

The Learning Contract

What is a Learning Contract?

The Learning Contract is a guide to monitor and direct the student's learning and the field instructor's teaching. It is a joint process and negotiated agreement between the student, the field instructor, and the faculty liaison who leads the seminar. It identifies the process and content of student learning.

Why develop a Learning Contract?

The Learning Contract provides structure and guidelines for the learning in the field placement. It helps to identify and define the following:

- What the student needs and wants to learn
- What learning activities/tasks/strategies will be used to meet the student's learning objectives
- How the student's learning and accomplishments will be monitored and evaluated
- The instructional/supervisory meeting times and process of instruction/supervision
- Identification of the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the student's learning, including the student

How do I prepare for the Learning Contract?

Student responsibilities:

- Review the course objectives for SOWK 330 or SOWK 430
- Review the mid-term and final evaluation forms for the field placement to determine what criteria will be used to evaluate your performance
- Reflect on your learning style
- Identify your expectations of field instruction/supervision and how to communicate them
- Reflect on how you communicate, deal with feedback, deal with authority, engage in self-directed learning, deal with conflict
- Reflect on how you would make best use of supervision.

Field Instructor's responsibilities:

- Review the course objectives for SOWK 330 or SOWK 430
- Review the UFV School of Social Work and Human Services' expectations for field instructors and field settings.
- Identify what learning opportunities exist in the field setting
- Identify and prepare colleagues who may be involved in the field instruction activities
- Reflect on personal expectations of the student and of yourself
- Reflect on your teaching style and how you will communicate this to the student
- Reflect on your ability to negotiate

General Purpose of the Learning Contract

- An opportunity for the student and field instructor to discuss expectations, individual learning and teaching styles, strengths and challenges, how to manage conflict
- Determines structure of supervisory sessions such as dates and times, length of sessions and who will determine agenda
- Placement hours, who keeps record, what to do if unable to attend placement, etc

Considerations

- There is considerable anxiety associated with this process
- Learning plans are negotiated, sometimes there are restrictions on what activities are appropriate for students
- The field instructor must be mindful of the power dynamics
- Learning plans are evolving and should be renegotiated.

Learning Contract Objectives

1) Student's Learning Objectives

A learning objective is a statement of what needs to be learned. Students should identify learning objectives that are specific, doable and realistic within the time frame of the field placement so the student and the field instructor can identify when it has been met. The objectives should be clear and measurable.

2) Plan of Achieving Learning Objectives:

This is a plan/strategy to meet a specific learning objective. It should be realistic and include what learning opportunities are available at the agency setting. The tasks are negotiated based on the skill level of the student and the field instructor. Dates can be assigned for completion of the tasks.

- a) Learning opportunities that will be available and how will they be structured
- b) What client, tasks or project assignments can the student be involved with?
- c) Learning opportunities should be relevant to the student's learning

Field instructors should be actively involved in developing this section because of their knowledge of resources of the agency and the range of learning opportunities available to the student.

3) Identify how you will evaluate and monitor if you have met your learning objectives.

The Learning Contract is meant to give the student and the field instructor a sense of accomplishment. Evaluation procedures should include how the student will be evaluated and who will be consulted. Evaluation can occur through the following methods:

Direct Practice

- Observations, audio tapes, meetings, consultation

Indirect Practice

- Process recordings, summary recordings, journals or reflective logs

Documentation

- Review of documents prepared in practice such as letters, minutes, assessments, briefs, proposals, reports
- Agency statistics

User satisfaction indicators used by the agency.

Guidelines for Learning Objectives

Students are required to develop three personal learning objectives for each of the 11 categories in the Learning Contract. Below, are guidelines designed to aid students in creating clear and measurable learning objectives for each of the 11 categories.

1. Social Work as a Profession

- Develop an understanding of generalist social work practice
- Perform a variety of social work roles (e.g., broker, counselor, networker, case manager, educator, advocate, program planner, facilitator, policy analyst, researcher)
- Gain experience at various levels of practice (e.g., micro, mezzo, and macro)
- Apply the BC College of Social Workers *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* in a practice setting

2. Organizational Context of Practice

- Apply organizational analysis techniques to the practicum agency
- Understand the practicum agency's history, mission, purpose, and function
- Understand the practicum agency's structure and funding
- Understand the practicum agency's methods for evaluating its effectiveness

3. Community Context of Practice

- Understand the features of the community that impact clients (e.g., population, unemployment rates, housing costs, attitudes toward diverse populations, or available recreation)
- Identify both the strengths and problems of the community
- Become aware of the range of community resources available and gaps in services
- Utilize a variety of community resources

4. Assessment

- Develop assessment skills for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- Develop skills in problem and strength identification
- Identify the major social systems involved with the problem or concern being addressed
- Become familiar with the ongoing nature of assessment

