

UVM DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION PROGRAM

LEARNING AGREEMENT ASSIGNMENT

Almost immediately, students and Field Instructors will begin talking about the work they will be doing together in the semesters ahead. It is, however, highly unlikely that this is the first time the conversation or the thinking about “student assignments” has happened. Field instructors would have discussed assignment possibilities in their application for field site approval; students and Field Instructors will have already talked about assignments during the interview; and Field Instructors probably would have already talked with agency/organization colleagues prior to the start of the school year. The Learning Agreement formalizes and expands on those discussions.

This is a student-driven assignment that requires significant input from the Field Instructor. It is a deeply relational, co-created document generated at the very beginning of the student/Field Instructor relationship and is a wonderful opportunity for collaboration, curiosity, discovery, exploration, visioning, agreement, and the building of authentic connections. The student becomes the document writer, and the Field Instructor is the consultant.

Please note, your Faculty Field Liaison will also be offering you feedback on this assignment. They may require you to submit a draft first in order to do so, with edits/changes to be made before your submission of the final document with signatures, or they may ask that their feedback be taken into account for the Spring revision of this document (the Learning Agreement Addendum).

What follows below is the structure for the final written assignment; please read these instructions in their entirety and make sure that what you turn in to your Faculty Field Liaison on the assignment due date is in line with this format.

Cover Page

The student should include the following on the first page. If there is additional information that seems relevant to the placement, students should be encouraged to include that, as well.

- Student name, UVM email, phone
- Faculty Field Liaison name, email, phone
- Field Instructor name, email, phone
- On-Site Supervisor name, email, phone (if applicable)
- Agency/organization and program name
- Program address, main phone
- Student Schedule agreement (placement beginning and end dates; planned regular weekly schedule, including the day of the week, arrival and departure times)¹

¹ Please see the “Student Hours” policy on UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#).

- Anticipated expected dates student will be absent from field¹

Section One: Agency/Organization/Program Description

- Describe what you know about your agency or organization so far. Use your own words to include a brief overview of the *agency* itself (i.e., Howard Center, Spectrum, Northeastern Family Institute): who it serves, types of services, etc.
- Describe what you know about the program you will be working in (i.e., Restorative Justice, Children’s Program, etc.). In your own words, write what you know about the place where you will be spending the year working and learning.
- Share how you know what you know about the agency/organization and the program (e.g., website, conversations with professionals, word on the street, etc.). If you are quoting or paraphrasing from other sources, please use appropriate APA formatting.
- List any questions you have about the agency/organization/program that you hope to have answered by the end of the placement/academic year.

Section Two: Relationship to the Work

- Describe your particular relationship to the work of the agency/organization/program.
- Explication of this relationship could include personal anecdotes or harken back to your educational or professional background.
- It could also connect to a related interest of yours (long- or short-term) that you know little about or have little experience with.
- Please take the time to think, and write, deeply so as not to miss any “overlapping stories” that might reveal some connection between yourself and some piece of where you have been placed.

Section Three: Engagement Assignments

Because this document is due to your liaison within the first month of placement, there is a general acceptance that your work will be fluid and may perhaps change within the complexity of your organization’s context. In other words, it is quite likely that the ideas presented in this section could change over the lifecycle of your internship. Therefore, the work here should reflect a discussion that charts a “lightly held” path for your work with some vision for how it will evolve over the two semesters. Part of that vision should include ongoing review and revision of your assignments; as noted above, the beginning of the Spring semester offers the opportunity for formal revisions and updates to this document with the Learning Agreement Addendum assignment.

There are three parts to this section (an example of this format follows; see Appendix below).

- 1) **Engagement Assignment.** Describe your specific plans for engagement. This includes the actual work you will do with clients, patients, service-users, students, members, etc. It also includes collaborations you will be developing with colleagues and outside community members. Keep in mind that a well-rounded social work learning experience at both the undergraduate and

graduate levels includes work with individuals, families, and small groups, as well as organizational practice and community work. Make sure your assignment descriptions are specific and include an overview of the task, your role, and the purpose of working on such a task (or how it will inform your practice)

