# FIELD EDUCATION MANUAL

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INFORMATION FOR AGENCIES

Criteria for the Selection of Field Placement Agencies and Field Instructors

I. Field Placement Agencies
   A. Discussion of the possible use of a social agency for field placement may be initiated by the agency, a student or members of Field Education Department. Initial discussion explores the agency's interest and ability to provide the range of learning opportunities necessary to carry out the purposes of the field education courses.
   B. Following the initial discussion, a site visit is usually made to the agency by a representative of the Field Education Department. The purpose is to meet with agency representatives to discuss learning opportunities available, potential field instructors, and to review the nature of social work practice in the agency.
   C. As a result of these discussions, the agency decides whether it wishes to accept students for field placement and the school determines whether the required educational expectations and standards for field placement can be met.
   D. When an agency becomes a field placement site, a contract, in the form of a Memorandum of Agreement between the school and the agency, is executed and the agency becomes an affiliate of the school and its programs. Click here to access the Memorandum of Agreement form.

II. Field Instructors
   A. Field instructors are recommended by the agency and approved by the director of field education.
      1. A field instructor is expected to have, at minimum:
         a. an earned master of social work degree from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, and
         b. completed two years of post-master's, supervised social work practice. It is preferable that at least one year has been in the agency where field instruction will be provided.
         c. for clinical concentration students, field instructors must have completed three years post-masters supervised social work practice or be licensed as a clinical social worker in Virginia.
      2. The person recommended as a field instructor is required to submit a resume to the Field Department using the Field Instructor Resume Coversheet.
   B. The person recommended as a field instructor will speak with a representative of the Field Education Department to review expectations. This discussion is usually conducted by the faculty field liaison who is or will be assigned to the agency. Particular emphasis is placed on:
      1. interest in teaching;
      2. potential for providing students with knowledge of social work concepts, principles and values; and capacity for stimulating and supporting students in the learning process.
   C. In special circumstances, exceptions to these criteria are made and additional supervision is provided by the faculty field liaison to ensure that educational expectations regarding the social work perspective are met.
   D. New field instructors are required to complete an orientation for new field instructors offered by the Field Education Department.
Ideas for the First Three Weeks in the Agency

The success of the field education course assumes that students will be assigned responsibility for direct service to clients within the first three weeks of their arrival at the agency. The following are some ideas about how this expectation might be implemented, particularly at the Senior B.S.W. and Foundation M.S.W. levels. In addition, we offer ideas about other kinds of experiences available in most field placement agencies that would be good beginning assignments and/or learning opportunities for students:

1. Develop a list of questions for students to answer after a “windshield” survey of the community; or as a result of interviewing key staff members, or through contact with key referral agencies.
2. Invite students to “shadow” specific staff members in their work with clients (whether in the office or in home visits). Give the student specific guidance in what they are to be observing and analyzing. Monitor or facilitate a meeting in which “shadow and shadowee” give feedback to each other on their performance.
3. Design ways to orient the student(s) to the agency in which they are active: e.g., interviewing staff, informal interviews with agency clients about the agency itself, contacts with relevant referral and resource agencies. They also can process record some of these interviewing experiences.
4. Consider orienting students through a case. This is a way of “starting where the student is.... with what they want to know about how to work with clients. This could be done by selecting a case which you could “walk-through” with the student beginning with what the agency has to offer the particular client(s), how help is offered through agency services, what other services might be available in the community, how to begin thinking about assessment, etc.
5. Invite students to be participant observers in team meetings/staffings/staff meetings. Students can use the group process recording guide to organize their learning from these experiences and at the same time get to know how the agency functions.
6. Begin student's client contact with an intake experience. This can provide a beginning profile of the clients who come to the agency, the range of problems presented, how decisions are made to “open a case” or how to refer to other resources in the community.
7. Students should be given responsibility for their “own work” as soon as the orientation to the agency has been completed. This work can be a case assignment but it also can be another task assignment which will put them in touch with clients and/or staff, e.g., informing clients of a new service, follow-up calls to clients as part of program evaluation, community outreach and/or needs assessment contacts.
8. When the student is given full responsibility for service delivery to client(s) from the beginning, the field instructor should allow sufficient time (with first case) to work with the student on how to approach the case. For example, discussion could focus on how to understand the request for service/help, how one might approach the first interview vis-a-vis information for initial assessment, what the student is “expecting”?anxious about in this first contact, etc.
9. If a student does not have the specific background to deal with the particular client population, or if the cases seem overwhelmingly difficult, it might be possible to begin with just one case and stay with it for the first few weeks of placement. This is preferable to delaying client contact. Most students will learn more quickly if the experience is tied to an immediate problem that needs solving, i.e., a real client.
10. In some instances it may be possible for a field instructor to “share” case/client situation with a student. For example, think of viable additions to the service being provided, e.g., meeting with client's children during client's individual or group time, designing case management functions for student to perform, etc.
11. Provide the student with the social study (or primary data collection) outline used by the agency, and have them organize and/or update case record information for selected clients.

12. Have the student sit in the agency waiting room to observe how clients are greeted and treated by “intake” agency staff. Encourage them to try to put themselves in the clients' place as they begin their “relationship” with the agency/service.

13. Have students handle the telephones for a few hours (after being well oriented to the agency). Answering questions that come in about agency services will give the student yet another view of agency purpose and function and will expand their beginning understanding of “asking for help.”
Mid-semester Evaluation Guidelines

The mid-semester evaluation is a formal verbal conference, to be conducted during the week specified in the field education calendar.

This evaluation is to be verbal unless terms outlined in the Learning Plan are not being met at a satisfactory level.

If, in the opinion of the field instructor or the student, concerns warrant significant negative feedback, a written evaluation in the form of the Corrective Action Plan must be completed. The Corrective Action Plan must be discussed with and submitted to the field liaison for review as soon as possible.

To assist with your planning, the following checklist is offered as a guide.

**The Student and Field Instructor:**
- ____ discuss each of the student's significant assignments to date.
- ____ review the Learning Plan with regard to progress.
- ____ summarize the most significant areas of progress as well as areas of marginal or unsatisfactory progress.
- ____ evaluate the student/supervisor relationship with regard to teaching and learning styles, directness of feedback and other process issues.
- ____ complete the Corrective Action Plan when indicated.

**Evaluation Forms**

**B.S.W.**
- SLWK 393 Junior Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SLWK 494-495 Senior Field Education Student Evaluation Form

**M.S.W.**
- SLWK 612 Advanced Standing Program Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SLWK 693-694 Foundation Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SLWK 695 Foundation Block Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SLWK 793-794 Clinical Concentration Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SLWK 795 Clinical Concentration Block Field Education Student Evaluation Form
- SWAPPP Field Education I and II Student Evaluation Form
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Organizational Chart

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Faculty Adviser

Consultation

Field Liaison

Consultation

Agency Field Instructor

Consultation

Student
Introduction to Field

Field education is integral to social work education and for preparing students for professional practice. Many social work graduates and practicing professionals say that it was their field experience they valued most in their graduate or undergraduate program. Your field placement is an opportunity for you to engage in the process of becoming a professional social worker by being in an agency and learning/practicing the knowledge and skills of social work practice.

There are many different settings in which social work is practiced. In all agencies there are opportunities to learn about many things. You may find yourself placed in an agency that was not your “first choice.” Our recommendation is that you interview with the agency and look at the opportunities it can bring. Some of the best learning stories are told by students who found themselves in contexts they would not have chosen.

You may feel very ready for field. You may feel very anxious. All of this is fine. The important part is that, as soon as possible, you need to position yourself as a receptive learner in your field agency. In the classroom, you are learning to know and understand, in the field you are learning to do.

You will have a field instructor who will meet with you in the agency every week for at least an hour for supervision. Your field instructor is someone who has been approved by the School of Social Work; the majority have been through training and are committed to social work education and teaching the next generation of social workers. We consider field instructors like faculty – they have a role in teaching you professional practice skills including ethics and values. All field instructors are different and have different styles of instruction and different expectations. Some field instructors may be a little more formal and will maintain strict professional boundaries; others may be more casual and include you in daily activities, home visits and lunch. Some field instructors may expect you to “hit the ground running,” while others will take more time to orient you or to have you shadow them for a while before you begin working with clients. Much depends upon the agency and the type of social work that is practiced.

What can you expect from field placement?

- Expect to learn about clients, the agency and yourself
- Expect to increase your practice skills, from wherever you are starting
- Expect to be challenged – a good field placement requires you to go beyond your comfort zone
- Expect to learn about and utilize community resources
- Expect to be part of the agency team and to contribute to that team
- Expect to be valued as a contributor and given the time to learn
- Expect to put into practice what you have learned from books

What is expected from you?

