

Field Instructors

Field Instructors are selected by the Director of Field Education based on the following criteria:

- A Master of Social Work degree from a program accredited by CSWE and preferably two year's post-MSW practice experience. If an exception is made and the Field Instructor has a degree in a different field/profession, the Graduate Social Work Program accepts responsibility for supplementing the student's experience with additional social work perspective.
- Commitment to teaching the knowledge, skills and values of the social work profession
- Knowledge and skills in models of practice introduced to students in the Foundation year and advanced theories taught in the Concentration year
- Willingness to provide regular feedback to the student and Faculty Field Liaison regarding the student's progress towards demonstrating competency behaviors, in interactions with clients, on process recordings, and written case documentation
- Willingness to provide a minimum of 60 minutes of regularly-scheduled, weekly, individual supervision
- Willingness to offer administrative, educational and supportive supervision for the student's growth and professional development
- Sensitivity to the learning needs of students from all population groups

The effectiveness of the Field Education program is dependent upon collaboration among the Graduate Social Work Department, the field practicum Sites/sites, the Director of Field Education, Faculty Field Liaisons, Field Instructors and the student and their fulfillment of respective roles and responsibilities.

Responsibilities of the Graduate Social Work Department

- Provide curriculum content that prepares the social work student for direct practice with individuals, families and communities
- Select and refer students with appropriate educational background, skills and professional social work commitment consistent with the educational experience being offered by the site
- Advise students regarding policies and expectations related to the field education experience and of their obligations to abide by the policies and procedures of the field practicum site
- Ensure that every student in field prior to beginning placement has obtained child abuse, criminal record clearances and professional liability insurance (\$1,000,000 per claim and aggregate of \$3,000,000 per occurrence) to be procured at the student's expense.
- Provide an educational forum for Field Instructors that is focused on issues related to student development and the field education experience
- Collaborate with the field site to ensure that the students' field instructional needs are being met by a qualified professional and, if not, the Program, in consultation with the site, will remove the student
- Respect the field site's right to terminate a student from field for violation of site policies and procedures
- Assign a faculty member to fulfill the Faculty Field Liaison responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Field Site

- Interview, select and accept students for field placement who are determined by the site to be appropriate
- Provide qualified Field Instructors who have the MSW degree and preferably two years of post-graduate professional experience
- Provide orientation to the student on the social work site, its mission, purpose, functions and services, including safety policies and procedures
- Allow the Field Instructor adequate time to prepare for and provide a minimum of 60 minutes of individual student supervision weekly, to complete in collaboration with the student mid- and final semester evaluations, to attend field instruction information sessions and seminars conducted by the Program and to meet at least once per semester with the Faculty Field Liaison and/or Director of Field Education
- Provide adequate space and learning opportunities for the student to gain appropriate social work practice experience
- Sign an Affiliation Agreement with WCU indicating acceptance of designated responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Director of Field Education

- Develop and administer the MSW field education program
- Identify, develop and evaluate field education opportunities throughout the region in relation to the program's mission and goals and accreditation core competencies
- Visit prospective field sites and maintain relationships with field Sites including the selection of qualified Field Instructors
- Coordinate the student placement process
 - Assess the student's professional development and learning needs
 - Refer the student to a field placement appropriate to the student's learning needs and the program objectives for field education
 - Confirm and finalize the placement with the student and the field site
- Conduct orientation to field practicum for students prior to the start of placements, ongoing training for Field Instructors, and orientation, training and support for Faculty Field Liaisons
- Consult with Faculty Field Liaisons regarding students' learning processes
- Coordinate problem-solving and termination processes as necessary
- Initiate and conduct periodic meetings with Faculty Field Liaisons to exchange information on students' learning needs in field and the field education program, policies and procedures
- Coordinate all field-related activities, including the development of a field calendar

Responsibilities of the Faculty Field Liaison

- Provide the primary link between the Graduate Social Work Department and the field site
- Oversee, review and monitor the students' development and demonstration of the competency behaviors for the practicum course
- Maintain regular contact with the student, Field Instructor and Task Supervisor (if applicable) and visit the field practicum site at least once per semester
- Conduct field-related discussions in the Foundation/1st Field practicum course or three field seminars per semester with the section of Concentration/2nd Field practicum students assigned to the Liaison
- Provide information about the curriculum content and policies and answer questions regarding student issues, learning needs or crises
- Facilitate communication and mediate differences among the student, Field Instructor, Task Supervisor (if applicable) and practicum site
- Review, provide feedback and grade two process recordings per semester (Foundation/1st field). Field Instructors for Concentration/2nd field students have the option of requiring process recordings
- Evaluate, provide feedback and assign grades for the students' Learning Agreement, Mid- and Final semester evaluations, and assign a final course grade
- Clarify program or practicum policies, procedures, events and curriculum issues for students, site Field Instructors and/or other site personnel
- Serve as a liaison between the program and the social work site by conveying the program's practicum expectations to the field instructor, providing information regarding the MSW curriculum as it relates to field education, and support and develop the site's continued availability as a field placement for program students
- Provide feedback regarding students' learning needs, problems and progress, field practicum sites, assignments and level of student to the Director of Field Education
- Monitor employment-based field assignments to insure differentiation between field practicum assignments and paid employment assignments

