INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

Instructions: For academic units, the content will focus on the assessment of student learning outcomes. Each degree program must submit a plan and report separately (i.e., a department with bachelor and master’s degree programs must submit a plan and report for each program). The report should represent work accomplished during summer, fall, and spring of the past year. While the majority of the report may be completed during the summer before the report is due, reports must be submitted annually by September 30.

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<tr>
<th>Academic Department or Division:</th>
<th>Social Work</th>
<th>Report Year: 2011-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree Program: Masters Social Work</td>
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REPORT OF ASSESSMENTS

Enter assessments conducted during the previous year by Core, Major, and/or Graduate levels. The data/evidence results provided in this section should tie directly to last year’s Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Delete any sections (Core, Major, Graduate) below which are not applicable to the reviewed program.

GRADUATE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES ASSESSED: CSWE REQUIRES ASSESSMENT OF CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES. OF OUR 19 CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES, ONLY THE FOLLOWING SEVEN WERE ASSESSED. THE FIRST 2 ARE FOUNDATION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES; THE FINAL FIVE ARE ALL CONCENTRATION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES. THIS IS THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR THAT WE EVALUATED THESE SEVEN; HAVING DETERMINED THAT THEY ARE AT ONCE THE MOST CRUCIAL AND PERHAPS MOST VULNERABLE TO THREATS TO VALIDITY

FPO 11 Demonstrate the ability to communicate across client populations, colleagues and communities, in written and verbal form.
FPO 14 Identify with the social work profession and behave professionally.
CPO 15 Demonstrate an increasing ability to engage in informed and systematic Self-Directed practice.
CPO 16 Demonstrate elements of leadership and the ability to shape the professional environment.
CPO 17 Demonstrate an ability to analyze and critically evaluate the contextual elements to inform social work practice.
CPO 18 Apply attention to balanced, multi-level practice.
CPO 19 Demonstrate the ability to practice at increasing levels of complexity using specialized theories and practice methods.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

We use four major methods of measurement for each objective – anticipating convergence within expected ranges on measures for each objective. These are all either compiled or completed in April of each year.

Method 1: PoCo evaluation – is based on our PoCo map which maps the alignment of every course outcome from each course in the curriculum, with one or more of our curriculum objectives. Aggregate data from measures of particular course outcomes drawn from all courses were identified last September. Selection of specific course outcomes occurs anew each year so that, different measures, which are connected to different course elements are used. This is done to ensure that all parts of the curriculum and curriculum learning are being utilized in outcome measurement. These data are aggregated into and index for each curriculum objective that is targeted for evaluation.
Method 2 – student self ratings.  Students are asked to rate their proficiency on each curriculum learning objective.  Student self-efficacy scales are considered an acceptable method of student outcome evaluation by CSWE.  Self-evaluations used a 10-point likert-type scale wherein each student was asked to self-evaluate.  This was done separately from the pozo evaluation in order to minimize grade-induced bias.  Students are also introduced to standardized anchors for the scale. This is done to minimize social desirability bias.

Method 3 - Final Student Learning Plan Evaluation.  The Final Student Learning Plan Evaluation (FLSP) directly utilizes the 19 curriculum program objectives as the objectives of the practicum and specifies a number of outcome indicators based on the performance of specified professional competencies for each objective.  In other words, practicum is viewed as reflecting an agency-based achievement of program objectives.  Although evaluated at the end of each semester, only the FLSP Evaluation conducted at the time of graduation is used in the annual outcome evaluation. In 2011, the practicum grading system of Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory was changed to a letter grading system, and students now will receive grades of A-F in field.  The number of discrete practicum outcomes for each curriculum objective ranges from 5 to 20, and each separate outcome will be rated using a 5-point likert-type scale, using 3 as a satisfactory midpoint which is equivalent to the grade of B. There is some unbalanced equivalency in converting the continuous rating into an ordinal one.  This could be problematic.

Method 4 – Simulated licensure exam- A shortened version (50 questions rather than 150) of an actual LMSW licensing examination, using an examination from the ASWB and factors specified by this organization. Questions were selected and examined by three independent raters as to face validity and congruence with all factors and their weights on the licensing exam. The shortened version is given to students under simulated testing conditions each April.  We recognize that the licensing simulation does not represent our 19 program objectives and is not a measure of these objectives.  By extension, the simulation is not a primary measure of outcomes. However, we posit that the exam is an accurate representation of the examination that beginning social workers must pass in order to achieve the status of Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW).  Thus, if our students meet our outcomes as operationalized by our primary measures, and then pass the Licensure Examination at a rate similar to the national pass rate, the licensing simulation may be considered an artifact in establishing criterion-validity for our primary measures as well as a supplemental affirmation of our graduating students’ fitness to practice.  Additionally, aggregate data on VSU’s Division of Social Work pass rate will be compared with national pass rates for the 2011 academic year.

