute new and different learning in the placement setting. Depending on the setting, some competencies may already be met through the student's existing role, while others will need intentional focus during the field placement period.

Competency	Relevant Tasks, Activities, or Projects from Existing Role	Placement-Specific Tasks, Activities, or Projects
1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior		
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice		
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice		
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice		
5. Engage in policy practice		
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities		

7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities		
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities		
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities		

Parties to Agreement (all agency personnel should sign this application before submission)

By signing here, I confirm that by the time my placement begins, I will have completed any orientation, training, or probationary periods required by my employment. I also acknowledge that any interruption to my employment with this agency may impact my field experience, and that students who are terminated from or leave employment while completing an employment-based placement are not guaranteed alternative field placements during the same semester or academic year.

Student: **Date Signed:**

By signing here, we confirm our support for the proposed field education experience described above, and agree to support the student in achieving their learning goals during the field placement period.

Employment Supervisor: **Date Signed:**

Proposed Field Instructor: **Date Signed:**

Program Administrator/Director: **Date Signed:**
(if different from above)

UPON APPROVAL BY THE FACULTY COMMITTEE

Director of Field Education: **Date Signed:**

Appendix H: Sample Distance Placement Application

Note: this form is provided as a sample. Students interested in proposing a field placement outside of Western North Carolina should speak with the Director of Field Education prior to completing this form.

Before completing this application, please review the policy on Distance Placements in the BSW/MSW Field Manual. This application should be submitted via email to the Director of Field Education, and will be reviewed by a faculty committee. Any changes to this proposal must be submitted in writing as an addendum.

Student Information

Name:
Date of submission:
Current Address:
Home Address (if different from above):
Phone number:
Catamount Email Address:
Level of proposed placement:
☐ BSW ☐ MSW-Foundation ☐ MSW-Specialization ☐ Advanced Standing

Proposed Field Placement

Location of proposed placement:
Agency or type of agency:
Proposed Field Instructor (if known)
Name:
Job title:
Credentials:
Phone number:
Email address:

Describe your rationale for completing a field placement located outside of Western North Carolina.

Describe your plan for obtaining a field placement in the location you propose.

Parties to Agreement

By signing below, I acknowledge that if I am approved for a Distance Placement:

- I am responsible for identifying and making contact with an appropriate agency in my proposed location.
- All agencies and Field Instructors must be approved by the Director of Field Education, and a contract must be signed between the agency and the College of Health and Human Sciences before my placement can begin.
- I am expected to attend seminar meetings using synchronous video technology.
- I am responsible for having and maintaining a computer, web camera, and all software required to participate actively in seminar meetings. I may be required to attend additional orientation or training events related to the use of this software.

Student: Date Signed:
Advisor: Date Signed:

Appendix I: Sample Student Concern Form

Please use this form to document WCU Department of Social Work student field placement performance issues and coordinate on a performance improvement plan with the student, their Faculty Liaison, and the Director of Field Education. **Visit our resource page on Prism** to access the department's policy manuals and other relevant materials.

DOCUMENTATION OF CONCERN(S) & COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENT

Student:	**Agency:**
Field Instructor:	**WCU Faculty Liaison:**
Other Involved Staff:	**Date of Documentation:**

Describe area(s) of concern within student performance/behavior (e.g. repeated lateness, inappropriate interactions or communication with clients or staff, inappropriate use of technology, violation of agency policies, etc.).

Below are WCU Department of Social Work's technical and professional standards for students. Please review and note if the student is not meeting one or more of these standards within their field placement.

1. Observation: Students must be able to:
   - Accurately observe clients to effectively assess their situations.
   - Have functional use of the senses and sufficient motor capability to carry out the necessary assessment activities.

2. Communication: Students must be able to:
   - Communicate effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients and other professionals, and exemplify a willingness and ability to listen to others.
   - Demonstrate effective communication in oral presentations, written assignments, small group settings, and through electronic means.
   - Perceive and interpret nonverbal communication.
   - Use spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program.
   - Comprehend reading assignments and search and evaluate the literature.
   - Demonstrate competency in writing skills.

3. Sensory and Motor Functions: Students must have sufficient sensory and motor abilities to:

- Attend class and complete the required number of hours during their field practicum.
- Maintain consciousness and equilibrium and have the physical strength and stamina to perform satisfactorily in the classroom and in social work agency settings.

4. Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Functions: Students must have the ability to:
   - Think critically, analyze and interpret objective and subjective data, and apply effective problem solving skills. These skills allow students to make proper assessments, use sound judgment, appropriately prioritize therapeutic interventions, and measure and report client outcomes.
   - Demonstrate skills of recall using long and short term memory, inferential reasoning, application of knowledge, and evaluation of predicted outcomes at appropriate levels in the program.

5. Self-Awareness: Students must exhibit:
   - Knowledge and openness to learning how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships.
   - Willingness to examine and change their behavior when appropriate and work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as with those in authority.