Responsibilities of the Field Instructor

- Assume primary responsibility for the student's field learning experience
- Develop assignments that assist in meeting the student's learning objectives, ensures the quality of services and protects clients

- Provide consistent, scheduled, in-person, Field Instruction/supervision at least one hour per week that includes administrative, educational and supportive supervision
- Orient the student to the social work site, its mission, purpose, function and services within the community including safety policies and procedures
- Collaborate with the student to
 - Assess learning needs
 - Develop the student's Learning Agreement
 - Periodically review the Learning Agreement to monitor the student's progress
- Review and comment on the student's process recordings (two required in Foundation/1st field, optional for Concentration/2nd field) and other writing such as reports and documentation of services provided
 - Provide ongoing, mutual and continuous evaluation and feedback of the student's work with clients, development and demonstration of competency behaviors, and respect for social work values and ethics
 - Collaborate, review and discuss with the student the mid-semester and final evaluations
 - Provide feedback to the Faculty Field Liaison regarding the student's development and demonstration of competency behaviors, and respect for social work values and ethics
 - Alert the Faculty Field Liaison by phone, email or request for a meeting regarding any problematic behaviors or other issues that arise between liaison site visits
- Attend program's orientation session for Field Instructors to become familiar with the MSW curriculum and the processes of field instruction
- Complete the Seminar In Field Instruction (SIFI) series offered by WCU Social Work or by another accredited social work program
- Collaborate with the Director of Field Education to:
 - Develop the site as a field practicum setting
 - Process an Affiliation Agreement
 - [Complete a Field Instructor Application](#)
 - Recommend the number and types of students the site can accommodate

Responsibilities of the Student

- Complete and submit the Field Practicum Application to the Director of Field
- Schedule and attend a meeting with the Director of Field to explore field practicum options that meet the student's learning needs and are appropriate to the student's stage of professional development
- Interview at the proposed field site and communicate outcome of the interview to the Director of Field
- Adhere to the field calendar, the placement site's schedule, personnel practices and work policies
- Collaborate with the Field Instructor (and task supervisor, if applicable) to develop a Learning Agreement that includes: Professional Self-Reflection; Expected Practice Opportunities; Practice Vignette (Concentration field only); Supervision Expectations; Signatures
- Participate with the Field Instructor (and task supervisor, if applicable) in self-evaluation for the Mid-Semester and Final Evaluations
- Perform practicum assignments in a responsible and professional manner, including all required documentation and planned delivery of services
- Actively participate in supervisory meetings by preparing an agenda, addressing issues related to practicum assignment, theoretical issues and/or related site concerns
- Utilize supervision to identify needs, resolve barriers that might interfere with learning
- Share academic material related to practicum learning, including relevant course syllabi, with the Field Instructor
- Prepare and submit to the Field Instructor for review and comment two process recordings (required for Foundation/1st Field students)
- Participate in placement site staff meetings such as all-staff meetings, student seminars, continuing education events, and case conferences
- Maintain on-going communication with the Faculty Field Liaison

- Maintain confidentiality of client contact, case records and other social work material. Obtain approval of the Field Instructor before using case material for class purposes. If materials are used for class, client identity must at all times be sufficiently disguised.
- Maintain professional liability insurance throughout the field practicum courses.
- Conduct themselves at all times in accord with the [Code of Ethics](#) of the National Association of Social Work and with the [WCU Graduate Social Work Standards of Professional Behavior](#) and all policies contained in the [WCU Graduate Catalog](#)

Child Abuse Registry Check, Criminal Background Check, and Liability Insurance

Students in field are required to submit to a Pennsylvania criminal background check and a Pennsylvania Child Abuse registry, and to purchase professional liability insurance. If a student has any criminal charge that may appear on his or her criminal background report, the student is encouraged to disclose and discuss the charge(s) with the director of field education. Depending on the nature of the charge, the record may not be acceptable to some field sites and will limit the student's placement options.

Hours

The MSW Program publishes a calendar each semester with specific dates pertinent to field practicum. Students in their first field practicum must complete 224 hours over the course of each semester, averaging 16 hours per week. Students in their second field practicum are required to complete 280 hours over the course of each semester, averaging 20 hours per week. A regular weekly schedule is negotiated with the Field Instructor and approved by the Faculty Field Liaison in the Learning Agreement at the beginning of the semester.

Because these are required practicum hours, any days or hours that are missed for illness or other reasons must be made up. Hours should be made up during the semester at specific times negotiated with the Field Instructor. In certain circumstances, hours can be made up over the Thanksgiving, winter and spring breaks with prior approval from the Field Instructor and the Faculty Field Liaison. Students are not permitted to accumulate hours over breaks and end field practicum early in the semester.

Students with a field placement in a school setting should take the field placement school's fall, spring or holiday breaks rather than West Chester University breaks to avoid losing too many practicum hours.