- Be professional – dress appropriately, be dependable and prompt, respectful and receptive
- Communicate often and openly with your field instructor
- Approach your clients with compassion and a willingness to help
- Be receptive to feedback from your field instructor, your liaison and from others in the agency
- Complete all required written work for field thoughtfully and on time
- Talk with your field instructor if you have concerns; bring your liaison into the conversation if you feel your concerns are not being resolved
- Work actively to develop skills
Work actively to develop self awareness
Be a positive representative of the school, your student body and the social work field

**Purpose and Use of a Working Contract**

All students are required to complete a working contract within the first two weeks of field placement. This document specifies the agreement between you and the field instructor regarding your weekly schedule in field, important meetings you are expected to attend (for example, your supervision time, team meetings that are required, etc.), and when your conference agendas and process recordings or journals will be due.

It is important that you complete the working contract as soon as possible and have it signed by your field instructor, in order to prevent any misunderstanding. Use the template below to prepare your contract. Your field liaison will review and sign the working contract as well.

- [Working Contract Example](#) [PDF]
- [Working Contract Template](#) [Word document]

**Purpose and Use of Learning Plans**

What is a learning plan?

It is a document developed by the student, in collaboration with the field instructor, that specifies what the student will learn, how the learning will take place and in what period of time.

Who must do a learning plan?

All field students must develop a personal learning plan.

Why use a learning plan?

The learning plan is a good tool to track your progress over time. Because it specifies goals or issues for focus, it can guide your activities and focus so that your time in field is most productive.

When do I complete a learning plan?

You should complete your learning plan during the first month of field. It is intended to be “a living document” that will be modified and updated as your field experience progresses and as new opportunities arise.

- [Learning Plan Example](#) [PDF]
- [Learning Plan Template](#) [Word document]
Purpose and Use of Conference Agendas

As the learner, you have the responsibility of making sure that your weekly meeting with your field instructor is productive and meets your learning needs. Each week, prepare a list of topics or issues you wish to discuss with the field instructor. Some topics will be about specific clients or projects you are working on, while others will concern conceptual or practical issues that are arising.

To discipline yourself to fully own the responsibility for your part in supervision, you must prepare a weekly conference agenda.

Keys to using this tool well are:

- Be thoughtful - this is an important hour in your learning experience
- Prepare your agenda and provide it to your field instructor ahead of time
- Outline specific questions or areas for discussion

- Conference Agenda Example [PDF]
- Conference Agenda Template [Word document]

Purpose and Use of Journals

Journals are to be completed by Junior BSW students in SWK 393. The journal is intended to aid students in developing critical analytical skills in regard to their field experience and their own performance. The student records significant activities and experiences in the field placement. The journal reflects orientation and breadth of exposure to agency life as well as itemizes involvement in diverse social work methodology. This assists the faculty liaison, the student and field instructor to shape a full experience in keeping with a student's and the program's educational objectives. Completion of the journals is intended to developmentally support reflective, critical thinking, and integrative skills that will be utilized in writing process recordings. Your journal should be submitted each week to your field instructor and monthly to your field liaison. Discussion of your journal should be a regular part of your supervision time.
**Purpose and Use of Process Recordings**

Process recordings are an integral part of the learning experience in field. They provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your work, to build your self awareness, to share your experiences and thoughts with your instructor, and to teach you how to relate theory to practice.

The purpose of the process recordings is to enhance students’ ability to recall the details of their interactive work with clients and/or colleagues; to write clearly and coherently about the complex thoughts, actions and feelings that comprise their social work practice; to reflect on their work, integrating theoretical concepts, skills and values that are being taught in the curriculum; and to identify the core competencies used in social work practice.

It is important and required that students in the senior BSW and the MSW field education courses complete a process recording each week. BSW students in junior field will complete two process recordings in the one semester field course. The focus of any process recording could be work with a client system, a group, or experience in a professional meeting. Regardless of the focus, you should be able to discuss your feelings, your analysis and any connection to classroom learning that is relevant. You will probably write about a segment of interaction rather than an entire session or meeting. The length of a good process recording is 3-5 typewritten pages. It is imperative that only initials, not full names, be used in process recordings in order to protect confidentiality of clients.

Your process recordings should be submitted each week to your field instructor, who will include his/her written comments. Discussion of your process recordings should be a regular part of your supervision time.

You and your field instructor should decide on the best format for your process recordings, with the approval of your field liaison. See the following links for examples of the format styles for process recordings.

- **Process Recording Example – Column Format** [PDF]
- **Process Recording Template – Column Format** [Word document]
- **Process Recording Templates – Narrative Format** [Word document]
  - Process Recording Outline for Social Work Practice with Individuals, Couples, and Families
  - Process Recording Outline for Social Work Practice with Small Client Groups
  - Process Recording Outline for Social Work Practice with Community and Organizational Groups
Ideas for the First Three Weeks in the Field

It is important that you immediately get involved in your agency and begin the learning process. Some agencies will have a full schedule or plan already in place for you when you arrive. Others will not. Either way, you are a partner in your learning process and initiative on your part will be necessary.

Here are some suggestions for your beginning weeks of field:

- Shadow staff members during client contacts or interagency meetings
- Interview staff about what they do
- Observe case staffings or other team meetings
- Read the policy and procedure manual
- Review any community resource books owned by the agency, or do an internet search about other community agencies
- Read relevant journal articles about the population(s) your agency serves and discuss these with your field instructor or another staff member
- Collect the key forms used in agency documentation and become familiar with how and when each is used
- If the agency does not have up to date resource material from other agencies, visit those agencies to collect such material
- Meet with the agency person who oversees records/documentation to learn specifics of how to document per agency standards
- If there is an administrative assistant within the agency who supports the program you are assigned to, interview that Admin to learn day-to-day details that will make your initial entry easier

Macro Experience Exemplars

B.S.W. seniors and Foundation students are required to complete at least one “macro assignment” during field. Here are examples:

- An exploration/windshield survey of a particular section of an agency's service area gathering data on socio-economic, political, environmental, and historical factors and resources
- An organizational analysis reviewing agency charter, mission, goals, domain, long-range plans, legislative agendas and budgetary issues
- An assessment of the impact of state policies on agency clients and staff
- Use of the 2010 Census data to examine the character of a community or service area
- A review of funding sources for the agency and the implications of private, public, not-for-profit and faith-based sources
- Attendance at community or agency decision-making sessions, Boards and committees
- Interviews with key leaders in community, agency, state government, civic associations, churches, etc.
- Assisting the agency and its coalition members in developing a legislative agenda for the annual meeting of the Virginia General Assembly
- The creation of an advocacy campaign that the agency or members of its staff are sponsoring
- Collaboration with staff in writing grant proposals or other fundraising activities
- Attendance at task force, coalition, or inter-organizational meetings
- Research projects that evaluate program outcomes and effectiveness
• Participation in creating agency brochures and other documents for client and community education.
• Development or updating of community resource directories or agency policy documents.

Transportation Policy

VCU School of Social Work students are not permitted to transport clients in their own vehicles as part of their Field Internship responsibilities, unless the agency is willing to indemnify the student transporter. Proof of the agency's indemnity coverage for student(s) is required. Students not covered by the agency, but who choose to use their own vehicles to transport clients, may be liable in the event of an accident in which the client(s) or other passengers are injured. Students need to talk with their field instructors and their insurance agents about the type of automobile insurance required when transporting clients. It is students’ responsibility to ensure that these issues are resolved before they transport any clients.

VCU Field Education Department
August 2013

Your Personal Safety

Guidelines for General Personal Risk Reduction

- Walk with a sense of purpose. Be aware of your body language.
- Be alert! Don’t walk “in a daze.” For example, be aware of strangers who approach and speak to you. Keep a safe distance and keep moving.
- Walk on the outside of the sidewalk so you are away from possible hiding places.
- Do not walk on the side of the street where you see a group of people loitering.
- Be aware of safe places such as stores, library, schools and community centers in areas where you are walking or visiting that you might use as a refuge.
- Do not carry a purse or bag. If you must carry one, conceal it, or use a shoulder bag or backpack.
- Wear sensible and appropriate clothing, low heeled shoes and avoid wearing jewelry that could be pulled off, used to grab you, or wrapped around you in some way.
- Assess multi-story buildings for safety. If you need to take an elevator, check out the interior before entering. If it appears unsafe, wait for the next elevator. If a suspicious person enters the elevator after you are there, exit before the door closes. If you can’t exit, stand next to the control panel and if you are accosted, press all the buttons.
- If you need to take the stairs in a multi-story building, be aware of who is in the stairwell and how far apart the exits are.
Risk Reduction in the Field

- Learn to appreciate realistic limitations. Be reasonable about what is, and is not, possible. Know when to stay and when to leave.

