Developmental Stages of Students in Field

Stage 1: Beginning
“High Anxiety”

Characterized by:
• Learning field placement expectations and requirements

Critical Questions:
• Can I meet the learning goals of the practicum?
• Can I deal with all of this?

Students Need:
• Permission to be learners; to understand learning styles
• To build self-awareness of strengths and limitations
• To identify support systems
• To discuss feelings and questions with agency field instructor
• To be introduced at the agency, to have a place to sit, to leave coat, papers
• Clarification of roles, expectations, and policies
• An orientation plan
• A plan to focus goals and meet general requirements
• To individualize placement
• To understand how to use supervision in planning and reviewing work
• Skills to start work assignments

Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 1:
• Learn:
  - Role
  - Agency
  - Program Responsibilities
  - Specific Practicum Tasks
  - Client Population and Needs
Stage 2: Reality Confrontation
“Engagement”

Characterized by:
- Becoming engaged with the agency

Critical Questions:
- Will I like it here?
- Is this agency for me?
- Can I get my needs met here?
- If I don’t like something, should I keep it to myself?

Students Need:
- To talk with peers, agency field instructor, and field liaison about doubts and fears
- To reflect on how they handle stressful situations; to use stress management skills
- To examine their expectations of themselves
- Permission to make mistakes and take risks
- To identify discomforts with agency, field instructor, social work profession
- Assistance with major problems, crises, and decisions
- To explore feelings about support, authority, independence
- To build a solid supervisory relationship with agency field instructor
- Effective supervision meetings
- To develop skills in giving, receiving, and implementing feedback

Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 2:
- Learn:
  - To Use Information
  - Carry out Practicum Tasks
- Make Decisions
- Engage Clients and Resources
- Basic Skills
- Use Supervision

**Stage 3: Relative Mastery**

*“Basic Mastery”*

**Characterized by:**
- Able to perform core practicum tasks well
- Identify and analyze problems
- Recognize when methods are not achieving desired results

**Critical Questions:**
- Can I continue to get my personal and professional needs met here?
- What’s next?
- Can I make an impact?

**Students Need:**
- To take more initiative in own learning, become more self-directed & autonomous
- To explore new challenges
- To continue building relationship with agency field instructor
- To evaluate more concrete feedback
- To evaluate own practice
- To build on strengths and interests
- To identify what learning they still need/ what competency areas have not been met
- To find ways to contribute to the agency

**Processes/Tasks to Complete Stage 3:**
- Learn:
  - To work as a Team Member
  - Organizational Influence Skills
  - Specific Skills Needs for Functional Independence
  - Specialized Knowledge Needed for Practice Competence
Stage 4: Closure
“Termination”

**Characterized by:**
- Feeling ambivalent about ending
- Reappearance of self-doubt

**Critical Questions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Students</th>
<th>Graduating Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can I meet next year’s higher expectations?</td>
<td>Can I really do this work now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being distracted by new demands (job search, license exams, relocating)?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Students Need:**
- To reflect on past experiences with endings; identify patterns
- To share feelings with peers in program and agency field instructor
- To start closure process early
- To develop an ending/termination plan
- To reflect on their growth and learning
- To use learning to develop new goals and future plans

**Processes/Tasks to Master Stage 4:**
- Learn:
  - Advanced or Specialized Skills
  - Preparation for new roles
- Work Through:
  - Own Professional Goals
  - Balance of Personal and Organizational Needs

Adopted from University of Buffalo School of Social Work