6. Emotional and Mental Stability: Students must demonstrate the ability to:
   - Deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms effectively by using appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others.

Students must demonstrate:
- A commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession, as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The essential values of social work including the respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her right to a just share of society's resources (social justice).
- Behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, professional ethical standards, and societal laws in classroom, field, and community.
- Responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and criticism in a positive manner.
- A commitment to serve in an appropriate manner all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious affiliation (or lack of), gender, disability, sexual orientation and/or value system.

Describe which, if any, of the above technical and professional standards the student is not currently meeting within their field placement, and any associated behaviors the student has displayed.

How has agency staff has attempted to discuss or resolve these areas of concern with the student? Please include names of staff and dates whenever possible.

What change(s) to student performance or behavior would demonstrate adequate improvement?
Note: If student conduct necessitates immediate dismissal from field placement, please contact the student's WCU Faculty Liaison to discuss details of the dismissal process.

The student's WCU Faculty Liaison or the WCU Director of Field Education will reach out to you as soon as possible to discuss your concerns. Please use this box to note any additional questions or concerns:

Appendix J: Student Information Release Authorization

DIRECTIONS: In compliance with FERPA, and the University's Policy on Access to Student Education Records www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-services/registrars-office/transcripts/ferpa.aspx, the University is prohibited from providing certain information from your student records to a third party, including academic records, test scores, program status, and license application information.

In order for the College of Health and Human Sciences to release information for the purpose of arranging clinical experiences, internships, or field placements, you must complete the following authorization form.

This release authorization is intended for the release of information maintained by the:

College of Health and Human Sciences │3971 Little Savannah Road│ Cullowhee, NC 28723

SECTION A: Student Information	
Name (Last, First, Middle Initial)	Student ID Number

SECTION B: Third-Party Receiving Information

- Prospective placement sites for clinical experiences, internships, or field placements;
- Relevant licensing board(s); and/or
- Other entities as specified below.

SECTION C: Purpose

- Arrangement of clinical experiences, internships, or field placements; and/or
- Recommendations for licensure or certification

SECTION D: Records to be Disclosed

Including any or all of the following:

- Academic records, including prior clinical performance outcomes
- Test scores
- Program status, including prior disciplinary action resulting in suspension or removal from the program
- Information shared in applications to the University, Graduate School, College, Department, or specific program

SECTION D: Certification

I authorize the College of Health and Human Sciences to disclose and discuss confidential information from my education record with the above third parties, named in Section B, for the purposes named in Section C.

This authorization shall be considered as a waiver of any and all of my rights and/or privileges as provided under the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. A photocopy of this authorization shall be considered as valid as the originally signed document.

Student's Signature	Date

* **NOTE**: For the third-party designees named on this form, this release overrides all FERPA directory suppression information that you have set up in your student record.

Appendix K: Policy Acknowledgement Form

I, _____, as a student in good standing of Western Carolina University's Bachelor of Social Work program, hereby understand and agree to the following conditions during my social work field placement(s).

I understand that my participation in this program is contingent upon my satisfactory performance and cooperation with the facility staff, and that if, at any time, I do not abide by the conditions described in this manual, I may be removed from the program.

I understand that I am responsible for developing a Learning Contract in collaboration with my field instructor, and for completing the activities outlined therein. I understand that my performance will be evaluated on a regular basis by designated social work faculty and agency representatives and that I may be dismissed if my performance is not satisfactory.

I understand that I am responsible for my transportation to and from the field agency and on any reasonable special assignment.

I understand that records, documents, and all patient or client information of the field agency are legally confidential under a variety of laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191. I will not divulge any personal, medical, and/or business information concerning any person and/or record which I encounter at any facility.

I am in compliance with North Carolina General Statute 130A-155.1 and North Carolina Immunization rules, and have provided the University with evidence of the following current immunizations: diphtheria, pertussis-tetanus or tetanus-diphtheria; measles, mumps, and rubella; and, if required by the field agency, a varicella zoster vaccine and tuberculin skin test. I agree to participate fully in any agency training and requirements regarding blood-borne pathogens or other occupational hazards.

I understand that I am responsible for following all behavioral standards and administrative policies and procedures of the field agency, including provision of immunization records, proof of health insurance, criminal background checks, and drug screenings as required. I understand that I am responsible for all associated costs, and that if a field agency refuses me placement based on results of a required background check or drug screening, I may be removed from the social work program.

I understand that I am responsible for reporting to the designated individual on time during my scheduled assignment, and that I must notify the designated individual of any deviation from my scheduled arrival and departure times. I understand that the field agency will, upon prior agreement, permit me facility and University holidays where possible in meeting educational objectives, but that I am not guaranteed time off for University breaks.

I understand that I am not acting as an employee of the field agency during my field placement, unless previously approved for an employment-based placement through the process outlined in this manual.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the above conditions and agree to perform accordingly.

Signed: _____ Date: _____