- Keep your own work area as safe as possible: keep it clear of items that could become harmful to anyone involved in a physical intervention. For example, keep objects which could be used as weapons (e.g., sharp objects) hidden from view.

- Avoid seeing clients with reputations for unprovoked assaults, or those with acute paranoid psychotic symptoms, in an empty office without back up or security available. Alert other staff members, prior to beginning your session that assistance might be needed. When possible, leave the door to the office ajar and always sit or stand closest to the door.

- Act calmly. Keep the “scream” out of your voice. An emotional or aggressive response to a distraught individual is likely to reinforce and escalate the aggression. Remember, clients and others who are violent are often reacting to a feeling of helplessness and/or loss of control. Therefore, you need to be in control of the situation.

- Take a non-threatening, but protected, posture to avoid appearing confrontational. For example, stand slightly sideways to the individual, and keep a safe distance to avoid sudden lunges, punches or kicks. Avoid a stare-down by periodically breaking eye contact.

- Do not walk away from a person who is escalating. Acknowledge the person’s feelings and try to talk them down. Encouraging the person to sit down may sufficiently delay or divert the possibility of an attack. Usually, it is most important to demonstrate rapport rather than authority.

- Observe the process as you interact with a client who is being aggressive. Identify which of your actions seem to calm and which seem to inflame, and act accordingly.

- Avoid sudden movements or issuing ultimatums or strident commands. Whenever possible, allow the person to make behavioral choices. Directives or alternatives should be stated calmly, concretely and in action terms.

- Do not touch the individual you are trying to calm down unless you are willing to restrain him/her (and you have been trained to do so), and only when there is sufficient staff to do so in a manner consistent with the agency’s containment policies.

- If you are threatened or injured while in field placement, or are involved in an incident where your safety is or could be compromised, the incident should immediately be reported to your field instructor, your field liaison and to the Field Office at (804) 828-0708
Mid-semester Evaluation Guidelines

The mid-semester evaluation is a formal verbal conference, to be conducted during the week specified in the field education calendar.

This evaluation is to be verbal unless terms outlined in the Learning Plan are not being met at a satisfactory level.

If, in the opinion of the field instructor or the student, concerns warrant significant negative feedback, a written evaluation in the form of the Corrective Action Plan must be completed. The Corrective Action Plan must be discussed with and submitted to the field liaison for review as soon as possible.

To assist with your planning, the following checklist is offered as a guide.

**The Student and Field Instructor:**
- ____ discuss each of the student's significant assignments to date.
- ____ review the Learning Plan with regard to progress.
- ____ summarize the most significant areas of progress as well as areas of marginal or unsatisfactory progress.
- ____ evaluate the student/supervisor relationship with regard to teaching and learning styles, directness of feedback and other process issues.
- ____ complete the Corrective Action Plan when indicated.

**Evaluation Forms**

**B.S.W.**

SLWK 393 Junior Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SLWK 494-495 Senior Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form

**M.S.W.**

SLWK 612 Advanced Standing Program Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SLWK 693-694 Foundation Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SLWK 695 Foundation Block Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SLWK 793-794 Clinical Concentration Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SLWK 795 Clinical Concentration Block Field Instruction Student Evaluation Form  
SWAPPP Field Instruction I and II Student Evaluation Form

**ALL**

Corrective Action Plan
STANDARDS OF FIELD EDUCATION

PROGRAM

The VCU Social Work Program implements the curriculum policy statement established by the Council on Social Work Education by setting forth the division of responsibility between field agencies and the School regarding the administration of the field practicum, the establishment of criteria for the selection of field settings, and appointment of field instructors.

Rights and Responsibilities of the School

1. Field Education Department:
   a. administers the Field Education Program and makes all decisions affecting students' placement in and progress through all field education courses; e.g., agency selection, assigning students, field instruction hours, grades, etc.;
   b. maintains an information system for the purpose of effective field education planning;
   c. selects the students to be referred to agencies for field education placement;
   d. provides pertinent information on students to the placement agency;
   e. provides a faculty member to serve as liaison between the School and each agency;
   f. prepares students for the field placement experience;
   g. provides consultation to agencies (and staff) with regard to the general development of the agency's Field Education Program;
   h. recruits and develops new field placement sites and appropriate field instructors within those agencies;
   i. evaluates all components of the Field Education Program including field instructors, liaisons, agencies, and the Field Department itself;
   j. is informed of and intervenes, as appropriate, in all field placement situations which are problematic from the perspective of any of the following participants: student, field instructor, field liaison, other faculty, or agency staff;
   k. studies issues in field education, including those problems and opportunities which emerge in our own program;
   l. offers field instruction seminars for new field instructors;
   m. offers meetings and institutes for the professional development of field instructors and other agency staff;
   n. acquaints agency directors and field instructors with the educational objectives of the total curriculum and the policies of the field department;
   o. participates actively in curriculum work that contributes to the integration of classroom and field learning.

2. Faculty Field Liaisons:
   Field liaisons are full-time or adjunct faculty of the School of Social Work. They carry many responsibilities of the Field Department as they liaison from the School to the placement agency. Field liaisons are primarily responsible for facilitating field teaching and student learning, monitoring student progress and agency educational opportunities, fostering interchange between the School and the practice community, and evaluating student achievements and field instructor efforts. They carry out these responsibilities through the following activities:
   a. making agency visits and maintaining ongoing contact to confer with the field instructor and the student;
   b. providing students with written expectations at the beginning of placement;
c. reading process recording and other records or materials provided by the student to gain a firsthand impression of the student's progress in the field placement;
d. providing feedback to students regarding their progress in field;
e. being readily available to students during office hours or by telephone for consultation and problem solving;
f. providing written feedback to students when there are difficulties, including a plan for remediation;
g. assigning final grades based on the field instructor's evaluation, assessment of written materials, and information derived from liaison conferences;
h. helping field instructors design meaningful learning experiences for student(s) placed in the agency;
i. providing consultation to the field instructor regarding the student's progress in the field;
j. sharing with the field instructor, and other appropriate agency staff, information about the M.S.W. and B.S.W. program;
k. helping orient students to the field course;
l. participation in the formal training of field instructors, as requested;
m. informing the student's adviser if the student is experiencing difficulty in field education or is at risk of receiving an F;
n. bringing current practice developments to the attention of M.S.W. and B.S.W. Program faculty to ensure that the School's curriculum is responsive to trends in professional social work practice;
o. providing ongoing evaluation of the placement agency and field instructor's willingness and ability to provide learning opportunities and field instruction consistent with the learning objectives of the M.S.W. and B.S.W. curricula and with the curriculum standards set forth by the Council on Social Work Education.

**Rights and Responsibilities of Field Placement Agency**

1. The Agency has the right to:
   a. a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the School of Social Work
   b. identify their setting as an approved VCU Field Practicum site
   c. receive a field application on each prospective student
   d. interview all prospective students;
   e. reject individual prospective students who cannot function in the agency’s program
   f. regular contact with the Field Department through faculty field liaison visits and other consultations as requested
   g. send their field instructors to all Field Department educational offerings
   h. require students to meet health and safety standards of the agency
      ask that a student be removed from the agency for cause (see Procedures for Removal of a Student from the Field Agency)

2. The Agency accepts the following responsibilities to:
   a. designate qualified agency personnel to serve as field instructors
   b. structure the workload of those field instructor(s) to make time available to provide field instruction, i.e., it takes approximately four hours per week to meet field instruction responsibilities for one student
   c. inform the School, using the link on the Field Instruction page of the VCU SSW website, about the number of students who can be interviewed for placement each year
   d. interview all assigned students regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or political belief
   e. facilitate the development of a climate in the agency conducive to field instruction and student learning
f. provide appropriate work space, an accessible telephone, clerical assistance and reimbursement for expenses, if at all possible

g. provide student(s) with an orientation to the agency which includes policies, procedures and requirements related to health and safety and other policies relevant to the practicum

h. prepare students in whatever way is necessary to maximize their safety in the learning environment: in the agency, in the community and with the client population(s) served

i. provide students the opportunity to participate in the overall agency program, as appropriate to their educational needs, preparation and practice competency

j. balance service delivery needs with students’ learning needs, i.e., it is important to avoid using students to fill staffing deficits

k. identify M.S.W. and B.S.W. students as “students” (to clients and the community) while they are engaged in a field practicum at the agency

Rights and Responsibilities of the Field Instructor

1. Field Instructors have the right to:
   a. receive appropriate information from the Field Education Department on the student assigned to their agency
   b. participate in interviewing the prospective student
   c. on-site conferences and ongoing interaction with their assigned faculty field liaison and consultation with other Field Department staff
   d. participate in the educational offerings of the Field Department
   e. use of the VCU library
   f. information about the M.S.W. or B.S.W. curriculum
   g. request removal of a student from the agency for cause (see Procedures for Removal of a Student from the Field Agency).