Students who are unable to attend field practicum regularly for 20 hours per week because of employment, caregiving or other responsibilities may be eligible for an extended field practicum. The extended program allows students in certain field sites to design a schedule that satisfies an average of 12 or 13 hours per week over a longer period of time. Before the start of the semester, proposals for the extended program must be negotiated with the Field Instructor and formally submitted in writing to the Director of Field Education. If approved by the Director of Field Education, these proposals are then submitted to the Faculty Field Liaison and to the Field Instructor with the Learning Agreement.

Students are expected to maintain a weekly log of practicum hours and supervision with signatures from the Field Instructor and Task Supervisor, where applicable. Field logs are due to Faculty Field Liaisons on a monthly basis.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend field practicum regularly and arrive when expected, prepared to engage in the assigned tasks. Students must notify Field Instructors and any other pertinent individuals of their lateness or absence ahead of time. Failure to attend field practicum with regularity and punctuality will constitute a violation of the [Standards for Professional Behavior](#).

Students are expected to attend field practicum during the fall break in October if these are regularly scheduled days. Students are not expected to be at field practicum during the following times:

- Labor Day
- Wednesday through Friday during the week of Thanksgiving

- Monday through Friday of spring break, unless a school placement has different spring break dates
- After the last day of the semester, assuming hours have been completed, and unless a student is doing an approved extended field placement

Clients are often best served when students are consistently available. Students often choose to continue to work over the breaks, especially those who in their second field placements or are in sites where this would be particularly important to client well-being.

If the University closes for inclement weather or other reasons, students are still expected to attend field practicum unless the field site closes or delays opening. In these cases students are not expected to attend, but are expected to make up the field hours. If a student feels that travel is unsafe, s/he must alert the Field Instructor and arrange to make up the hours at another time. The student and the Field Instructor are encouraged to create a contingency plan for how the student's activities will be handled in the student's absence.

Performance

Student performance in field practicum is evaluated through a variety of measures designed to be supportive and collaborative. Both the Field Instructor and the Faculty Field Liaison contribute to the student's evaluation process.

The Field Instructor uses the following for evaluation purposes:

- Student's self-reflection in Learning Agreement
- Direct observation of student
- Reports of direct observation of student from other team members
- Weekly supervision and ongoing consultation
- Process recordings (only required in the first field practicum)
- Practice vignettes and self-reflections in the Learning Agreement and the Final Evaluation
- Collaborative assessment of mid-semester and end-of-semester performance

The Faculty Field Liaison uses the following for evaluation purposes:

- Student's self-reflection in Learning Agreement
- Field discussions in practice class or field seminars
- Process recordings (only required in the first field practicum)
- Direct observation during field visit
- Ongoing consultation with student and Field Instructor
- Practice vignettes and self-reflections in the Learning Agreement and the Final Evaluation
- Ratings and comments from the Field Instructor on mid-semester and end-of-semester evaluations

The Faculty Field Liaison has sole responsibility for grading student performance in field practicum. While s/he may rely on insight from the Field Instructor, the grade is ultimately the decision of the Faculty Field Liaison in accordance with the course syllabus.

Readiness for Field Practicum

Most students are prepared to enter field practicum. Some students' personal issues and behaviors, such as extreme anxiety and inability to pay attention to others, may demonstrate a lack of readiness for field. In these cases the Director of Field Education and the student's faculty advisor may recommend that the student consider part-time status, volunteer, or seek outside counseling to focus on self-care.

In some cases, a student's readiness for field is not apparent until the student is in a field practicum. In some of these cases, the student is unable to meet the expectations of the practicum and is dismissed. In other instances the student realizes that s/he is not ready for a certain field practicum.

Dismissal from Field Practicum

When a student is dismissed from a field practicum or asks to be replaced, the student is required to respond to a set of [reflection questions](#) before the Director of Field Education will meet with the student to consider a change in placement.

If the director decides a different placement is appropriate, the student may be placed in a second practicum. If the student is not able to meet expectations at the second site, the student most likely will be advised to take a leave of absence, engage in remedial work to better prepare for field, or consider another field of study.

Termination from the Program for Violations in Field Practicum

The University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) states, "Under some circumstances, if a student is found to have violated that professional code, that violation may be considered a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy." Therefore, any student who is dismissed from a field placement for violation of the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) may be found in violation of university policy and terminated from the program.

Addressing Problem Situations

Students who have concerns about field such as practicum assignment, conditions of placement, quality or frequency of supervision, educational needs, evaluation, grading, social work values and ethics, or any other related issue should:

- First try to resolve the issues directly in meetings with their Field Instructor.
- If resolution with the Field Instructor is not possible, notify the Faculty Field Liaison. The Faculty Field Liaison will mediate differences among students, Field Instructors and other practicum site staff

If the problem is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the Field Instructor and/or the Faculty Field Liaison, the student may request a meeting with the Director of Field Education. The director may serve as a mediator between the liaison, student and Field Instructor or site representative as requested. When the grievance involves an educational issue, the Director of Field Education may refer the matter to the Program Director for discussion and a decision.

If the issue is still not solved to the student's satisfaction, a final appeal may be directed to the Program Director. If the issue is in regard to an assigned grade, the student must follow the appeal procedure as stated in the [West Chester University Graduate Catalog](#).