

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements

National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS)

Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work/Bachelor of Social Work Program in Social Work AY 2010-11

Key Assessment Findings

Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT)

The ACAT was developed by the Program for Area Concentration Achievement Testing (PACAT) as an assessment tool for measuring student integration of the content components of particular disciplinary majors. NCSSS administers the Social Work Curriculum C version of this instrument, which covers four major content areas: human behavior and the social environment, social work practice, policy and services, and research methods. The test was administered as a paper and pencil test.

In the spring of 2011, 9 social work seniors took the exam. PACAT reported that there were no significant linear relationships between the student's self reported overall GPA and GPA in major for policy and services, practice, human behavior, research, and overall performance.

PACAT reported the overall performance standard score to be 527, which falls above the benchmark set by NCSSS, and placed us at the 61st percentile.

Content Area	Min	Max	Standard Score	Below Expectations	Meets or Exceeds Expectations
HBSE	395	649	510	4	5
Practice	436	645	543	2	7
Policy	325	597	468	6	3
Research	465	693	567	3	6
Overall	398	656	527	3	6

PACAT provided additional analyses which compared the students who took the test in the spring of 2011 with the 116 students who have taken the test from NCSSS in the past 8 years. The change is reported in increments of .25 standard deviations.

Area	Change
HBSE	-0.25
Practice	+0.25
Policy	-0.25
Research	+0.75
Overall	+0.25

Senior Thesis

Pass Rate. For the undergraduate degree in social work, the senior thesis is the senior comprehensive assessment. In the spring of 2009, 12 students in the senior year were expected to complete the thesis assignment. One student did not complete the assignment and received a grade of Fail. Out of the students who completed the assignment, 8 (66.7%) passed and 4 (33.3%) passed with honors. Total scores on the thesis (for the 11 who completed the thesis) ranged from 70 to 100, with a mean of 90.00 (SD 9.61).

Content Areas. Each of the major content areas had a point value of 10 points. Mean scores were calculated for each of the major content areas that students wrote about in the thesis. Each of these content areas is aligned with one of the program objectives. To explore the data in greater depth, each score was recoded into 3 categories, with 0 to 4 recoded to 0 for below expectations, 5 to 7 recoded to 1 for meets expectations, and 8 to 10 recoded to 2 for exceeds expectations. One student did not submit her thesis and received scores of 0 for each section, which impacted the findings related to mean scores and range of scores.

Content Area	Range	Mean (SD)	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
HBSE	0 - 10	7.94 (3.24)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.7%)
Practice	0 - 10	8.22 (3.24)	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	7 (77.8%)
Policy	0 - 10	7.72 (3.07)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.7%)
Research	0 - 9	7.00 (2.86)	1 (11.1%)	3 (33.3%)	5 (55.6%)
Diversity	0 - 10	8.56 (3.28)	1 (11.1%)	0	8 (88.9%)
Values/Ethics	0 - 10	7.94 (3.26)	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	7 (77.8%)
Knowledge Building	0 - 10	8.28 (3.19)	1 (11.1%)	0	8 (88.9%)

Field Evaluation Findings

Field evaluations are a critical assessment measure for NCSSS as the Council on Social Work Education has defined field education to be the “signature pedagogy” of social work education. In order to categorize the outcomes, the grades that students receive in the second semester of the field seminar class (SSS 466) to evaluate how the student is performing in field at the end of the social work program. Students who receive a grade in the “A” range are exceeding expectations, a grade in the “B” range are meeting expectations, and a grade in the “C” range or below are below expectations. Of the 9 students who participated in field education over the course of the 2010-2011 academic year: 5 (56%) exceeded expectations, 3 (33%) met expectations, and 1 (11%) was below expectations. The student who was below expectations reportedly did well in field, but did not submit the final field evaluation and subsequently failed the class.

Exit Survey Findings

An exit survey was sent to all graduating seniors in May of 2011. This survey encompassed the Field Student Self-Assessment form used as an individual assessment tool in previous years. For the 2010-2011 year, only 2 students completed the survey, which represents a response rate that is too low to be used for this report.

Curricular Improvements

The NCSSS Baccalaureate Committee reviews findings from the previous year at the beginning of every fall term. Based on this review of findings, curricular improvements are explored. Modifications are sometimes implemented for the current year, when possible, and sometimes implemented in subsequent years when it is too late to make a change for the current year.

Based on student feedback and course evaluation data, changes were made to the Field seminar. The committee decided to include content on human behavior theories in the senior year as a result of the decrease in performance in this area on the ACAT. The committee reviewed that human behavior theories had previously been incorporated into the practice class during the senior year, which had a positive impact on the ACAT score. However, specific theory review content was not included in the practice class last year and has not been included this year. As such, the committee decided to incorporate content related to human behavior theory review into the spring semester of the field seminar. The ACAT scores from spring 2012 will then be compared to the scores from spring 2011 to see if this change leads to improvements.

The committee discussed the policy area of the ACAT as that represents another area where a decline in scores was noted. The committee determined that a review of the curriculum is necessary to identify and address any gaps between what we are teaching in the policy sequence and what the ACAT tests. This review will be undertaken by faculty teaching in the policy sequence and the program chair. Feedback will be provided to the committee over the 2011-2012 academic year and changes to the curriculum will be brought to the committee for approval.