2. The Field Instructor is expected to:
   a. complete Field Instruction Orientation, if the instructor is new to VCU
   b. select and assign tasks appropriate to the student's individual learning needs and competency, which are consistent with the defined objectives of field education
   c. plan appropriate orientation activities, to include: orientation to the agency, its policies and procedures related to clients and to agency professionals such as safety, risk management, sexual harassment, etc.
   d. hold an individual weekly conference with the student for a minimum of 1(one) hour to focus on reviewing her/his work and professional development and to provide feedback and instruction;
   e. read and write feedback on the student’s weekly process recording(s)
   f. give on-going feedback to the students about their performance in the field education course and provide written documentation when the student is in difficulty and/or at risk of getting an F in the M.S.W. program or at risk of a D or F in the B.S.W. program
   g. complete a written evaluation of the student once a semester on a form provided by the school
   h. meet with the faculty liaison and attend other meetings as arranged by the school
   i. notify the liaison immediately if the student's performance is less than satisfactory
   j. complete an end of the year evaluation of her/his experience with the Field program
   k. adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics in her/his work with students
Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

1. All Students are entitled to:
   a. a general orientation to field education by the School and a specific orientation to
      the setting by the agency
   b. interview and be placed in an agency which will provide field instruction focused
      on their learning needs
   c. reasonable accommodations based on a documented disability under conditions
      of the Americans with Disabilities Act
   d. meet with their field instructors individually at least one hour a week during field
      placement
   e. on-going feedback on their progress in the field placement
   f. written feedback on their process recording(s)
   g. agency based meetings and ongoing communication with their liaisons as needed
   h. access to the Director of the Field Department for consultation about any concern

2. All Students are responsible for the following:
   a. adherence to agency norms and standards governing professional practice,
      including professional presentation of self
   b. adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics in their practice at the placement agency;
   c. identifying themselves as a “student” while they are engaged in a field education
      practicum at the agency
   d. adherence to the principles and rules of confidentiality
      (1) specifically, no identifying client information is to be shared with anyone
      except ones field instructor and other appropriate agency staff;
      (2) when case material or agency material is used in class or in process
      recordings all identifying information must be disguised
   e. knowing about policies and procedures regarding field instruction and adhering
      to them
   f. active participation in their own learning in the field placement including
      identification of learning goals, turning in the required written work, e.g.,
      Learning Plans, Agendas, weekly Process Recordings, Journals, and taking
      initiative in identifying and working through, with appropriate field personnel,
      any learning difficulties which may arise
   g. completing an evaluation of their field placement experience
BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK

B.S.W. Field Education Objectives
The objectives of the field education courses reflect the objectives of the Bachelor's in Social Work Program and parallel the learning objectives of the three co-requisite, practice courses. Upon completion of field education courses, students are expected to utilize knowledge, values and skills essential for entry-level generalist practice in such a way as to demonstrate:

- An understanding of the social work profession and commitment to its goals and ethics;
- The ability to assess professional strengths and weaknesses and to set goals for continued development of self awareness;
- Skills in problem solving with client systems. This includes the ability to identify and assess problems, select, implement and evaluate a plan of intervention;
- The ability to use theory and research to guide practice;
- Skill in understanding, developing, and effectively using and terminating professional relationships;
- The ability to recognize the impact of diversity, on client systems and professional relationships;
- The ability to understand the impact of oppression on all people and basic strategies to alleviate the impact;
- The ability to assess and understand agency policy and procedures, to identify problem areas within the agency and to suggest appropriate changes for the improvement of service delivery;
- Skill in determining community resources and in making effective referrals;
- The ability to use field instruction effectively to develop knowledge, values and skills;
- The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in both oral and written form;
- The ability to set appropriate priorities, organize work and manage time; and
- The capacity to critically evaluate ones own practice and to assume responsibility for continued professional development.
The Field Sequence
Field Education in the B.S.W. Program consists of three sequential courses. They are SLWK 393 (Junior Field Instruction), and SLWK 494 and 495 (Senior Field Instruction I and II). SLWK 393 is open only to social work majors with Junior standing (54 credits) who have a minimum of 2.0 GPA and have earned a B or above in SLWK 201 and SLWK 230 and a C or above in all social work courses taken. SLWK 393 must be taken with SLWK 332 (Social Work Practice: Fundamentals). SLWK 313 (Person in Society) is a prerequisite for both SLWK 393 and 332. The SLWK 393 field course can only be taken in the spring semester or summer semester with SLWK 332).

SLWK 494 and 495 are continuous courses open only to social work majors of senior standing who have earned a C or above in attempted 300-level social work courses. These field courses must be taken with the corequisite practice courses SLWK 441 (Social Work Practice I) and SLWK 442 (Social Work Practice II). SLWK 494 can only be taken in the fall semester (14 hours per week) and SLWK 495 in the subsequent spring semester (14 hours per week). Continuation into SLWK 495 requires a grade of C or above in SLWK 494 and SLWK 441.

Students will have the option of either being placed in one agency setting for all three semesters of field education or two different agency settings during the field education sequence.
Policies Governing B.S.W. Program Field Education

Application for Field Education
Application for field education courses must be made using the online system designed by the School of Social Work Department of Field Education and must be received by the deadline set in the fall or spring semester prior to the one in which field placement is to begin. Application must be made separately for SLWK 393 Junior Field Instruction and for SLWK 494–495 Senior Field Education. Advisers have an active role in this process. They must verify with the student that course and grade requirements for the field practicum have been met, and they should review the application once completed.

All placements are arranged by the school's field education department. If a student is aware of an agency not yet used by the School as a field placement site, the student may initiate a call to that agency to inquire about the agency’s interest. If the agency may be interested in a student intern, the student or agency should call the Field Department for further exploration. Students are not to call existing agencies asking for placements as this creates duplication and confusion for all parties involved. It is the Field Department’s responsibility and prerogative to decide on the placement of students in existing agencies.

Placement Interviews
At the beginning of the placement semester, each student who has applied for field will be tentatively assigned to an agency, pending the placement interview. It is the students’ responsibility to schedule this interview. No placement is considered final until after the interview when the agency indicates its acceptance or rejection of the student in writing. If two consecutive agency interviews result in the student not being accepted for placement due to performance or behavior concerns, no further placement will be attempted until the student and her/his academic adviser meet with the director of field education to determine appropriate alternatives.

Hours and Days of Field Placement
Students are to be present and engaged in the work of the field agency for the required hours per week for each semester of field education for which they are registered.

School, Agency and/or Religious Holidays
Students do not attend field placement on agency holidays but do attend on some school holidays (i.e. reading days, inclement weather days) if their agency is open on their usual day in field. During spring break (one week) and Thanksgiving students do not attend field placement.

Students' observance of their major religious holidays is respected. When scheduling conflicts prove unavoidable, no student will be penalized due to religious reasons but will make up the hours missed at another time within the semester.

Students are to notify the field instructor when they must be absent because of illness or other reasons; if the absence is expected to last more than one week, they also must notify the faculty field liaison.

All absences, except for required meetings arranged for by the School, are to be made up in a manner mutually agreed to by the student, the field instructor, and the faculty field liaison. All time missed must be made up so that hours in field reaches the required number for the course. Ultimately, it is the student who is responsible for ensuring completion for the required number of hours in each field course.
Semester Breaks

Prior to lengthy semester breaks (more than two weeks), students are expected to assess carefully their agency assignments with their field instructors to determine if, and how frequently, during their break time, they will need to be at the agency to meet ongoing professional responsibilities. This assessment, and the resultant schedule designed to meet these responsibilities, will become part of their Working Contract and is to be shared with the faculty field liaisons.

Some overtime in field education is to be expected. These hours may not be accumulated for use as leave time, vacation time, or to end the field placement early. The expectation of the school is that students not be involved in excessive overtime during their field practicum. If the overtime becomes excessive, students should discuss this with their field instructor and with their faculty field liaison so that an adjustment can be made.

Required Field Assignments

The Field Department requires students to develop an individualized learning plan and working contract with their field instructor within the first few weeks of the semester. This plan will be modified as learning goals change during the field practicum. A copy of the plan and working contract is to be given to the faculty field liaison.

Students are required to complete a minimum of one process recording per week. The process recording outlines are to serve as guides and may be modified by the field instructor and/or field liaison.

Students are to present written agendas in preparation for their weekly field instruction conference.

Students will be expected to share some of this written work with their field liaison in preparation for each scheduled liaison visit.

Other written work may be required by the field instructor and/or the field liaison.

Grading

The faculty field liaison, in consultation with the field instructor, is responsible for assigning the student's grade for the field education course.