- 2) **Related Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies.** Look at your assignments in conjunction with the Course Objectives & Social Work Competencies from your field syllabus (on the UVM Dept. of Social Work Field Education website). Determine whether your assignments (above) will give you the opportunity to meet these learning objectives, and then show the specifics of your determination next to each assignment. Please only list the 2-4 objectives that seem “most” pertinent, and please make sure that your description of the Engagement Assignment above makes explicit the link to the Social Work Competencies you’ve chosen.
 - a. This is very important as your Ending Evaluation for the year will document your progress on these learning objectives—therefore, you really want to make sure you have assignments that will give you the opportunity to make progress and meet those objectives. These objectives have been approved as “outcome measures of student learning” by our national accrediting body (CSWE); thus, a student’s identification of the relationship between field assignments and learning objectives indicates that the student’s work in the field is related to these outcome measures of the overall academic program.
 - b. The goal for the L.A. as a whole is to use each of the ten Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies *at least* once. Therefore, it is imperative that you have at least one assignment that incorporates each objective. If you need more information about the competencies and what they mean in the context of social work education, please see pp. 8-13 in the CSWE 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).²

- 3) **Process for Determining Student Progress/Evaluative Plan.** Discuss your plan for how you and your Field Instructor will be able to determine your progress for each of your assignments. Include a written evaluative and self-assessment plan for each engagement assignment.
 - a. Make sure each of your assignment evaluation answers this question: How will my supervisor and I know I have made progress towards the Learning Objectives (Social Work Competencies) chosen for this task?—this is not necessarily the same (but could be) as making progress on the stated goal of the task itself.

A solid Learning Agreement should have 4-6 engagement assignments; some of these may be more of a priority in an ongoing capacity, others may be of a one-off and/or back burner.

² <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/94471c42-13b8-493b-9041-b30f48533d64/2022-EPAS.pdf>

Section Four: Supervision

Because your work with your Field Instructor (and On-Site Supervisor, if applicable) will be central to your learning, describe your plan for ongoing supervision and support. This can include agency practices, as well as the individual agreement(s) you and your Field Instructor (and on-site supervisor, if applicable) make. Please include both formal and informal processes.

- Some additional considerations: What will *your* preparation and participation in supervision look like? What are the student's responsibilities for engaging in effective supervision? What other informal sources of support do you have to turn to? This most often is in the form of colleagues (whether fellow students or professionals) who are also doing the work and who may have input on how you're doing, what direction to go in next, answers to resource questions, etc.

Section Five: Student Safety Agreement

Below is a copy of the "Student Safety Agreements" policy on the UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#). First, please review and discuss this policy as well as the organization/program's safety protocols with your Field Instructor. Some possible considerations for this conversation might include (but are certainly not limited to):

- What did you learn about procedures/policy if there is a safety concern on site? How will you be notified? What are next steps?
- How do you handle it if clients become escalated?
- How do you respond if a client threatens you or someone else?
- What if a client is in crisis (suicidal or homicidal)?
- What considerations should you make for doing home visits (like notification of your arrivals and departures; where/how to park; being aware of environment)?
- What considerations should you make for meeting remotely with clients?
- Are there protocols for providing transportation to clients?
- Are there protocols for lockdowns if this should ever take place?
- Are there routine safety-related practices (such as drills) you should be aware of?
- What COVID risk-mitigation strategies is the organization or program currently engaging in that would be relevant to your work?
- Etc.

Then, here in Section 5, share the salient points of the conversation with your Field Instructor that convey your understanding of the relationship between "safety" and the work you will be doing within the agency.

At the end of your written Section Five, please also include the verbatim text of the **last paragraph (in bold)** of the Student Safety Agreements policy below, "If an incident occurs..."

Student Safety Agreements

Placement agencies and organizations are responsible for communicating a plan of safety for any and all students who confirm a placement with them. Since most agencies and organizations have existing safety procedures, policies, or

practices, they should feel free to refer to that which already exists. However, it is important that Field Instructors and/or On-Site Supervisors (if applicable) and students discuss general plans for safety within the first two weeks of the placement. Safety issues could include things like approaches to working with potentially violent or unpredictable client situations, making home visits to places where the student may be unwelcome or there is doubt about the acceptance of the visit, working with clients who are incarcerated or on furlough for violent assaults, and responses to threatening statements, letters, phone calls, e-mails or other communications directed to the student or other agency personnel.

Section Five of the student's Learning Agreement will be the student's understanding (a description/summary of the discussion between student and Field Instructor) of the relationship between "safety" and their work within the agency.

If an incident occurs in which a student is personally threatened or hurt, or if the student is involved in an accident of any kind, the student will immediately inform their Field Instructor and Faculty Field Liaison. The Faculty Field Liaison will inform the Field Education Coordinator. The Field Education Coordinator will complete an incident report for the student's academic placement file, and will review the situation with the student, Faculty Field Liaison, and Field Instructor. Together they will determine the student's readiness to return to the placement.

Section Six: Monetary Compensation

If applicable, please list any agreements between the student and the field agency in which the student will receive monetary compensation. If not applicable, please include this section header and write "N/A."