5. Planning and Intervention

- Acquire skills in goal setting, identifying measurable objectives, and planning interventions
- Select an appropriate level of intervention for individual client/client system needs (micro to macro) Develop intervention plans matched to client/client system needs, including client in selection of intervention
- Develop intervention skills based on theoretical understanding of client needs and of interventions selected

6. Termination and Evaluation

- Develop skills in appropriate termination and empowerment of clients
- Utilize tools and instruments to evaluate client progress
- Utilize tools and instruments to evaluate own professional performance
- Utilize tools and instruments to evaluate agency effectiveness

7. Understanding Social Problems

- Understand one or more social problems from a structural perspective
- Understand the major social problems addressed by the practicum agency (e.g., etiology, incidence, causal factors, impact, consequences, and prevention)
- Understand how social problems develop as a result of the interaction among individuals, social systems, and the larger social environment
- Identify the major social problems facing the community

8. Social Policy and Social Change

- Analyze the development of social policies
- Analyze the effectiveness of social policies
- Assess the impact of social policies on clients
- Participate in social policy and social justice efforts

9. Diversity

- Recognize the impact of diversity (e.g., culture, gender, age, disability, class, sexual orientation, or religion) on clients
- Understand the impact of oppression, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping on clients
- Analyze the practicum agency's ability to effectively and sensitively address the needs of diverse clients/client systems

- Communicate effectively and sensitively with members of diverse groups, individualizing interventions for diverse clients

10. Communication Skills

- Communicate clearly and effectively in written form
- Communicate clearly and effectively in verbal form with clients, including non-voluntary, or hard-to-reach clients
- Communicate clearly and effectively in verbal form with coworkers and other professionals
- Demonstrate awareness of underlying client concerns

11. Knowledge and Use of Self

- Recognize the impact of personal issues, biases, values, and attitudes on clients and make needed changes.
- Establish effective and purposeful relationships with clients and coworkers
- Seek professional growth by taking initiative in designing and implementing own learning activities
- Utilize professional supervision and training for guidance and learning

EXAMPLES

Examples are provided below to help you in developing a thoughtful, obtainable, and strategic Learning Contract.

Learning Contract		
Learning Objectives: What do you want to learn?	What learning activities and tasks will you engage in at the agency to reach your learning objectives?	How will you measure what you have learned?
<p>Examples of ways you may identify your learning objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain competence in... • Increase knowledge of... • Improve in... • Develop skills in... • Deepen knowledge/awareness of... • Learn about... • Discover... • Become familiar with... • Explore... 	<p>Examples of activities/tasks you may engage in to learn your objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and group contact • Research • Case conferences • Shadowing and observing • Community visits • Attend meetings • Documentation • Read • Supervision 	<p>Examples of ways you may measure your learning process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual, uninterrupted weekly supervision • Role plays • Discussions • Presentations • Debriefings • Development of documents • Self-reflective documentation • Willingness to be observed • Provide readings and resources

Learning Contract

Student:

Field Instructor:

Social Work Consultant (if applicable):

Faculty Liaison:

Agency:

Field Placement Days and Hours:

Field Instruction Meeting Schedule:

INSTRUCTIONS

Students (in consultation with their Field Instructors) are to identify learning objectives and select learning activities that will help them reach self identified learning objectives in each area. Students are to identify at least 3 learning objectives in each area. Additional learning objectives may also be submitted. Students are also to describe how and by what dates their learning and performance will be evaluated. At the mid-term and end of semester, students will be evaluated by the Field Instructor and the Faculty Liaison on their learning and performance. This document should be used as a reference for the mid-term and final evaluations.

Learning Contract

Learning Objectives: What do you want to learn?	What tasks and learning activities will you engage in at the agency to reach your learning objectives?	How will you measure what you have learned?
Social Work as a Profession 1. 2. 3.		
Organizational Context of Practice 1. 2. 3.		
Community Context of Practice 1. 2. 3.		
Assessment 1. 2. 3.		

Learning Contract Cont'd

Learning Objectives: What do you want to learn?	What tasks and learning activities will you engage in at the agency to reach your learning objectives?	How will you measure what you have learned?
Planning and Intervention 1. 2. 3.		
Closure and Evaluation 1. 2. 3.		
Understanding Social Problems 1. 2. 3.		
Social Policy and Social Change 1. 2. 3.		

Learning Contract Cont'd

Learning Objectives: What do you want to learn?	What tasks and learning activities will you engage in at the agency to reach your learning objectives?	How will you measure what you have learned?
Diversity 1. 2. 3.		
Communication Skills 1. 2. 3.		
Knowledge and Use of Self 1. 2. 3.		