Grades for field education are based on:

- An evaluation form completed by the field instructor reflecting the student’s attainment of field placement learning objectives, including the student’s demonstrated level of knowledge and skill in social work practice;
- Faculty field liaison's assessment, from process recordings and other materials submitted by the student, of the student’s progress and current level of social work practice knowledge and skill;
- Conferences between the faculty field liaison, the field instructor and the student, which are to evaluate the student's current level of social work practice knowledge and skill, as well as the student's ability to engage in a discussion of his/her work and his/her professional development.
The following grades are used for B.S.W. field education courses:

**A = EXCEPTIONAL** – Student’s performance consistently exceeds the usual expectations and is outstanding in a number of areas.

**B = VERY GOOD** – Student’s performance is consistently above average in most areas.

**C = SATISFACTORY** – Student consistently performs at an acceptable level in all areas.

**D = MARGINAL** – Student’s performance is below acceptable levels in specific areas. This is not a passing grade and the course must be repeated. Approval to repeat must be obtained from the student's adviser, the field department and the B.S.W. Program director.

**F = FAILURE** – Student has not demonstrated the level of social work practice knowledge, values and skills appropriate for the field education course. Students should discuss the advisability of their continuance in the program with their adviser. Approval to repeat the course must be obtained from the student’s adviser, the Field Department and the B.S.W. Program Director.

**I = INCOMPLETE** – The grade of Incomplete (I) presupposes that the student is doing passing work in the field education course, but because of illness or another emergency situation which is beyond the student's control, is unable to complete all course requirements by the end of the semester.

The grade of incomplete (I) may not be given to allow the student to do additional work in order to meet field education course requirements more adequately. The grade of Incomplete (I) requires an agreement in writing between the field instructor, the faculty field liaison, and the student about how the field course requirements will be met and in what time frame. An Incomplete Grade Form must be completed and filed with the associate dean.

The School of Social Work requires that all incomplete grades in all courses be graded by the instructor by the end of the second full week of classes in the semester immediately following the awarding of the Incomplete (second summer session, fall, spring). This policy assumes three semesters in a given year and notes any week with less than five days of classes is not a full week. If all requirements necessary for removal of the grade of Incomplete (I) are not satisfactorily met by the end of the second full week of classes in the semester immediately following the awarding of the Incomplete(I), the Incomplete (I) will be changed automatically to a grade of Fail (F).

**W = WITHDRAW** – The grade of Withdrawn (W) indicates that the student has officially withdrawn from the field education course after the first week and before the end of the eighth week of the semester. No student who has officially withdrawn from the field education course may continue in the field placement.

NOTE: UNIVERSITY POLICIES (see the Undergraduate Bulletin) REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT PENALTY (W), INCOMPLETE (I), OR GRADE APPEAL APPLY TO THE FIELD EDUCATION COURSES.
Withdrawal from Field Education

Students may not withdraw from a field instruction course even before the university “withdrawal date” without prior consultation with, and approval from, their faculty field liaison and their adviser.

Consultation must include the development of an alternate plan for completion of the course which meets the requirements of the curriculum.

The reasons for withdrawal and the plan for completion of the course must be discussed at the time of withdrawal and in writing to the director of Field Education and the director of the B.S.W. Program.

A student who has withdrawn from field (prior to University Withdrawal date) for reasons related to documented poor performance will be replaced only one time. If he/she withdraws again for reasons related to documented poor performance in the second placement he/she will not be placed again until the school provides an opportunity for the student, the student’s adviser, the B.S.W. program director, and an appropriate member of the Field Education Department to meet and review the student’s program and performance. The purpose of this meeting is to make recommendations. These recommendations may include (but are not limited to): rearrangement of student’s program to complete field education at a later time; having the student seek additional experiences outside of the university to address identified areas of weakness; providing one additional field placement opportunity or referral to the Academic Standards Committee.

Student Performance Problems

The field education course is quite different from other VCU courses. While a field placement in a community agency is organized around educational objectives determined by the B.S.W. curriculum, it also involves professional responsibilities to clients, agencies and the community. As a result of the involvement of these many stakeholders, it is imperative that we recognize early and respond quickly to students’ performance problems. When problems occur, it is crucial that the field instructor, student and faculty field liaison attend to a number of issues: the rights of clients to adequate professional service; the educational needs of the student (including access to corrective and supportive services, as appropriate); and, the “gatekeeping” function of the school and the social work professional community.

Procedures for Removal of a Student from the Field Agency

A request for the consideration of removal may be initiated by the field instructor, the agency executive, the faculty field liaison, or the student. In all cases, a written statement, which documents the issues and/or concerns, is to be prepared by the person initiating the action.

At the request of the agency, the field instructor or the faculty liaison, a student may be removed from the field placement agency for documented unprofessional conduct or for demonstrable lack of progress in attaining field placement learning objectives.

The following steps are to be taken:

1. The student will be apprised, orally or in writing, of the specific nature of the concern(s) about her/his behavior, progress in learning, or performance.
2. The person initiating the request will communicate her/his concern regarding the student to the others involved (e.g. field instructor, and liaison, etc.). The faculty liaison will alert the Director of Field Education.
3. In an effort to arrive at a resolution of the situation, a meeting will be held with, at a minimum, the student, the field instructor, and the faculty liaison. The student's adviser and the Director of Field Education will be informed and may be included. The purpose of this meeting would be to ascertain the facts and give
all parties involved an opportunity to raise their concerns and explore possibilities for resolution of the problem. The possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- continuation in the agency with a specific plan (including time limits) for correction in the areas identified as deficient.
- removal from the agency, without grade penalty, and replacement in another agency to complete the course requirements.
- removal from the agency, for documented cause, resulting in a Failing (F) grade.

4. In the event the situation is not resolved as a result of this meeting, the matter will be referred to the Director of Field Education.

Steps 2 to 4 should be completed in a period not to exceed three weeks.

Serious obstacles to the student’s learning in the agency may be addressed through a request for removal by the student. The following steps are to be taken:

1. The student will discuss the situation with the field instructor;
2. If the issue remains unresolved, the student will consult the faculty liaison to discuss the issues and the rationale for the request to be placed elsewhere. The Director of Field Education will be informed;
3. If, after such a discussion, the matter is not resolved, the faculty liaison will convene a meeting of the student, the field instructor, the Director of Field Education and the student's adviser. The purpose of such a meeting would be to ascertain the facts, to give all parties involved an opportunity to voice their concerns, and to serve as a basis for decisions;
4. The Director of Field Education, with the student and faculty liaison, will then proceed to make a decision in this matter. The possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- continuation in the agency with a specific plan (including time limits) for correction in the areas identified as deficient;
- removal from the agency, without grade penalty, and replacement in another agency to complete the course requirements;
- removal from the agency, for documented cause, resulting in a Failing (F) grade.

Steps 2 to 4 should be completed in a period not to exceed three weeks.

If, as a result of these procedures, a student is removed from the field agency for documented unprofessional conduct or demonstrable failure to progress in attaining field education objectives, a grade of Fail (F) will be assigned for the course.

If a student is removed from an agency and then reassigned during the same semester, that student must make up the time missed from field in order to complete successfully. The method of making up the time should be agreed to by both the field agency and faculty liaison.
**Evaluation of the Student's Performance**

Evaluation of the student's performance in the placement agency should be an ongoing process. This means the student is to receive continual assessment of and feedback about her/his performance throughout the placement.

1. Performance expectations are detailed in the field evaluation forms for each course. These forms are given to the student and the field instructor at the time of placement by the Field Department.
2. These expectations are to serve as the basis for the Individualized Learning Plan which is developed by the student and the field instructor.

If a student’s performance is evaluated by the field instructor as less than satisfactory at any point after mid-semester and prior to the end of the semester, the field instructor shall notify the faculty field liaison immediately.

A final conference, between the field instructor and the student, is to be held prior to the end of the semester to evaluate the student's field education performance. The student is expected to participate actively in the evaluation conference.

A written evaluation (using forms provided by the School of Social Work) by the field instructor is required one week prior to the end of each semester of B.S.W. Field Instruction.

The student must read the written evaluation and must sign it to indicate that he or she has read it, prior to giving it to the faculty field liaison.

If the student disagrees with any part of the evaluation, he or she may attach a signed addendum noting the areas of disagreement. Undergraduate Grade Appeal Procedures apply to Field Education courses (see Undergraduate Bulletin).

The field instructor must also sign the evaluation prior to giving it to the faculty field liaison for review and grading.

**Feedback on Placement Agencies, Field Instructors Faculty Field Liaisons and the Field Program**

At the end of each placement, forms are distributed by the Field Education Department of the School of Social Work. Students give feedback on the placement agency, the field instructor, the faculty field liaison and the Field Program. Field instructors give feedback on his/her experience with the Field Program. Faculty field liaisons give feedback on the placement agency and the field instructor. All feedback forms are returned directly to the Director of Field Education and constitute the primary data used in subsequent planning and placement decisions.

