

PROGRAM EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The Department of Social Work conducts program evaluation annually through the administration of various surveys, analysis of data collected, and implementation of curriculum changes or other changes as a result of the survey outcomes. The Department's Program Evaluation Committee is responsible for implementing the surveys, presenting information to the faculty, and tracking new outcomes after changes are made. The Field Education component of the department also implements various evaluation surveys. Further, the university's Institutional Research Office implements a comprehensive survey of alumni for the Department and presents yearly comparative data report to the faculty for analysis. Finally, the Department examines the graduates' annual pass rate statistics for social work licensure provided by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB).

The following is a listing of the six major surveys or data collection methods that are conducted as part of the program evaluation plan:

- 1. Pass rate data on the social work licensure exam for the bachelor's level and master's level programs provided by the ASWB.**
- 2. Career and Further Education Study – Ohio University Survey of Graduates, administered annually to graduates of both programs at one year after graduation, by the Ohio University, Office of Institutional Research.**
- 3. Mastery of Social Work Knowledge, Skills, and Ethics, a program evaluation survey that is administered annually to students and field instructors of both programs, by the field education office.**
- 4. End-of-the-Year Field Evaluation Survey, a field evaluation survey that is administered annually to students and field instructors of both programs, by the field education office.**
- 5. Advising Survey, administered annually to all enrolled students of the undergraduate program, by the program evaluation committee.**
- 6. Focus groups conducted by the department annually for the graduate program.**

The following is a brief description of each survey or data collection method:

Pass Rate for Licensure Exam:

For many years, the department has acquired these data annually from the Association of Social Work Boards. For the undergraduate program, the pass rate for department graduates for 2003 was 86%. Over the years, this percentage for graduates of the undergraduate program is consistently 12 to 15 points above the

national pass rate. For the graduate program, a trend has not developed due to the newness of the program and the fact that many students can delay taking the exam for up to two years. However, for the year 2003, the graduates' pass rate was 83%, which is 20 points higher than the national pass rate for that year. The department has sent for 2004 data.

Career and Further Education Study – Ohio University Survey of Graduates:

The Office of Institutional Research at Ohio University implements a survey which is sent to graduates of both programs—graduate and undergraduate—at one year after graduation. This survey collects data on job acquisition and satisfaction, graduate school enrollment, and program effectiveness. It contains a section for the graduates to rate their performance on twenty essential social work skills. A Likert scale is used, and the rating options range from very poor to excellent. The survey also collects data on the effectiveness of various curriculum areas for preparation for employment or graduate school.

After receiving the results of this survey, the members of the Program Evaluation Committee primarily look for trends in this data and present data highlights and areas of concern for the faculty as a whole to consider. For example, this survey has been used by the department to identify various areas of the curriculum that need emphasis, expansion, or reorganization. The data from this survey as well as the Mastery of Social Work Knowledge, Skills, and Ethics survey (see below) were used by the department recently to strengthen the curriculum in a couple of areas.

Survey Results: While looking at the most recent results for the undergraduate program, for instance, it is interesting to note that with respect to the skill questions, the responders consistently rated their performance at above average or excellent. Specifically, two-thirds or more of the responders rated their performance on 19 of the 20 skills at above average or excellent. Eight of the skills were rated at 100% above average or excellent. For one skill, 67% of the responders rated performance of that skill at above average or excellent. This is below the threshold identified by the faculty for meriting further analysis and attention. The scoring for this skill, therefore, prompted curriculum revisions and improvements. In reviewing the data from this report over time, faculty has noted consistent improvement in the scores for most of the skills.

Further, while looking at the graduate program's most recent survey and the section devoted to self-assessment of basic skills, it is interesting to note that most of the responders rated themselves at above average to excellent for most of the skills. Indeed, for 85% of the skills, 100% of the responders rated themselves at above average or excellent. The scores for three skills did merit attention by the faculty in terms of curriculum revisions, and the Department is waiting for new data for the graduate program following the implementation of these curriculum changes.