TARGETED LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY:

| Poco evaluation – data is standardized. Curriculum objectives that demonstrate an average of below 80% or above 95% are flagged for further analysis by the Curriculum Committee. An excessive number of positive outliers on an objective is considered by us to be an indicator of methodological problems (i.e. grade inflation, poor measures, underdeveloped outcomes). An excessive number of negative outliers on an objective is considered by us to be an indicator substantive problems (inadequate student achievement, undeveloped or underdeveloped curriculum content). In this way, faculty members attempt to identify program objectives that are not being met for either methodological or substantive reasons. Self-rating – acceptable range is considered between 3 and 7. Student who evaluate lower indicate their lack of comfort with their own ability. Scores over 7 suggests inflated sense of ability. Final student learning plane evaluation - The minimum standard for achievement for each objective is a mean score of 3. Students who receive a mean of below 3 for an objective at the time of graduation are expected to extend their practicum until the minimum standard has been achieved. Objectives are “flagged” for further analysis if they fall below a mean of 3 or above a mean of 4.5. Simulated licensing exam – using a percentage, we expect a mean score on the licensing exam of 70%. This would qualify as passing. Score on the actual licensure exam. |

Revised July 31, 2012
NUMBER OF STUDENTS ASSESSED:
35 graduates assessed

DATA/EVIDENCE RESULTS (INCLUDE QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY; RAW DATA SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN AN ATTACHMENT):

- Method 1 - Poco evaluation means for the seven objectives were slightly higher than last year with a significant increase (p=0.011) in the leadership objective (cpo 16) and an increase – approaching significance- in the objective (cpo 17) that focused on the ability to assess the contextual elements of practice. Overall the scores seemed to fit well with acceptable standards of learning. Only one objective (FPO 11) had more than 2 positive outliers (equal to or greater than 95) when disaggregated. More importantly two of our five advanced objective had negative outliers of 10 or greater when disaggregated. This was reflected in the lower means for these objectives. Overall however, means on these two objective were normally dispersed, suggesting greater difficulty- as we expect- in achievement on these two objectives. These data indicate that students are achieving at an acceptable standard on measured objectives. They have more difficulty with our advanced objectives – as expected. The variance in the measures suggest that the measures are not inflated and acceptable indicator of classroom-based achievement. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 4 YEARS, THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE CLASSES IN ONE OF THE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES; FPO 11. The online students scored significantly (p=0.004) higher on measures of this objective. This objective refers to the ability to communicate as a professional. In discussions, faculty suggested that this was a result of an online group that was academically superior to the FTT group. However, there is no other evidence that supports this contention.

- Method 2 – Student self-ratings. Students assessed themselves most frequently using the mid-point anchor. This is interpreted by us as suggesting that students are largely realistic when evaluating their own ability to adequately apply and operationalize the curriculum objectives in the practice world. THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE STUDENTS.

- Method 3 – Final student learning plan evaluation. The mean scores for the seven measured program objectives were all higher this year than in previous years. Means this year for the objectives ranged from 4.23 to 4.40. Whereas last year, they ranged from 3.87 to 4.23. A series of ANOVAs run for the last 3 years suggests statistically significant higher values for this year on all seven objectives. There are several possible explanations for these unexpected results; a. they reflect a stronger more well-prepared graduating class, b. the higher grades reflect a numeric ‘boost’ created by our transition to an ordinal grading scale without recalibrating our anchors on the likert scale that are the raw data used to create the final letter grade; c. the differences reflect the faculty and field instructors lack of familiarity with the new grading method, d. a combination of the previous 3. We are concerned about these data. HOWEVER, THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE STUDENTS.

- Method 4 – The simulated licensing exam. This year: the mean score on the licensing examination was 74.63 with a median of 76 and mode of 84. Twenty-three of 35 MSW students passed the simulated licensing exam with a 65.7% pass rate. There were no significant differences between this year’s pass rate and the two previous years and none are significantly different from the actual pass rate nationally. More significant is that the actual pass rate for the national licensure exam for MSW graduates at VSU in 2011 was 80% and 91% in 2012, a percentage that is much higher than the national pass rates (72%) from schools across the country. ASWB data from 2008-2011 reveal an increase in pass rates for VSU students over the past 4 years. The rate in 2008 was 43%, in 2009, 64%, in 2010, 69%, 2011, 80% and in 2012, 91%. THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE STUDENTS.

USE OF RESULTS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS (PROVIDE A BRIEF EXPLANATION FOR EACH INSTANCE OF USAGE OF RESULTS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS, CLEARLY CONNECTING EACH TO DATA/EVIDENCE RESULTS ABOVE): FACULTY MET IN EARLY SEPTEMBER TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS OF THIS EVALUATION. OUT OF THAT DISCUSSION SEVERAL RECOMMENDATIONS WERE Addressed FOR THIS YEAR. THE MAJOR CONCERNS WERE DERIVED FROM THE POCO EVALUATION AND FINAL FIELD LEARNING PLAN EVALUATION.
Concern over inflated scores on the final field learning plans led to the following recommendations:

- Suspend the POCO evaluation for one year while focusing solely on the final field learning plan evaluation. Evaluate all curriculum objectives.
- All faculty liaisons must become more familiar with how the 5 point likert scale translates into grades
- Training for field instructors will be conducted on how to translate continuous variable into ordinal
- Liaisons will be more active in assisting field instructors in grading
- Look closely at next year’s data; if score continue to be inflated, we must consider re-calibrating the likert scale.

While Poco evaluations were overall satisfactory, the higher scores on CPO 16 (leadership) and CPO 18 (balanced practice), continue to generate concerns about curriculum content that addresses these objectives and the course outcomes and outcome measures used to evaluate them. Several recommendations were made:

- Suspend the POCO evaluation for one year, while attending to course content in these areas
- Review course content for leadership this year
- Consider how ‘attention to balanced practice is assessed’
- Allow more flexibility in the measurement of outcomes. All outcomes do not need to be measured with formal assignments
- Consider how to develop measures of unanticipated learning
- Discuss other ways to maintain model fidelity
- Explore the relationship of different pedagogical methods to outcomes.

Student self-ratings indicate that students apply the capacity for realistic self-appraisal quite well. Continue use of student-self ratings with no changes

Pass rates on the simulated and actual licensing exams suggest that our students graduate with the ability to become competent beginning practitioners of Social Work. Continue use of simulated licensing exam with an eye toward revising exam when we are fully staffed.