**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[1] and contributions as a team member[2] (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[3]. 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[4] and conducting an eco-systems assessment[5]. Assignments in the *Lab* course include self-assessment exercises with students identifying their goals and strategies for learning[6], conducting a role play interview which is recorded, transcribed, and content and process interaction are analyzed[7], and the *OSCE* (Objective Standardized Clinical Examination)[8]. 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*[9].

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.
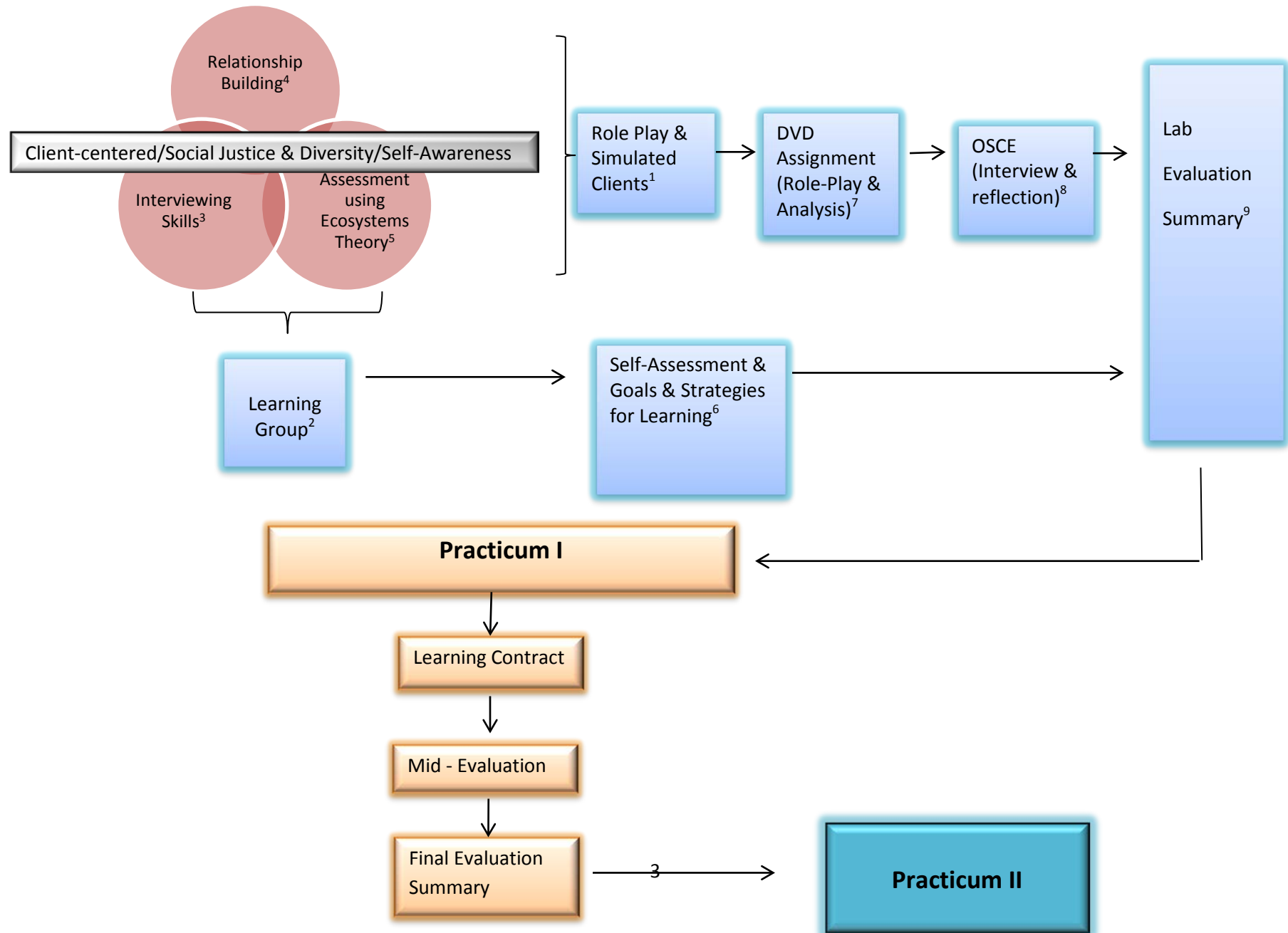
Table 1.