Section Seven: Pre-Submission Checklist

Please include this checklist at the very end of your Learning Agreement, prior to the signatures, and indicate that you agree to all of the following.

If you answer "No" to any of these items, please go back into your document to make changes as needed.

If you are unable to make relevant changes, please include a brief note of explanation in the indicated section below.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | 1.) My cover page lists all of the information required per the Learning Agreement assignment instructions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | 2.) I have used headings for each section of the Learning Agreement. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | 3.) I have completed each individual section of this document <i>thoughtfully and comprehensively</i> according to the assignment |

instructions, answering all required questions and following the format that has been outlined for each section.

Yes No

4.) For Section 3: Engagement Assignments, I have chosen the 2-4 *most relevant* Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies for each task listed, and there is a clear and explicit link between the assignment description and each of competencies I have chosen.

Yes No

5.) For Section 3: Engagement Assignments, I have meaningfully used *each* of the 9 Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies (including research and policy) at least once within this section.

Yes No

6.) For Section 3: Engagement Assignments, the description of each assignment accurately reflects what I will be working on throughout the year.

Yes No

7.) For Section 3: Engagement Assignments, I have worked with my Field Instructor and On-site Supervisor (if applicable) to create engagement assignments that reflect some semblance of *all requisite areas of practice*: Individual, Family, Group, Organizational and Community.

Yes No

8.) The Signatures page has space available for *each* of the relevant parties.

Yes No

9.) This document integrates initial feedback from my Field Instructor (and On-Site Supervisor, if applicable), and has been reviewed, assessed and approved by these parties prior to Signatures and final submission.

Note (if applicable):

Section Eight: Signatures

This is your signature page. The last section of this document should contain space for you, your Field Instructor, your On-Site Supervisor (if applicable), your Faculty Field Liaison, and the Field Education Coordinator to sign and date, indicating agreement with the content. Type our names and titles beneath the signature lines and add a date notation. (Template included as Appendix B, below).

Electronic signatures (typing the name above the signature line or inserting a picture from a signature file) are fine, as long as they have been approved for inclusion by the appropriate party.

Appendix A.
Section Three: Engagement Assignments Examples

Section Three: Engagement Assignments

Engagement Assignment #1: I will participate in the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee on a weekly basis. From the content of these meetings and from my own research into best practices, I will support the agency to adapt new trainings and policies that strive to utilize an anti-oppressive practice lens with regards to inclusivity and diversity within the organization for both employees and clients. I will engage in an ethical and professional manner with the organization's leadership to support, develop and employ this new content.

Related Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Process for Determining Student Progress/Evaluative Plan:

By the end of my field placement, there will be a compiled list of resources, trainings and curricula ready for implementation at the program's various sites, along with recommendations as to how these should be employed. I will request feedback from my Field Instructor, colleagues, leadership, and clients (as appropriate) regarding my direct practice, communication skills, and professional approach to these endeavors. I will use self-reflection to evaluate my practice and how my skills/knowledge have changed over time, and as a foundation for supervision conversations.

Engagement Assignment #2: Through learnings gleaned from experience shadowing intake assessments, the social work practices of my colleagues, interactions with my clients, relevant trainings, and supervision, I will create appropriate and effective treatment plans with several clients. Each treatment plan will take into consideration the client's expressed needs, desires, strengths, and access to care. Using a collaborative relational approach, the client and I will align on a course of action regarding appropriate internal and/or external services.

Related Learning Objectives/Social Work Competencies:

Competency 3: Advanced Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

Process for Determining Progress/Evaluative Plan:

Prior to reviewing the final treatment plan with the client, I will present my thoughts to my supervisor for feedback. I will then present the treatment plan to the client and assist in execution appropriately. While the client is still under my care, I will continue to assess the client's progress in relation to the treatment plan and adjust it accordingly I will use self-reflection to evaluate my practice and how my skills/knowledge have changed over time, and as a foundation for supervision conversations, and with my field instructor, consider whether a process record assignment might be an appropriate tool to enhance my learning in this capacity.

NOTE: Please make sure you follow the same format for each of your engagement assignments. Some may be more complicated than others and that's fine. The important thing is to get the beginning map of your work in the field on paper. This is intended to be a working document and you and your Field Instructor (and On-Site Supervisor, if appropriate) will revisit it several times throughout the year, revising your assignments as you go along.

Appendix B.
Section Eight: Signatures Template

Section Eight: Signatures

Student

Date

On-Site Supervisor (if applicable)

Date

Field Instructor

Date

Faculty Field Liaison

Date

Field Education Coordinator

Date