**B.S.W. Field Instruction Syllabi**

The syllabi for BSW Field Instruction can be found at the following links:

- **SLWK 393** Junior Field Instruction
- **SLWK 494 – 495** Senior Field Instruction I and II
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Purpose of Program and of Social Work Program
The purpose of the Master of Social Work program is to prepare graduate-level social workers with mastery of the knowledge, values, and skills essential for advanced social work practice in a multicultural society. The School accomplishes this purpose through its full and part-time programs of study for the M.S.W. degree in its on- and off-campus locations. The objectives of the M.S.W. program are to:

- provide a foundation curriculum of the knowledge, skills, ethics and values essential for work with individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, and organizations;
- provide a concentration curriculum preparing students for advanced practice in either clinical social work practice or social work administration, planning and policy practice in a range of settings;
- offer classroom and field instruction experiences that promote students' adherence to the profession's values and their application;
- offer learning experiences which sensitize students to the implications of diversity by helping them to identify and counteract individual and institutional prejudice, oppression and discrimination;
- enable students to analyze and critically evaluate professional practice, programs and service delivery systems;
- provide a learning environment that instills in students a commitment to continued learning and self-critical practice.
Field Education Courses
A. Field Education consists of two Foundation and two Concentration courses which are integral components of the Master of Social Work Program of the School of Social Work.

1. The purpose of field education is to provide opportunities for students to apply and test social work knowledge, values, and skills in relation to identified client needs, agency purpose, and social sanction. As students learn from the professional demands of agency life, the knowledge, attitudes, and skills acquired from all areas of the curriculum are translated into accountable performance and professional competence.

2. Field education also provides opportunities for students to gain new knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum through agency based practice, e.g., to experience differences and agreements between theoretical perspectives and the realities of daily practice and to integrate theory and practice.

B. Field Education courses are designed to enable students to learn:

1. the full range of the practice of social work with individuals, families, groups, communities, and in organizations;
2. to evaluate relevant policies and procedures that govern service delivery in an agency and to develop proposals for appropriate policy and procedural changes;
3. to incorporate social work values, ethics, knowledge, and practice principles in all professional interventions;
4. self-awareness and the ethical integrity required for competent professional performance with clients, within the social work profession, and in society;
5. to use scientifically grounded procedures and knowledge in their practice and in the evaluation of their professional work;
6. to recognize the contributions to society of human diversity and the implications of this diversity for social work practice;
7. to identify and propose strategies to counteract institutional and personal prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability;
8. to accept responsibility for continued learning and for contributing to the development of the social work profession.
Policies Governing M.S.W. Program Field Education

Application for Field Education
1. All students in the Master of Social Work Program must apply for placement in a field agency by completing the online application provided by the Field Education Department.
2. All placements are arranged by the School’s Field Education Department. If a student is aware of an agency not yet used by the School as a field placement site, the student may initiate a call to that agency to inquire about the agency’s interest. If the agency may be interested in a student intern, the student or agency must call the Field Department for further exploration. The agency site must be able to provide the appropriate type and level of experience to students to be considered. Students are not to call existing agencies asking for placements as this creates duplication and confusion for all parties involved. It is the Field Department’s responsibility and prerogative to decide on the placement of students in existing agencies.
3. Faculty advisers must review and approve the application for Field placement for part-time students to confirm that all prerequisites have been met.

Options for Completing Field Education Requirements
NOTE: All options for completing Field Education requirements meet or exceed the minimum 900 hours of field placement specified by the Council on Social Work Education for graduate programs.
1. The Concurrent Option
   a. Students enrolled in the full-time Master of Social Work Curriculum (15 credits per semester for 4 semesters) must complete Field Education requirements (3 credits per semester) concurrently with the four required academic courses per semester (12 credits). Exceptions to this policy may be granted for extenuating circumstances with approval from the Field Department and the student’s Faculty Adviser.
   b. Foundation and Concentration Curriculum students are in Field Education courses in both the Fall and the following Spring semesters.
      i. The concurrent option requires placement of the student in the same placement agency for both semesters;
      ii. A student who withdraws from Field Education prior to successfully completing the two semester placement must submit a new field application to the Director of Field Education and must repeat the entire two semester requirement. Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case by case basis.

2. The Block Field Placement Option
   a. This option is available to part-time M.S.W. students. Under certain circumstances, curriculum exception can be made for a full time student. Students may complete only one (Foundation or Concentration) of their two required field placements in a Block.
   b. Part-time students wishing to do a Block field placement must apply to the Field Department as noted above. The student's adviser, and the Director of Field Education will be involved in deciding if a block placement will provide the best learning opportunities for the student. The availability of appropriate field agencies will also be considered in the decision.
      i. Students who withdraw from a block Field Education placement prior to completing it must reapply to begin that Field Education course again.

3. Proposal to do Field placement in Student's Agency of Employment
a. Full and part-time M.S.W. students may submit a proposal to complete one of their field placements (Foundation or Concentration) in the social service agency where they are employed.
   i. The outline for the proposal can be found here. Instructions on how to complete the proposal can be found below. The completed proposal must be submitted to the Director of Field Education;
   ii. The Proposal will be reviewed by members of the Field Department to determine if the placement will meet the learning objectives of the Field Education course, is suitable for meeting the individual student's learning needs, and is designed to avoid potential conflicts of interest and dual relationships;

b. Students in the Advanced Standing Program complete only one field placement in the M.S.W. Program and are not eligible to submit a proposal to complete this placement in their agency of employment.

Placement Interviews
At the beginning of the placement semester, each student who has applied for field will be tentatively assigned to an agency, pending the placement interview. It is the students' responsibility to schedule this interview. No placement is considered final until after the interview when the agency indicates its acceptance or rejection of the student in writing. If two consecutive agency interviews result in the student not being accepted for placement due to performance or behavior concerns, no further placement will be attempted until the student and her/his academic advisor meets with the Director of Field Education to determine appropriate alternatives. A student may be terminated from the program for lack of acceptance by three or more field agencies if, in the judgment of faculty and field staff, the placements can provide appropriate field experiences without undue inconvenience to the student.

Hours and Days of Field Placement
1. Two Semester (Concurrent and Non-Concurrent) Options
   a. Foundation students are placed in the field agency for 14 hours (normally 2 days/week, normally Tuesdays and Wednesdays but negotiable between the student and agency) for two consecutive semesters. We require a minimum 4 hour shift for field work. A total of 420 field hours are required.
      i. If one of the two consecutive semesters is a summer semester, an additional half day of Field Education is required for each week of the summer semester, i.e., 2-1/2 days per week for a total of 420 hours.
   b. Concentration students are placed in the field agency for 21 hours (normally 3 days/week, normally Wednesdays – Fridays but negotiable between the student and agency) for two consecutive semesters. A total of 630 field hours are required. We require a minimum 4 hour shift for field work.
      i. If one of the two consecutive semesters is a summer semester, an additional half day of field placement is required for each week of the summer session, i.e., 3-1/2 days per week for a total of 630 hours.

2. Block Placement
   a. All Foundation Block field placements are five days per week, seven field placement hours per day (or the hours which correspond to a full working day at the agency), for one full semester (Summer, Fall or Spring) for a total of 525 hours. See Field Calendar for starting/ending dates.
   b. All Concentration Block field placements are five days per week, eight field placement hours per day (or the hours which correspond to a full working day at the agency), for one full semester (Summer, Fall or Spring) for a total of 600 hours. See Field Calendar for starting/ending dates.
Student Absences from Field Placement
1. Regular attendance in placement is expected for the entire scheduled field placement period.
2. Students are to notify the field instructor when they must be absent because of illness or other reasons; if the absence is expected to last more than one week, they must also notify the faculty field liaison.
3. All absences, except for required meetings arranged for by the School, are to be made up in a manner mutually agreed to by the student, the field instructor, and the faculty field liaison. Students are responsible for ensuring completion of the required hours for each field course.
4. Absences due to observance of religious holidays, attendance at professional meetings, or participation in professional conferences may be excused with the approval of the field instructor and the faculty field liaison.
5. Breaks: Prior to lengthy semester breaks (more than two weeks), students are expected to assess their agency assignments with their field instructor to determine if, and how frequently, during their vacation time, they will need to be at the agency to meet on-going professional responsibilities. This assessment, and the resultant schedule designed to meet these responsibilities, will become part of their Working Contract and is to be shared with their faculty field liaison.
6. Some overtime in field education is to be expected. These hours may not be accumulated for use as leave time, vacation time, or to end the field placement early. The expectation of the School is that students not be involved in excessive overtime during their field practicum. If the overtime becomes excessive, students should discuss this with their field instructor and with their faculty field liaison so that an adjustment can be made.

