



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



- Community
- Work Through:
 - Feelings about clients, authority and responsibilities

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:

First Year Students

Can I meet next year’s higher expectations?

Graduating Students

Can I really do this work now?

Being distracted by new demands
(job search, license exams,
relocating)?

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