

## **Bridging Learning in the Class and the Practicum: Competencies in Elements of Social Work Practice, Social Work Practice Laboratory, and Practicum**

The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work uses a Holistic Competence Model as a framework for teaching, learning, and assessment/evaluation of student performance. This model was developed through a series of studies that involved over 100 field instructors in identifying competencies for direct practice and for mezzo/macro practice. The Competencies for Direct Practice are used to evaluate all students in Year I field practicum and consist of 6 dimensions, each accompanied by field instructor generated performance indicators (see Table 1). The Competencies are: Learning and Growth, Behavior in the Organization, Conceptualizing Practice, Clinical Relationships, Assessment and Intervention, Professional Communication.

In the fall term of Year 1 all students are enrolled in the companion courses Elements of Social Work Practice and Social Work Practice Laboratory. The competencies to be developed in these two courses are similar to those in the field. *The performance indicators of each competency however are those which can be taught and evaluated in a simulated environment.*

The context for learning and teaching in classroom courses in comparison to the context of field learning is obviously different. In the interests of supporting student learning and field instructor teaching, Figure 1 presents the competencies in the two contexts. The Elements and Lab courses involve some observation and interactions with social workers in agencies. However, the main teaching and learning approaches used in the classroom involves use of role play and *simulation* with standardized clients<sup>1</sup> and contributions as a team member<sup>2</sup> (the learning group in the classroom). Course instructors emphasize the links between theoretical concepts and practice behaviors, and focus on developing professional behavior, communication and interviewing skills<sup>3</sup>. The aim is to assist students to learn to use the professional knowledge base and concepts in their practice. Assignments in the *Elements* course include conceptualizing relationships with practice examples<sup>4</sup> and conducting an eco-systems assessment<sup>5</sup>. Assignments in the *Lab* course include self-assessment exercises with students identifying their goals and strategies for learning<sup>6</sup>, conducting a role play interview which is recorded, transcribed, and content and process interaction are analyzed<sup>7</sup>, and the *OSCE* (Objective Standardized Clinical Examination)<sup>8</sup>. The *OSCE* is the final assignment and consists of a performance-based interview with a standardized client followed immediately by a written structured reflection. This method enables raters (members of the teaching team who are not the student's direct course instructor) to assess student interview behavior and the way concepts are used to reflect on and analyze the interview. Student cumulative performance in the lab based on all of these assignments is included in the final *Lab Evaluation Summary*<sup>9</sup>.

The specific Performance Indicators for the Lab are presented in Appendix II. The Performance Indicators for the Practicum are specified in the Practicum Evaluation Online Tool. A newly developed *Lab Evaluation Summary* is being piloted in 2014-2015. The headings used in the table in Appendix II consist of the terminology used in the Lab, followed by the terminology used in the Practicum to facilitate developing the Practicum Learning Contract.