Required Field Assignments
1. The Field Department requires students to develop an individualized learning plan with their field instructor within the first few weeks of the semester. This plan will be modified as learning goals change during the field practicum. A copy of the Learning Plan is to be given to the faculty field liaison.
2. Students are required to complete a minimum of (1) one process recording per week. Process recording outlines are to serve as guides and may be modified by the field instructor and/or field liaison.
3. Students are to present written agendas in preparation for their weekly field instruction conference.
4. In the foundation field placement, students are to have one or more assignments which involve them in the community and in planning or organizational tasks within the agency. The purpose of these assignments and/or projects is to facilitate their understanding of the integration of micro and macro elements of social work practice and service delivery.
5. Students will be expected to share some of this written work with their faculty field liaison in preparation for each scheduled liaison visit, as determined by the liaison.
6. Other written work may be required by the field instructor and/or the field liaison.
Grading

1. The faculty field liaison, in consultation with the field instructor, is responsible for assigning the student's grade for the field education course.

2. Grades for field education are based on:
   a. an evaluation form completed by the field instructor which reflects the student's attainment of field education learning objectives and Learning Plan, including the student's demonstrated level of knowledge and skill in social work practice;
   b. faculty field liaison's assessment, from process recordings and other materials submitted by the student, of the student's progress and current level of social work practice knowledge and skill;
   c. conferences between the faculty field liaison, the field instructor, and the student, which are to evaluate the student's current level of social work practice knowledge and skill, as well as the student's ability to engage in a discussion of her/his work and her/his professional development.

3. The following grades are used for M.S.W. field education courses:

   **Progress (PR)** — The grade of Progress (PR) indicates that the student has made adequate progress during the first semester of a two semester placement. Upon successful completion of the second semester, the PR grade converts to a grade of Pass (P).

   **Pass (P)** — The grade of Pass (P) denotes satisfactory completion of the field education course requirements. It is given when the student has demonstrated the level of social work practice knowledge and skill appropriate for the field education course.

   The student must receive a grade of Pass (P) to continue in the Master of Social Work Program.

   **Fail (F)** — The grade of Fail (F) denotes unsatisfactory completion of field course requirements. It is given when the student has not demonstrated the level of social work practice knowledge and skill appropriate for the field education course or for documented unprofessional behavior. A student may be removed from the field placement agency, at any time, by the field instructor, field agency, or field liaison for either of the reasons stated above. The student's academic adviser should have been notified and involved in the attempts at remediation leading up to the failing grade.

   A grade of Fail (F) in a field education course results in the student being automatically and immediately dropped from the Master of Social Work Program without regard to overall grade-point average.

   **Incomplete (I)** — The grade of Incomplete (I) presupposes that the student is doing passing work in the field education course, but because of illness or other emergency situation which is beyond the student's control, is unable to complete all course requirements by the end of the semester.

   The grade of Incomplete (I) may not be given to allow the student to do additional work in order to meet field education course requirements more adequately.

   The grade of Incomplete (I) requires an agreement in writing between the field instructor, the faculty field liaison, and the student about how the field education requirements will be met and in what time frame. An incomplete Grade Form must be completed and filed with the Associate Dean.
4. If all requirements necessary for removal of the grade of Incomplete (I) are not satisfactorily met by the last day of field placement in the academic semester or summer session following the academic semester or summer session in which the Incomplete (I) was incurred, the Incomplete (I) will be changed automatically to a grade of Fail (F).

Withdrawn (W) — The grade of Withdrawn (W) indicates that the student has officially withdrawn from the field education course after the first week and before the end of the eighth week of the semester. No student who has officially withdrawn from the field education course may continue in the field placement.

NOTE: University policies (see the Graduate and Professional Programs Bulletin) regarding administrative withdrawal (W), incomplete (I), or grade appeal apply to the field education courses.

Withdrawal from Field Placement
1. Students may not withdraw from a field education course, even before the University “withdrawal date” without prior consultation with and approval from their field liaison and their faculty adviser.
2. Consultation must include the development of an alternate plan for completion of the course which meets the requirements of the curriculum.
3. The reasons for withdrawal and the plan for completion of the course must be communicated at the time of withdrawal to the Director of Field Education and the Director of the M.S.W. Program.
4. A student who has withdrawn from field (prior to the University Withdrawal date) for reasons related to documented poor performance, will be re-placed only one time. If he/she withdraws again for reasons related to documented poor performance in the second placement he/she will not be placed again until the School, through the Associate Dean's office, provides an opportunity for the student, the student's adviser, the M.S.W. Program Director, and an appropriate member of the Field Education Department to meet and review the student's program and performance. The purpose of this meeting is to make recommendations. These recommendations may include, but are not limited to: rearrangement of student's program to complete field placement at a later time; having the student seek additional experiences outside of the University to address identified areas of weakness; providing one additional field placement opportunity; or, referral to the Academic Standards Committee.

Student Performance Problems
The field education course is quite different from other University courses. While a field placement in a community agency is organized around educational objectives determined by the M.S.W. curriculum, it also involves professional responsibilities to clients, agencies, and the community. As a result of the involvement of these many stakeholders, it is imperative that we recognize early and respond quickly to student’s performance problems. When problems occur, it is crucial that the field instructor, student and faculty field liaison attend to a number of issues: the rights of clients to adequate professional service; the educational needs of the student (including access to corrective and supportive services, as appropriate); and, the “gatekeeping” function of the School and the social work professional community.
Procedures for Removal of a Student from a Field Agency

1. A request for the consideration of removal may be initiated by the field instructor, the agency executive, the faculty field liaison, or the student. In all cases, a written statement, which documents the issues and/or concerns, is to be prepared by the person initiating the action.

   a. At the request of the agency, the field instructor or the faculty liaison:
      1. A student may be removed from the field placement agency for documented unprofessional conduct or for demonstrable lack of progress in attaining field education learning objectives.
      2. The following steps are to be taken:
         a. The student will be apprised, orally or in writing, of the specific nature of the concern(s) about her/his behavior, progress in learning, or performance.
         b. The person initiating the request will communicate her/his concern regarding the student field instructor, and liaison. The faculty liaison will alert the Director of Field Education.
         c. In an effort to arrive at a resolution of the situation, a meeting will be held with, at a minimum, the student, the field instructor, and the faculty liaison. The student's adviser and the Director of Field Education will be informed and may be included. The purpose of this meeting would be to ascertain the facts and give all parties involved an opportunity to raise their concerns and explore possibilities for resolution of the problem. The possibilities include, but are not limited to:
            i. continuation in the agency with a specific plan (including time limits) for correction in the areas identified as deficient;
            ii. removal from the agency, without grade penalty, and replacement in another agency to complete the course requirements;
            iii. removal from the agency, for documented cause, resulting in a Failing (F) grade;
      d. In the event the situation is not resolved as a result of this meeting, the matter will be referred to the Director of Field Education.
   e. Steps “b” to “d” should be completed in a period not to exceed three weeks.

b. Serious obstacles to the student's learning in the agency may be addressed through a request for removal by the student. The following steps are to be taken:
   1. The student will discuss the situation with the field instructor;
   2. If the issue remains unresolved, the student will consult the faculty liaison to discuss the issues and the rationale for the request to be placed elsewhere. The Director of Field Education will be informed;
   3. If, after such a discussion, the matter is not resolved, the faculty liaison will convene a meeting of the student, the field instructor, the Director of Field Education and the student's adviser. The purpose of such a meeting would be to ascertain the facts, to give all parties involved an opportunity to voice their concerns, and to serve as a basis for decisions;
   4. The Director of Field Education, with the student and faculty liaison, will then proceed to make a decision in this matter. The possibilities include, but are not limited to:
a. continuation in the agency with a specific plan (including time limits) for correction in the areas identified as deficient;
b. removal from the agency, without grade penalty, and replacement in another agency to complete the course requirements;
c. removal from the agency, for documented cause, resulting in a Failing (F) grade.

5. Steps “b” to “d” should be completed in a period not to exceed three weeks.

c. If, as a result of these procedures, a student is removed from the field agency for documented unprofessional conduct or demonstrable failure to progress in attaining field education objectives, a grade of Fail (F) will be assigned for the course.
d. A student who is removed from the field placement agency under such circumstances, and for whom a grade of Fail (F) is assigned for the field education course, will be dropped automatically and immediately from the Master of Social Work Program without regard to grade-point average.
e. If a student is removed from an agency and then reassigned during the same semester, that student must make up the time missed from field in order to complete successfully. The method of making up the time should be agreed to by both the field agency and faculty liaison.

