Field Education Curriculum

Field Education is one of five interrelated areas that comprise the Mandel School curriculum. The other four curricular areas – Methods, Socio-Behavioral Theory, Policy and Research – are classroom-based. The objective of Field Education is the application of classroom knowledge to a practice setting.

Students spend a significant amount of time in their field practicum. Full-time Non Advanced Standing students complete 1050 practicum hours over four semesters and Advanced Standing Students complete 900 practicum hours over three semesters. Students average between 16-20 hours per week in their field practicum. The field practicum is divided into foundation-level content and advanced-level content. The foundation field placement provides students with opportunities to engage in generalist social work practice that is applicable across settings, population groups, problem areas, and systems of all sizes. In this initial field placement students are exposed to vulnerable populations and are challenged to begin to examine themselves in relation to the social work profession's historical commitment to basic values of human freedom, dignity, and special social economic justice. The importance of a knowledgeable and disciplined use of self is emphasized and students are expected to develop an appreciation of the role of gender, age, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and handicapping condition as it relates to assessment and intervention. The foundation-level classroom content and field placement are directed toward preparing the student for an advanced area of practice.

Upon completion of the first semester foundation classes, which include Field Education 601 (150 hours) and its companion class, SASS 495 Field Education Seminar, students declare their area of concentration. During the second semester, students complete foundation requirements including Field Education 602 (300 hours) and begin taking advanced classes in one of five direct-practice areas or in community and social development. This second semester of Field Education continues at the same agency site and calls for increased application and integration of classroom learning.

The advanced curriculum builds on the foundation courses and provides knowledge and practice skills in the student's area of specialization. Advanced fieldwork, 603 and 604 (300 hours each) is completed at a second field site over two semesters during the second year of study. Students are provided with opportunities to engage in progressively differentiated and sophisticated social work practice that are applicable to specific settings, population groups, problem areas, and systems. Advanced fieldwork allows the student to synthesize and apply a broad range of knowledge and theory with respect to practice assessment and intervention and begin to move toward more autonomous practice.

In addition to time spent learning in an agency based setting students are also expected to participate in Professional Development opportunities as part of their field education process. In Field 601, 6 of the 150 field hours must be in Professional Development. In Field 602, 603, & 604, 12 of the required 300 hours per field period are to be completed in Professional Development opportunities.

In this partnership, each student works closely with two individuals - an MSASS-based field faculty advisor and an agency-based field instructor, both of whom contribute to the student's educational experience.

Each semester the student and field instructor develop a learning contract that integrates classroom and field objectives. The learning contract is reviewed and approved by the field faculty advisor at the time of the field conference, and it serves as a basis for the field evaluation which is completed at the end of each semester by the field instructor and student.

Participating Agencies

Approximately 150 participating agencies offer a variety of learning experiences. Several agencies accept students from different specializations. Practicum opportunities are available at the following types of agencies:

- Agencies serving needs of Older Adults
- Child Welfare, Public and Private
- Community Based Organizations
- Community Development Corporations
- Community Mental Health Centers
- Courts
- Family Service Agencies
- Government Organizations
- Hospitals & Outpatient Health Care Settings
- Neighborhood Centers
- Nonprofit organizations
- Residential Treatment Facilities
- Schools
- Work Force Development