



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# Helping Students Develop Learning Contracts

Information for Field Instructors

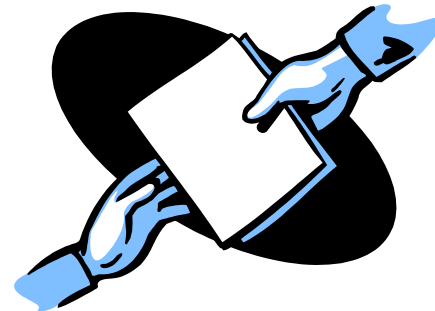
# What is a Learning Contract?

“A learning contract is a document developed by the student and field instructor which is based on what the field instructor and the agency can teach, what the school expects the student to learn, and what the student wishes to learn.” (Bogo & Vayda,1998, p. 61)



# Why Use a Learning Contract?

- To foster a learning partnership between student and field instructor with reciprocal accountability
- To make explicit the expectations for student activities, learning outcomes, and development of competencies
- To provide criteria for ongoing assessment of student progress
- To define boundaries for what is possible



# What Is the Framework?

- ▶ **Objectives** – Specific areas on which learning is focused
- ▶ **Learning Strategies** – Activities, tasks, projects, situations designed to enable student to meet objectives
- ▶ **Evidence of Accomplishments** – Measureable outcomes that objectives have been achieved
- ▶ **Projected Date of Completion** – Time line of target completion dates

# Keep in Mind

- ▶ A learning contract
  - should reflect the needs and interests of your particular student
  - is a working document to be modified as needed



# Learning Objectives should be

## ▶ Specific

- Ex: “Be able to meet time management, record keeping and report writing expectations of the agency” rather than “Understand agency administrative responsibilities”.

## ▶ Drawn from **internship’s position description**

## ▶ **Consistent with SSW Field Objectives** for Foundation, Clinical or MACO students

## ▶ Some verbs that identify **Objectives**: *develop, understand, utilize, be able, distinguish between, interpret, formulate, demonstrate, examine, take initiative*

# Three Categories of Learning Objectives

- ▶ **Values:** “strong preferences that effects one’s choices, decision, and actions and that are rooted in one’s deepest beliefs and commitments”
- ▶ **Knowledge:** “terminology, facts, principles, concepts and theories”
- ▶ **Skills:** “the behaviors of practice”

(Horejsi & Garthwait, 2002)

# Learning Strategies

- ▶ **Specify** how the learning objectives will be realized
- ▶ Some verbs that identify **Learning Strategies**: *interview, write, observe, role play, participate, accompany, tape, attend, summarize, co-lead* (Bogo & Vayda, p. 65)
- ▶ **Examples**
  - ▶ Co-lead a group of children whose parents are recently separated or divorced.
  - ▶ Observe a community meeting of parents concerned about reducing violence in their neighborhood.



# Evidence of Accomplishments

- ▶ Specifies what **data** will be used to evaluate learning objectives (e.g., evidence of student knowledge or skills as seen in process recordings, audiotapes, documentation, direct observation, group meetings, supervisory sessions)
- ▶ Accomplishments
  - Should be **measurable and/or observable**
  - Should clearly **relate to learning objectives**

# Example – Foundation

Learning Objectives	Learning Strategies	Evidence of Accomplishment
<p>1. To develop basic skills in working with diverse populations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Student will be assigned 3-4 clients who differ in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation</li><li>2. Student will observe field instructor and other staff interacting with diverse clients</li><li>3. Student will complete process recordings of all interviews</li><li>4. Student will identify where issues of diversity are most salient in his interactions with clients and client systems</li><li>5. Field instructor and student will role play challenging or problematic situations from process recordings</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. In supervisory sessions and process recordings, student will demonstrate awareness of how issues of diversity affect communication and understanding between himself and clients</li><li>2. Student process recordings will reflect use of questions for clarification and lack of assumptions in responding to clients who differ from him in areas of diversity.</li><li>3. Student will present a case involving his work with a client from another race, ethnicity or culture at a group supervision session</li></ol>

[Click here for a sample Foundation Learning Contract](#)

# Example- Advanced Clinical

Learning Objective	Learning Strategy	Evidence of Accomplishment
<p>1. Be able to use motivational interviewing (MI) skills with clients</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Field instructor will assign student 3-4 clients who are in different stages of readiness to change.</li><li>2. Student will attend a 3-hour training on MI at the agency, including watching videotapes of MI interviews.</li><li>3. Student will role play MI interviewing skills with field instructor; both will assess student's performance.</li><li>4. Field instructor will provide feedback on student's use of MI principles and skills on all process recordings.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Student will be able to identify her clients' initial stage in their readiness to change.</li><li>2. For first semester, student will process record all interviews.</li><li>3. Student will identify which MI approach is appropriate for clients' stage of readiness to change.</li><li>4. Student will evaluate her use of MI principles and skills in the analysis section of her process recordings.</li><li>5. By the end of the fall semester, student will be using MI skills appropriately in 6 out of 10 interviews.</li><li>6. Student will be able to identify practice situations in which MI is not the preferred approach.</li></ol>

[Click here for a sample Advanced Clinical Learning Contract](#)

# Example - MACO

Learning Objectives	Learning Strategies	Evidence of Accomplishments
<p>1. Conduct community assessment of housing needs for agency housing initiative.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Tour targeted neighborhoods.</li><li>2. Accompany field instructor to meeting of community leaders.</li><li>3. Attend a minimum of two additional community meetings.</li><li>4. Conduct telephone interviews with 4-5 homeowners.</li><li>5. Initiate interviews with community leaders to discuss neighborhood concerns.</li><li>6. Field instructor will provide guidance and feedback on all student tasks.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Write a case study of one neighborhood that demonstrates understanding of residents' needs and how needs are met or not met.</li><li>2. Write process recording of a community meeting which analyzes power relationships, areas of agreement and conflict.</li><li>3. Collaborate with field instructor and other relevant staff in writing report which assesses community's housing needs for agency initiative on housing.</li></ol>

[Click here for a sample Advanced MACO Learning Contract](#)

# References; Suggested Readings

- ▶ Bogo, M. & Vayda, E. (1998). *The practice of field instruction in social work: Theory and process* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- ▶ Friedman, B. D. & Neuman, K. M. (2001). Allegiances in social work education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 21*(3/4), 123-135.
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- ▶ Horejsi, C. R. & Garthwait, C. L. (2002). *The social work practicum: A guide and workbook for students*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- ▶ Wilson, S. J. (1981). *Field instruction: Techniques for supervisors*. New York: The Free Press.