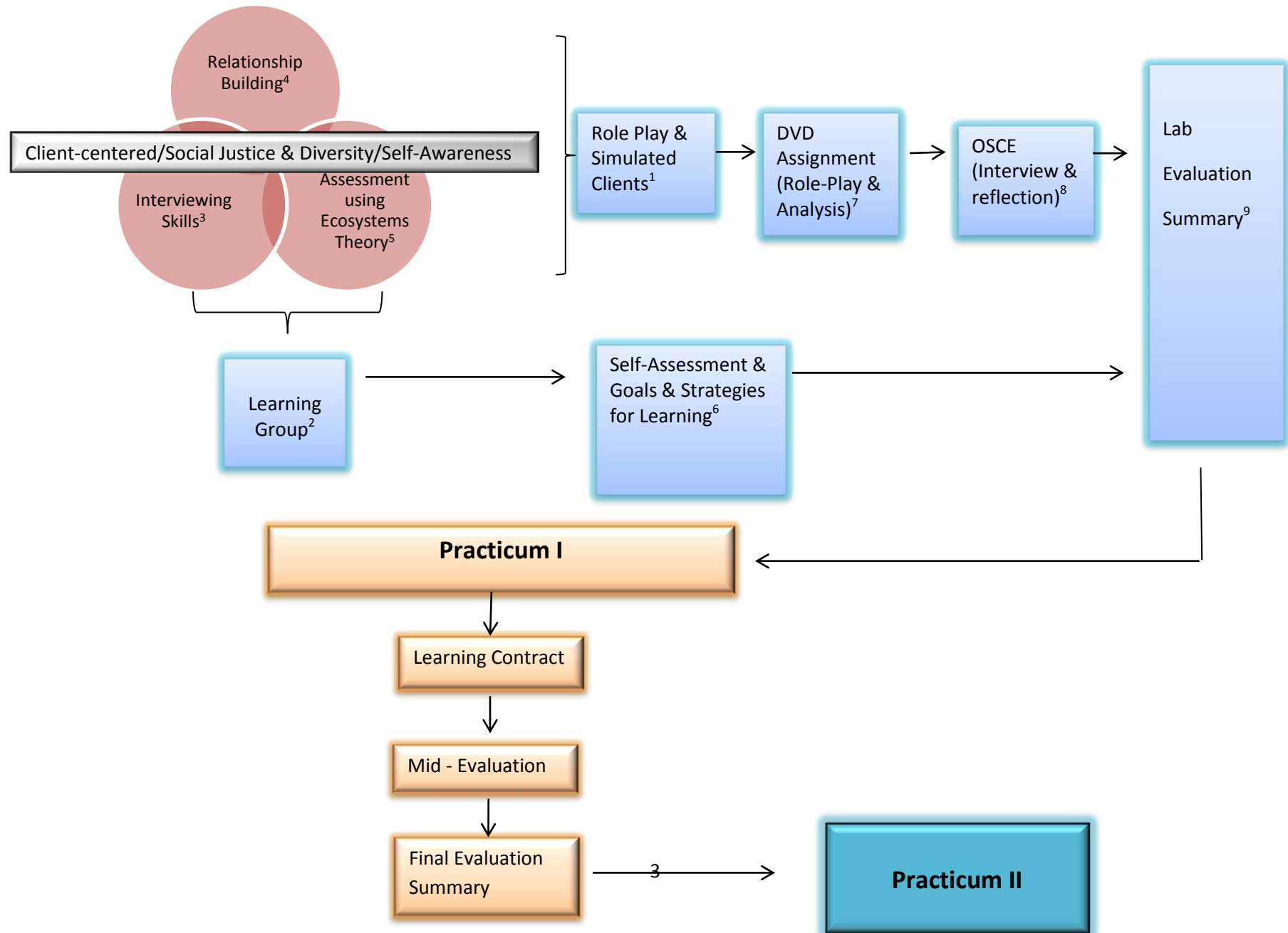
Table 1.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elements and Lab</b> Competencies for Direct Practice</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practicum Year 1</b> Competencies for Direct Practice</p>
<p><b>Self-direction in professional learning and development</b></p>	<p><b>Learning and Growth</b></p>
<p><b>Work Productively with Colleagues</b></p>	<p><b>Behavior in the Organization</b></p>
<p><b>Conceptualization of Practice</b></p>	<p><b>Conceptualizing Practice</b></p>
<p><b>Develop and use a Collaborative Relationship</b></p>	<p><b>Clinical Relationships</b></p>
<p><b>Conduct an Eco-Systemic Assessment</b></p>	<p><b>Assessment and Intervention</b></p>
<p><b>Non-verbal communication</b> <b>Use of interviewing skills</b> <b>Focused and responsive communication</b></p>	<p><b>Professional Communication</b></p>

Educational theorists highlight the human challenge of transferring knowledge and skill gained in one context to another. This is the case with our efforts to provide students with competencies learned in the Lab that can then be transferred into the field. Transfer of knowledge and skill is not automatic, but rather requires attention and new learning to consider how what has been learned can be used in a different situation. Students must bring the Lab Evaluation Summary to their field instructors to use in constructing the Practicum Learning Contract to facilitate such transfer of knowledge and skill. Field instructors will find it useful to help students ‘translate’ concepts and skills learned in the Elements/Lab courses into concepts and skills needed to achieve competence in the particular field setting. The faculty field liaison reviews the way in which the information in the Lab Evaluation Summary is included in the learning contract.

An ongoing study has sought input from field instructors regarding how we can make the Lab Evaluation Summary more useful to field instructors. This new Summary format is based on field instructor recommendations and will be piloted this year. We will also solicit further feedback to strengthen the bridge between these two curriculum components.