Mastery of Social Work Knowledge, Skills, and Ethics:

This survey is part of the End-of-the-Year Field Evaluation Survey and is administered at the end of the academic year to graduating seniors, all students in the graduate program, and all field instructors of both programs. Like the above survey (Career and Further Education Study), it provides an opportunity for the graduate and undergraduate students to rate themselves and for the field instructors to rate the student's performance on twenty essential social work skills. For two years, this survey was also administered to the seniors of the undergraduate program at the beginning of the year in order to provide a comparison of the students' perceptions of their skills over time. These comparison data are still being analyzed. Generally, the scores from this survey are consistent with data from the Career and Further Education Study.

Survey Results: Looking at the undergraduate program overall, for all of the skill questions, 78% to 100% of the responders rated their performance at above average or excellent. No skill was rated at or below the threshold of 70%, which necessitates a review by faculty. For the graduate program, 19 of the 20 skills were rated by 75% to 100% of the responders as performing at above average or excellent. The performance on one skill was rated by less than 70% of the responders as above average or excellent and was, therefore, identified for review by the faculty with changes in curriculum generated and implemented. The Department is now waiting for new data and emerging trends for the graduate program following implementation of these changes.

End-of-the-Year Field Evaluation Survey:

The field education office administers a comprehensive survey annually in May and June. The survey is distributed to all graduating seniors, students in the graduate program, field instructors, and augmented field instructors. Data is collected on the perceptions and opinions of the participants with regard to all field components: agencies, field instructors, augmented field instructors, field liaisons, seminar instructors, and field office. The field office has used data from these surveys to locate troublesome areas and to provide corrections and modifications. Through the use of this data, the field office has provided individualized consultation to a few field instructors, identified subjects for training of field instructors, revised the field curriculum, and created improved matches between the field instructors and the students.

As an example of these survey results and looking at one category—rating of undergraduate field placements—out of 25 placement agencies, all but two agencies (92%) were rated by the students on nine areas at or above the 3.5 threshold identified by the field office (3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = excellent). In regard to ratings of the field instructors (25), 92% received averaged scores at or above the 3.5 threshold. Eighty percent received scores of good to excellent. The scores for the following categories were all well above the 3.5 threshold: augmented field instructors, field liaisons, and field office. Similar results were obtained pertaining to the graduate program. In response to these survey results, the field office has

implemented the following corrective actions: provided additional training or direct assistance to selected agencies or field instructors, re-emphasized delineation of roles and responsibilities, and increased liaison contacts and other hands-on, supportive services.

Advising Survey:

This survey measures the students' perceptions and satisfaction with the advising process at the department level. This survey was administered at the undergraduate level for the first time in Spring Quarter, 2005. The responders rated the faculty members on twelve questions related to the quality of the advising and the availability of the advisor. On a 5-point scale, the faculty achieved an overall average of 3.8. This score is a positive one and provides a baseline upon which to build. This survey contained several open-ended questions and gleaned some high-quality information for the Department to work from in terms of advising improvements. Two members of the Department recently revised the Undergraduate Handbook, which was a concern expressed in the advising survey. Further, the Department has an Advising Committee which is very active in training new faculty members and in providing information to faculty in regard to new developments in university requirements and curriculum changes.

Focus Groups:

The Department conducts annual focus groups with students about to graduate from the master's program. The purpose of these groups is to gather qualitative information on areas of the program and curriculum that students identify as needing improvement and to identify other needs or obstacles that students experience while applying for or attending the program. During the focus group, students consider the admissions process and materials, the field site selection process, field education, field evaluation, course evaluation, and each course sequence, level, and concentration.

For the most part, the focus groups have reflected the strengths of our program and its ability to meet student needs. Past focus groups have reported that the admissions process is simpler and more responsive than those of many other graduate programs to which they had applied and that the field site selection process enables students to far more personal input than most programs, while exposing them to a wide range of agencies. As a result of early feedback, more group work was added to the Advanced Clinical Sequence, and the entire Research Sequence was redesigned, from one course in each program year to a three-quarter sequence associated with the field placement.

The information yielded from the focus groups has been in agreement with the data realized from the surveys, has helped to explain quantitative findings from other data collection methods, and has led to further confidence in the curriculum changes that have been made.

Conclusion:

The Program Evaluation Committee and the faculty are regularly observing both short-term and long-term trends in the survey data in response to curriculum changes that have been implemented. This process of noting the outcomes, implementing changes, and observing subsequent data has proven to be effective in our efforts to develop a responsive, vital curriculum and to promote continuous quality improvement within the department. For further information or questions, please contact the Social Work Department, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.