Closing the Assessment Loop Report
Human Services Program

2013-2014 Academic Year

Program Assessment System: Transition Point Assessments

The Department of Human Services and Rehabilitation is committed to department level planning, collection, analysis, and discussion of assessment data for purposes of improving candidate performance and program quality.

The Human Services Program utilizes an assessment plan that includes collection of entry, continuation, and exit assessment data from students in the major. Each year, the data is analyzed and shared with faculty for review and prioritization of areas for continuous improvement during the coming year. A program advisory committee receives updates on continuous improvements and areas requiring special attention. In addition to information from students, faculty in the Program meet quarterly to discuss Program needs for improvements. Both faculty and student perspectives and information are taken into consideration when making decisions related to program improvement plans.

The following table lists the key assessment points with the corresponding sources of evidence for the Human Services program.

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<th>Qualification for Field Studies (Practicum &amp; Internship)</th>
<th>Program Completion</th>
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<td>Transferable AA degree within 5 credits, or WWU GUR’s completed, or within 10 credits</td>
<td>Course-based assignments and performance tasks</td>
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**Use of Data for Improvements of Programs and/or Operations**

**Admissions GPA**

The Human Services program has a minimum GPA requirement of 2.75. A department exceptions policy allows for admission in exceptional situations when the GPA is between 2.2 and 2.75. Given past issues with admission GPA at the different sites, and given that it is a primary entry key assessment, all admissions decision-making is centralized within the Chair’s office, and facilitated by the Academic Program Director in consult with an Admissions Committee made up of at least 3 HS faculty members. For Academic Year 2013-2014, there were a total of thirty (30) entering students who did not meet the minimum 2.75 GPA requirement, and thus were admitted provisionally. Of those students, 19 were on campus, 6 were in the Distance-Learning (DL)-based site, and 5 were at our Everett-based site. The average GPA for all entering students during AY 2013-14 however was 3.49 (3.66 for DL; 3.49 for Everett; 3.32 for Bellingham), compared to 3.42 for the previous academic year (3.45 for DL; 3.42 for Everett; 3.39 for Bellingham).
Field Studies/Internship

The Human Services program uses a Benchmark exam assessment at the end of HSP 340 (Practicum I) to assess the students’ readiness for HSP 341 (Practicum II) and HSP 440 (Internship). During 2013-2014, 2 students (1.7%) did not meet the standard on the Benchmark Exam.

Students also need to meet the minimum standard on the HSP 341 Supervisor Evaluation before proceeding to HSP 440. During 2013-2014, one student (.89%) did not meet standard on supervisor evaluation at the end of their first field placement, while eight (8) students exceeded standard.

Exit Assessment/Capstone Portfolio

- **Pass rate for Capstone Portfolio Benchmark assessment:** In previous years, there were students who failed the capstone portfolio benchmark assessment, but still graduated successfully from the major. During 2009-2010, the Capstone Portfolio course was revised so that the benchmark assessment accounted for 100% of the final course grade. During 2013-2014, all students met the standard by achieving a score in the range of 70-100 points.

- **Student concerns about benchmark assessment:** In the past, there were several student concerns regarding the use of portfolios as an exit assessment. While several changes have been made to the Capstone Portfolio course and the benchmark assessment over the past several years, there is a sense among faculty (based on their insights and reflective feedback, as well as student feedback to faculty) that there is need for significant re-thinking and restructuring of the Capstone class and accompanying assignment(s) as benchmark assessment overall. The program will continue to monitor student performance and student/faculty feedback during this next academic year, and is formulating a strategic plan for possible significant change. A committee of faculty will work on this effort during the Spring 2015 quarter.
**Student Exit Surveys**

In addition to performance assessments, student exit surveys continue to be an important source of evidence to inform decision-making regarding priorities for continuous improvement. During the Spring of 2014, all graduating seniors were provided a comprehensive exit survey. Results indicated that the vast majority of exiting students view the program in a positive light, with 94% of students being “satisfied or very satisfied” with the quality of the human services course content (up from 82% in previous year); 91% “satisfied or very satisfied” with the quality of faculty instruction (up from 77% previous year), and 88% “satisfied or very satisfied” with their overall experience in the human services major (up from 79% the previous year).