Evaluation of the Student's Performance

1. Evaluation of the student's performance in the placement agency should be an on-going process. This means the student is to receive continual assessment of and feedback about her/his performance throughout the placement.
   a. Performance expectations are detailed in the field evaluation forms for each course. The appropriate form is given to the student and the field instructor at the time of placement by the Field Department and is available online.
   b. These expectations are to serve as the basis for the Learning Plan which is developed by the student and the field instructor.

2. A final conference, between the field instructor and the student, is to be held prior to the end of the semester to evaluate the student's field placement performance. The student is expected to participate actively in the evaluation conference.

3. A written evaluation (using forms provided by the School) by the field instructor is required at the end of the fourteenth week of each semester of concurrent Foundation or Concentration placement, or two weeks prior to the completion of a block Foundation or Concentration placement.
   a. The student must read the written evaluation and must sign it, to indicate that she/he has read it, prior to giving it to the faculty field liaison.
   b. If the student disagrees with any part of the evaluation, he or she may attach a signed addendum noting the areas of disagreement. Grade Appeal Procedures apply to Field Education courses (see Graduate Bulletin).
   c. The field instructor must also sign the evaluation prior to transmitting it to the faculty field liaison.
Feedback on Placement Agencies, Field Instructors, Faculty Field Liaisons, and the Field Program

1. At the end of each placement, forms are distributed by the Field Education Department of the School of Social Work.
   a. Students give feedback on the placement agency, the field instructor, the faculty field liaison and the Field Program.
   b. Field instructors give feedback on her/his experience with the Field Program.
   c. Faculty field liaisons give feedback on the placement agency and the field instructor.

2. All feedback forms are returned directly to the Director of Field Education and constitute the primary data used in subsequent planning and placement decisions.
Request for Field Placement in an Agency of Employment

A student may propose to use the agency in which they are employed for one of their two field placements in the M.S.W. program. This may be done for only one of the required field education placements (foundation or concentration). Advanced standing students who complete only one placement in the M.S.W. program are not eligible for this option.

Evaluation and approval of the proposal is the responsibility of the School of Social Work and is governed by accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education and the policies of the VCU-School of Social Work.

General Instructions
The proposed field placement must be designed in such a way that its implementation will facilitate the student’s development as a professional social worker by providing opportunities to pursue and achieve the specific objectives of the field education course for which the proposal is submitted.

The proposal may not include or in any way duplicate the roles, tasks, or responsibilities for which the student is employed by the agency.

The student is to review the options for completing the field practicum outlined in the Student Handbook and must consult with her/his adviser prior to developing the proposal.

Specific Instructions
Review the objectives of the field education course you are proposing to complete in the agency where you are employed. If your proposal is for completion of Foundation Field Education, keep in mind the foundation curriculum is generic and your proposal must ensure you have opportunities to apply the entire curriculum in the field placement including direct work with individuals and families, group experience, and involvement in a macro project.

Use the “Template Proposal to Complete Foundation (or Concentration) Field Education in my Agency of Employment” and follow the additional instructions below to complete your proposal.

Field Instructor
Approval of the proposed field instructor (M.S.W. and two years of post-M.S.W. practice experience are the minimum requirements) rests with the School of Social Work. The student’s present supervisor may not be used as the field instructor. In addition, careful thought should be given to the nature of your relationship with the person you are proposing as a Field Instructor to avoid potential conflicts of interest and/or dual relationships. For example, a relative or close personal friend would not be appropriate.

The proposed field instructor must submit a resume along with your proposal request.

Approval
- The student's adviser must sign the proposal before it is submitted to the Field Department.
- The administrator of the agency where the student is employed must sign the proposal indicating his/her approval. This includes approval of the required time for the employee to be a student in the agency and for the person providing field instruction to serve as the student's instructor.
• The field instructor must sign the proposal indicating his/her approval of the plan, including willingness to serve as the field instructor and to be available for regular field instruction conferences.
• The student must sign the proposal.
• The proposal must be submitted to the Director of Field Education for final approval.
• This proposal becomes the formal agreement among all parties who have signed the document and part of the student's field folder.

MSW Field Education Syllabi

SLWK 612  Advanced Standing Program

SLWK 693/694  Foundation Field Instruction

SLWK 695  Foundation Block Field Instruction

SLWK 793/794  Clinical Concentration Field Instruction

SLWK 795  Clinical Concentration Block Field Instruction
OTHER INFORMATION REGARDING FIELD INTERNSHIPS

Liability Insurance
All students whose field placement is necessary in order to meet degree requirements are covered by liability insurance carried by the university as long as the student is performing within the course and scope of his/her responsibilities as authorized. Additional coverage is available to students through the NASW Student Professional Liability Insurance Program for a fee. Students are encouraged to purchase this coverage and may do so by contacting the NASW-Virginia Chapter office in Richmond to inquire about membership.

Safety Issues
Students need to be aware that the practice of social work involves an element of personal risk. When students are concerned for their safety or the safety of others, they should discuss this concern with their field instructor to determine the best course of action. This discussion also must be shared with their faculty field liaison. Students are not to take unnecessary risks in the course of their field work. Agencies have agreed (see Memorandum of Agreement) to prepare students in whatever way necessary to maximize their safety in the learning environment. If a student is threatened or injured while in the field practicum, or is involved in an incident when her/his safety could have been compromised, the student should report the event immediately to the following people: field instructor, and faculty field liaison or Field Department. At a minimum, someone from the agency and someone from the School of Social Work should know of the event.

Criminal Record Checks
Many of our field agencies now require a criminal record check prior to accepting a student for placement. As a result of this reality of current social work practice, it is imperative that students inform the director of field education if there is personal background information that should be known and taken into consideration during the placement process.

Health Insurance
Health insurance is necessary for all students so they will be covered in the event of accidental injury or serious illness requiring hospitalization. The university is not responsible for accidents occurring to students in connection with class, laboratory, shop, fieldwork, athletics, student activities, travel or other activities. The University Student Health Services does not cover expenses for accidental injury or inpatient hospitalization (VCU Insider). Students who are not covered under the health insurance policy of a parent or spouse should consider the student insurance policy sponsored by the university. The application for student insurance coverage and information concerning benefits are mailed to all students with their bills for tuition and fees. Information may also be obtained from the University Student Health Services offices on either campus.

Access to a Vehicle
In conjunction with the movement of service delivery in health, mental health and family services toward community based models (which include outreach, home visits and community care), most placements require that students have a vehicle to perform their field assignments. Not having a vehicle limits field placement options.
Evening/Weekend Placements
The agencies in which students can complete placement hours only during evening and weekends are limited. Students need to be prepared to do their field education practicum hours in an agency during normal business hours and during the time a field instructor is on duty and available to the student since the number of agencies providing fully staffed services on evenings and weekends is limited. These requirements make it extremely unlikely that students can do their entire field practicum during evenings or on weekends.

Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment
VCU does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation or disability. The university also has a sexual harassment policy to ensure nondiscrimination against any member of the university community because of gender (see VCU Insider). Any incidents of discrimination and sexual harassment, as with all forms of abuse, should be brought promptly to the attention of the person responsible for the event during which the incident(s) occur. Those who choose not to mention the incidents to the persons having that responsibility (in the case of field placement, it would be the field instructor and/or the faculty field liaison) should discuss the incidents with the director of field education, or the associate dean. The university has formal procedures to deal with problems that involve such violations of university policy.

Students with Disabilities
The university has a policy regarding students with disabilities, which can be found in the University Bulletins. This policy is followed in all field education courses. The Field Department usually contacts students who have identified a disability before field assignments are made to discuss appropriate accommodations. The Field Department works in collaboration with the Office of Student Services and the associate dean to assist students with disabilities in field related matters.

Department of Field Education Diversity Statement
“A diverse and inclusive learning environment that respects and enhances the potential of all members of our community is vitally important to the mission of Virginia Commonwealth University to achieve excellence in teaching, research and service.”

http://www.news.vcu.edu/article/VCU_Board_of_Visitors_Reaffirms_Nondiscrimination_Policy

As with all of VCU, the field education program in the School of Social Work is “designed to promote the continuing policy of providing equal opportunity for employment and education and access to all programs and services without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, political affiliation, veterans’ status, sexual orientation or disability.”

Field agencies are expected to not tolerate any form of discrimination by any agency employee, representative, or student. All of the partners in the field collaboration – agency, field instructor, student, field liaison, and Department of Field Education - are expected to work together to foster an open, dynamic environment of respect, civil engagement, and dialogue about differences as they are encountered in the field setting.
Appendix: Links to Important Documents

Memorandum of Agreement

Evaluation Forms

Exemplars and Templates
  Working Contract
  Learning Plan
  Conference Agenda
  Process Recordings

BSW Syllabi
MSW Syllabi

Proposal to Complete Foundation (or Concentration) Field Instruction in my Agency of Employment (please refer to instructions on page 37 to complete this form).