Figure 1: Competencies in Elements of Social Work Practice, Social Work Practice Laboratory, and Practicum



**APPENDIX I**

<p align="center"><b>Elements and Lab Competencies for Direct Practice</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Practicum Year 1 Competencies for Direct Practice</b></p>
<p><b>Self-direction in professional learning and development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accurately assess one’s performance in an interview</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accurately assess strengths and areas for future development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Articulate goals and related learning activities for future learning</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposeful use of self</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of own emotional and subjective reactions in practice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of own assumptions and bias</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Selfregulation in order to engage in an intentional manner to form a collaborative relationship</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Critical thinking used in decision-making</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning and Growth</b></p>
<p><b>Work Productively with Colleagues</b> To be able to take on the role of member of a professional group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participate actively in all aspects of the class, such as discussion, analysis and sharing impressions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate awareness of silence and reticence in self and others and its impact on group development, team building and advocacy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seek, receive, use and give feedback appropriately</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Active involvement in generating learning opportunities for others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer to role-play in front of group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Suspend one’s own needs and compromise with others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accurately assess the impact of own behavior and style on others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect confidentiality as it is applicable to the lab context</li> </ul>	<p><b>Behavior in the Organization</b></p>

<p><b>Feedback</b> Provide guidance and support to colleagues. Feedback can be: a) confirmatory, letting others know they are performing appropriately; b) corrective, providing information to enable the recipient to perform adequately; and c) motivating, pointing out the consequences of adequate and inadequate performance.</p> <p>Good feedback entails helping the recipient explore alternatives rather than providing them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reflect positives regarding the behavior in question</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide critical feedback in a constructive manner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe behavior concretely and specifically</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information directly to recipient</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information at a time appropriate to the behavior in question</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information to enable recipients to make a change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help recipients identify alternative behavior</li> </ul> <p><b>Awareness of Value Systems:</b> Take into account all value systems, including one's own, that impinge on the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Describe behavior in non-judgmental terms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate and articulate respect for various cultural norms, value systems, ethics and moral standards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strive to understand frames of reference different from one's own</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conceptualization of Practice</b> <b>Link practice concepts with procedural competencies &amp; skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use practice concepts to guide interviews</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use diversity concepts to engage and assess clients</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conceptualizing Practice</b></p>
<p><b>Develop and use a Collaborative Relationship</b> <i>Clarify the roles of the participants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explain social worker role and agency context</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Determine the client's expectations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Clinical Relationships</b></p>

<input type="checkbox"/> Explain the nature of the helping process <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiate goals and formulate a contract <i>Empathic Communication</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate active listening <input type="checkbox"/> Reflect and respond to client's expressed feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and appropriately address implied feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately convey empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Provide realistic reassurance and support <input type="checkbox"/> Explore cultural cues and issues <input type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate self-disclosure  <i>Practice with diversity</i> The CASWE standards defines diversity as follows: "a range of characteristics including, but not limited to: age, colour, culture, disability/non-disability status, ethnic or linguistic origin, gender, health status, heritage, immigration status, geographic origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, political orientation, gender and sexual identities, and socioeconomic status" (p. 4). <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate openness and interest in learning about relevant issues related to diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Explore cues and issues related to intersecting diversities	
<b>Conduct an Eco-Systemic Assessment</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Explore precipitant and current situation <input type="checkbox"/> Allow space for clients to tell their stories, without dominating, interrupting, offering premature interpretations or solutions. <input type="checkbox"/> Inquire about relevant systems and networks <input type="checkbox"/> Realistically address both strengths and challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Make links between problem, situation, and systems <input type="checkbox"/> Offer appropriate feedback Clarify and confirm the practitioner's understanding through inviting client feedback and validation	<b>Assessment and Intervention</b>
<b>Non-verbal communication: Student's interactions should demonstrate:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate attending	<b>Professional Communication</b>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate attention to cultural cues</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate facial expressions</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate posture</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate voice and tonal quality</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate physical proximity</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Non-verbal encouragements</li></ul> |  |
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**Use of interviewing skills**

- Appropriate use of open and closed ended questions (avoid stacking questions, multiple closed questions and leading questions)
- Seek clarification
- Seek concreteness
- Paraphrase content, thoughts, and meanings in a clear and succinct manner
- Make appropriate use of silence
- Summarize

**Focused and responsive communication**

- Maintain focus of the interview
- Pace the interview appropriately
- Respond to content relevant issues
- Seek relevant and specific information