Ninety percent or more of students completing the major agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements about the program: (a) My major helped me develop as a professional (94.1%), (b) Faculty expected critical thinking in my courses (94.1%), (c) Faculty encouraged students to actively engage in learning (93%), and (e) Internship (HSP 440) was a valuable part of my learning experience (91.8%).

Some areas where faculty would like to focus attention based on feedback from student exit surveys include: Value of the capstone portfolio benchmark, Consistency of program effectiveness across all sites, efficacy of Practicum I for those students who enter the major with significant professional experience, and field placement oversight.

- **Capstone Portfolio:** The program will continue to monitor student and faculty feedback regarding the revised content and grading rubric for the Capstone Portfolio. Data from the exit surveys showed that only 35.3% of graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that creating a Capstone Portfolio was a valuable part of their learning experience. The exit survey data also showed that 38.8% of the graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that a Capstone Portfolio was a good way to assess a student’s learning. Faculty perceptions of the Capstone course mirror the sentiments of the students. To address this pressing issue, the program will engage in
critical inquiry and considerations for change during the Spring 2015 quarter of Capstone. A committee is being formed to consider alternative (potentially better) ways to assess student learning, and alternative usages for the Capstone overall. Ideas currently range from making Capstone an elective course, for those who wish to have a professional portfolio upon graduation, to having students work on their capstone materials throughout their entire time in the major (for instance through 1-credit courses sprinkled throughout the program), to identifying a different common assignment that will serve as this benchmark assessment (for instance an exam, or paper given in an upper-division course). The committee will bring recommendations to the greater faculty group for consideration – with potential changes as early as the following spring (2016).

- Consistency of Program Across All Sites: Faculty have been working to more clearly show that the HS program is ONE program, but with three different sites or modes of delivery (on campus/Bellingham, Everett, and Distance Learning). In the past there seemed to be a general perception that the different programs had different expectations and different deliverables. Assuring quality and satisfaction at all sites is important to the program. Yet, the 2014 data shows that there continues to be variation in student responses based on location. Work will be done to investigate the possibilities here – including the reality that off-campus sites have smaller cohort sizes, and thus outlier scores hold greater weight when looked at based on location; the potential need for more engagement by senior faculty at off-campus sites, and potential need for enhancing “virtual”, or electronic/web-based supports for instructors and students. To address this issue several actions have taken place, and will be monitored throughout the 2014-15 academic year, including: identifying a tenure track faculty member to serve a lead role working with an off-campus advisory committee; increased numbers of Tenured/Tenure-Track, and Senior-Instructor level individuals teaching courses off-campus; increased visits to
off-campus locations by Program Director and other Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty.

- **Value of Practicum I for More Experienced Students:** This is an area that is currently being addressed by program faculty. This issue has also been raised at HS Advisory Committee meetings to get input from field supervisors. Data from the exit surveys showed that only 57.7% of graduating seniors agreed or strongly agreed that the Practicum I course was a valuable part of their learning experience. The program will continue to investigate ways of strengthening the field experiences for students – particularly for those who are older and who have more professional experience prior to entering the program. To address this, faculty are creating a policy that will make space for individuals with extensive experience to be able to petition an exemption from that required course. It is expected that this will be piloted/tested during the 2015-16 academic year.

- **Field Studies Oversight:** There is a growing concern that given the significance of field studies in the program, coupled with the sensitive nature of such field work (typically working with marginalized and vulnerable populations, and in challenging contexts), there may be a need to designate a staff person (or faculty member) in the role of field studies supervisor or manager. Such a role has existed in the past, and there is a growing sense that this is something that needs to be considered once again. This sense/opinion is based on numerous factors, and for varied reasons ranging from liability issues and importance of community partnership building and sustenance, to student satisfaction of their experiences. For instance, while the vast majority of students believe the internships are a valuable part of their learning experience (91.8%), there is less enthusiasm and support for the ways in which field experiences are supervised by the program. Additionally there has been continued concern from faculty that points to the possibility of a lack of security and consistency in place when it comes to vetting potential placements,
supervisors, and roles within agencies. Considering the hundreds of
students and community partners and projects in play, and the thousands
of hours served in the field, there is significant risk associated with our field
studies, which may warrant personnel for oversight. This possibility is being
considered and deserves increased attention.