

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements

National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS)

Master of Social Work (MSW)

Key Assessment Findings

2009 -2010

Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams are required for all MSW students at the end of the foundation year and at the end of the advanced year. Each exam covers the core knowledge base of each required course. For the advanced year exam, it is expected that the student will intertwine not only knowledge from the advanced year but also content from the foundation year and from elective courses each student takes.

Foundation Year Comprehensive Exams

The foundation year comprehensive exam consists of five sections: policy, macro practice, research, diversity and oppression, and assessment and intervention. All questions refer to a case example that is common across all students. In order to pass a minimum of 70% for each section and an overall minimum of 80% must be achieved. If these two criteria are not achieved the student has the opportunity to take an oral exam in which each student is offered the opportunity to show their grasp of the content areas they did not pass. If the oral exam is not a pass, the student is given the opportunity to retake the written exam during the summer and must pass in order to move into the advanced year.

For the academic year 2008-2009 91 students take the foundation year comprehensive exam. The pass rate at the written exam was 74.7% with 25.3% failing. Of those who took the oral exam, 91.3% passed with 8.7% failing. At the second written exam 50% passed and 50% failed. Those who failed withdrew from the MSW program. Please see Table 1 for results. Table 2 provides further detail about the comprehensive exams.

Table 1

Foundation Year Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate by Section and Overall (n = 91)

	Failed 1 Written Exam	Passed Written Exam	Passed Oral Exam	Passed second Written Exam
Foundation Year Comprehensive Exam	25.3%	74.7%	91.3%	50.0%

Table 2:

Foundation Year Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate by Section and Overall (n = 91)

Name of Section		Points	Mean (S.D.)	Below Expectations less than 70% on one or less than 80% on Total	Meets or Exceeds Expectations
Section I	Policy	25	21.1 (4.1)	5.5%	94.5%
Section II	Macro Practice	20	17.6 (3.2)	5.5%	94.5%
Section III	Research	10	8.8 (0.9)	4.4%	96.6%
Section IV	Diversity and Oppression	15	13.1 (2.4)	5.5%	94.5%
Section V	Assessment and Intervention	30	23.3 (5.8)	11.0%	89.0%
Overall		100	84.1 (12.6)	25.3%	74.7%

Advanced year Comprehensive Exams

The advanced year comprehensive exams are actually three exams, one each for clinical, social change (SC), and combined. Each exam covers the core coursework required for the concentration. The clinical exam consists of five parts: Practice Theory; Application of Theory to Practice – Family; Application of Practice Theory – Individual; Ethics; and Practice Evaluation. A case is provided and is the basis for all five sections. For practice theory the students select a theory to address based on the required theory course each selected. The SC exam consists of three parts: Macro Practice; Ethics; and Program Evaluation. A case is provided and is the basis of the whole exam. The student selects two of five macro practice areas depending on the courses they took. The Combined exam includes content from both the clinical exam and the SC exam. Each student selects a Practice Theory question dependent on the clinical theory course they took. They also select two out of five macro practice questions, based on the courses they took, and complete one of two questions on Ethics. They may select either Application of Theory to Practice – Family or Application of Theory to Practice-Individual, as well as either the Practice or Program Evaluation question, this is also based on the courses each student took. Two cases are provided, one for the macro focused questions and one for the clinical focused questions. To pass the advanced year exam a student must pass each section at a minimum of 80% and an overall score of 80%. If a student does not meet these minimums they go to an oral exam and are tested on the section(s) they did not pass. If the student does not pass the oral exam they must retake the exam in the summer, which means they do not graduate with their class.

For the academic year 2009-2010 53 students took the clinical exam, eight took the SC exam, and 10 took the Combined exam. For the Clinical Exam 92.5% passed while 7.5% failed. At the oral exam 100% of the students passed. For the SC exam 87.5% passed with 12.5% failing. One-hundred percent failed the SC oral exam and will take a second written exam. For the Combined exam 90% passed and 10% failed. For the Combined oral exam 100% passed. Please see Table 3. Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide additional information on the three advanced year comprehensive exams.