Elements and Lab Competencies for Direct Practice	**Practicum Year 1** Competencies for Direct Practice
Self-direction in professional learning and development	**Learning and Growth**
Work Productively with Colleagues	**Behavior in the Organization**
Conceptualization of Practice	**Conceptualizing Practice**
Develop and use a Collaborative Relationship	**Clinical Relationships**
Conduct an Eco-Systemic Assessment	**Assessment and Intervention**
Non-verbal communication **Use of interviewing skills** **Focused and responsive communication**	**Professional Communication**

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**

Relationship Building[4]

Client-centered/Social Justice & Diversity/Self-Awareness

Interviewing Skills[3]

Assessment using Ecosystems Theory[5]

Role Play & Simulated Clients[1]

DVD Assignment (Role-Play & Analysis)[7]

OSCE (Interview & reflection)[8]

Lab Evaluation Summary[9]

Learning Group[2]

Self-Assessment & Goals & Strategies for Learning[6]

Practicum I

Learning Contract

Mid - Evaluation

Final Evaluation Summary

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Practicum II

APPENDIX I

Elements and Lab Competencies for Direct Practice	Practicum Year 1 Competencies for Direct Practice
Self-direction in professional learning and development ☐ Accurately assess one's performance in an interview ☐ Accurately assess strengths and areas for future development ☐ Articulate goals and related learning activities for future learning **Purposeful use of self** ☐ Awareness of own emotional and subjective reactions in practice ☐ Awareness of own assumptions and bias ☐ Self-regulation in order to engage in an intentional manner to form a collaborative relationship ☐ Critical thinking used in decision-making	**Learning and Growth**
Work Productively with Colleagues To be able to take on the role of member of a professional group. ☐ Participate actively in all aspects of the class, such as discussion, analysis and sharing impressions. ☐ Demonstrate awareness of silence and reticence in self and others and its impact on group development, team building and advocacy ☐ Seek, receive, use and give feedback appropriately ☐ Active involvement in generating learning opportunities for others ☐ Volunteer to role-play in front of group ☐ Suspend one's own needs and compromise with others ☐ Accurately assess the impact of own behavior and style on others ☐ Respect confidentiality as it is applicable to the lab context	**Behavior in the Organization**

Feedback 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. Good feedback entails helping the recipient explore alternatives rather than providing them. ☐ Reflect positives regarding the behavior in question ☐ Provide critical feedback in a constructive manner ☐ Describe behavior concretely and specifically ☐ Provide information directly to recipient ☐ Provide information at a time appropriate to the behavior in question ☐ Provide information to enable recipients to make a change ☐ Help recipients identify alternative behavior **Awareness of Value Systems:** Take into account all value systems, including one's own, that impinge on the situation. ☐ Describe behavior in non-judgmental terms ☐ Demonstrate and articulate respect for various cultural norms, value systems, ethics and moral standards ☐ Strive to understand frames of reference different from one's own	
Conceptualization of Practice **Link practice concepts with procedural competencies & skills** ☐ Use practice concepts to guide interviews ☐ Use diversity concepts to engage and assess clients	**Conceptualizing Practice**
Develop and use a Collaborative Relationship *Clarify the roles of the participants* ☐ Explain social worker role and agency context ☐ Determine the client's expectations	**Clinical Relationships**

☐ Explain the nature of the helping process ☐ Negotiate goals and formulate a contract *Empathic Communication* ☐ Demonstrate active listening ☐ Reflect and respond to client's expressed feelings ☐ Identify and appropriately address implied feelings ☐ Accurately convey empathy ☐ Provide realistic reassurance and support ☐ Explore cultural cues and issues ☐ Use appropriate self-disclosure *Practice with diversity* 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). ☐ Demonstrate openness and interest in learning about relevant issues related to diversity ☐ Explore cues and issues related to intersecting diversities	
Conduct an Eco-Systemic Assessment ☐ Explore precipitant and current situation ☐ Allow space for clients to tell their stories, without dominating, interrupting, offering premature interpretations or solutions. ☐ Inquire about relevant systems and networks ☐ Realistically address both strengths and challenges ☐ Make links between problem, situation, and systems ☐ Offer appropriate feedback Clarify and confirm the practitioner's understanding through inviting client feedback and validation	**Assessment and Intervention**
Non-verbal communication: *Student's interactions should demonstrate:* ☐ Appropriate attending	**Professional Communication**

☐ Appropriate attention to cultural cues ☐ Appropriate facial expressions ☐ Appropriate posture ☐ Appropriate voice and tonal quality ☐ Appropriate physical proximity ☐ Non-verbal encouragements **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	