Table 3

Advanced Year Comprehensive Exam Pass/Fail Rate by Concentration

	Passed Written Exam	Failed Written Exam	Passed Oral Exam
Clinical (n = 53)	96.8%	3.2%	100.0%
SJSC (n = 8)	88.5%	12.5%	0.0%
Combined (n = 10)	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%

Table 4

Advanced Year Clinical Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate by Section and Overall (n = 53)

Section Name		Points	Mean (S.D.)	Below Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations
Part I	Practice Theory	25	23.0 (2.2)	0.0%	100.0%
Part II	Application of Theory to Practice - Family	20	19.2 (1.3)	0.0%	100.0%
Part III	Application of Theory to Practice - Individual	25	22.8 (1.8)	1.8%	98.2%
Part IV	Ethics	15	13.6 (1.2)	5.6%	94.4%
Part V	Practice Evaluation	15	14.2 (1.0)	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Overall	100	92.8 (4.4)	7.5%	92.5%

Table 5

Advanced Year SC Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate by Section and Overall (n = 8)

Section Name		Points	Mean (S.D.)	Below Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations
Part I	Macro Practice	50	43.7 (4.4)	12.5%	87.5%
Part II	Ethics	25	22.3 (3.4)	12.5%	87.5%
Part III	Program Evaluation	25	21.9 (2.0)	12.5%	87.5%
Total	Overall	100	87.4 (8.0)	12.5%	88.5%

Table 6

Advanced Year Combined Comprehensive Exam Pass Rate by Section and Overall (n = 10)

Section Name		Points	Mean (S.D.)	Below Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations
Part I	Clinical Practice Theory	25	22.2 (1.4)	0.0%	100.0%
Part II	Macro Practice	35	30.8 (3.4)	10.0%	90.0%
Part III	Application of Theory to Practice: Family or Individual	10	9.7 (.4)	0.0%	100.0%
Part IV	Ethics	15	13.5 (1.1)	0.0%	100.0%
Part V	Practice or Program Evaluation	15	13.1 (1.0)	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Overall	100	89.3 (2.2)	10.0%	90.0%

Field Evaluation Findings

Foundation Year

In 2009-2010, we had a total of 112 foundation year MSW students begin field, 98 on our DC campus and 14 in Southern Maryland. On our main campus, 53 students were full-time. Of these, four changed to part-time, dropping their internships and three withdrew or took leaves of absence. We had 46 full-time foundation year students complete their field internships. On our main campus, 45 students were part-time. Of these, seven withdrew, one took a leave of absence mid-year and another was terminated. We had 36 part-time students completing their field internships, for a total of 82 foundation year students in Washington, DC.

All of our (14) southern Maryland students are part-time. Two were terminated and one withdrew. An additional student was injured on the job (also her field site), and is currently completing the internship year. We expect that she will complete the year successfully, so that 11 students will have successfully completed their foundation year internships.

A total of 93 foundation year students successfully completed their internships – this is **83%** of the 112 students who began placements in the fall semester.

Advanced Year

In 2009-2010, we had a total of 82 advanced year MSW students begin field. The breakdown by full-time/part-time/advanced standing was as follows:

- 38 full-time
- 18 part-time
- 26 advanced standing full-time

Four advanced standing full-time students dropped out of field: 1 changed to part-time status and 3 withdrew or took leaves of absence. Two full-time students dropped out of field: 1 requested a leave of absence and the second changed to part-time status.

A total of 76 advanced year students completed field, 92.7% of 82.

Curricular Improvements

For the upcoming year our curriculum improvements include the offering of two new courses in the advanced year. These courses are *Drug Abuse: Public Health and Public Policy Consideration* and *Instrument Development, Measurement, and Use: The Theory and Practice*. The first new course is being added as the topic is important to social workers, in both the clinical and social change concentrations. The second course is being developed to strengthen the research foundation for advanced year students. Subsequent to our last reaffirmation, the Council on Social Work Education modified the standards that all social work programs must respond to in their self-studies. Once we have developed competency statements to replace the objectives, we will review our assessment measures and develop new rubrics.