

## Analysis of Assessment in maintaining and Improving Units- Social Work

- I. **Objectives** – The Educational Objectives for the Social Work Program are presented in Appendix A. Faculty review the objectives annually in the end of year retreat/summit with the last major changes occurring in August 2006.
- II. **Course/Learning Experiences** - The educational objectives of the social work program are linked to the core social work courses as illustrated by Appendix B, Educational Objectives of the Social Work Program Reflected through Core Social Work Courses. A match between each core social work course objectives and course learning objectives can be provided upon request. Program-driven assignments/instructional methods are presented for the core social work course in Appendix C. These are assignments on which all social work faculty agree and which are in the course regardless of instructor. Additional assignments, such as testing, are also included in all courses.
- III. **Evaluation/Assessment Methods** - The senior assessment program is multi-faceted, using four methods implemented prior to the end of the student's senior year. The first of these measures the extent to which they have met all the criteria necessary for graduation for the Social Work Program and the University. The other measures include the field practicum evaluation, a written comprehensive exam and an oral exam. The latter two measures are program imbedded and use scales designed from program and educational learning objectives. These assessment measures are given both Fall and Spring semesters and are tied to SOWK 494 Senior Seminar, which is the capstone course for the social work major ensuring that 100% of our majors participate. See Appendix D to determine how educational objectives are linked to outcome assessment methods. Additionally, a Student Motivation Scale has the goal of determining what students think and feel about departmental assessment activities.

**Objective Accomplishments/Results** - Faculty review results of the comprehensive exam and the oral exam during the academic year or at one of the departmental retreats/summits.

### Comprehensive Written Exam

During the August 2007 Summit, the Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS) conducted an item writing workshop for faculty. As a result, some modifications were made to the written comprehensive exam. These changes were piloted in fall 2008. Faculty were to submit proposed questions during the fall 2007 semester which would be piloted in the spring 2008 written comprehensive. Appendix E presents the Social Work Senior Assessment Comprehensive Examination Results Summary for fall 2007 and spring 2008.

### Summer2008 plan

- align current department objectives with new CSWE EPAS competencies
- decide on whether to implement a knowledge-type exam (to be administered earlier in the program)
- group evaluation of new items

The plan as proposed by CARS is as follows:

### Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

- continue to imbed item writing exercise within course
- continue item-tryouts
  - administer updated test with additional pilot items
- group evaluation of newly written items

### Summer 2009

- standard setting workshop

### Fall 2009

- administration of full test

The comprehensive exam is designed to evaluate theoretical content, knowledge base and skill

base. The student must pass this test in order to take the oral examination. The student who fails must repeat the test six to eight weeks after taking the first test. If a student passes the total test but fails a subtest, that subtest must be repeated to receive a passing score. The subtests are in the areas of context, knowledge and practice. It should be noted that the student's first test score is the one used for program evaluation purposes.

Each year test results as well as results of curriculum and program reviews are used to review, revise, and improve the examination. The comprehensive exam has been revised ten times since its inception. For the fall 2007, 11 of 14 students passed the total test. Of these six passed all the subtests and five had to repeat one subtest. For the spring 2008, 17 of 25 students passed the total test. Thirteen of these students passed all subtests and four had to repeat one subtest. There appears to be a direct correlation between grade point average in the major and comprehensive test results. Test results by year are available on site.

### **Oral Exam**

The oral exam is designed to evaluate the student in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, application of theory, and knowledge base to social work practice and self-assessment as well as professional identity. The rating form for the oral exam was designed for the Spring 1988 assessment and has been revised ten times. The last few revisions have been in an attempt to strengthen the anchors in the professional identification section.

Students completing the oral exam during the last seven academic years scored higher in all areas than students during previous years. This is more than likely due to the increased coherence between the curriculum and the exam. Appendix F presents the fall 2007 and spring 2008 Social Work Assessment Oral Exam Reports from the Center for Assessment and Research Studies.

**Field Practicum Evaluation Instrument** Each social work major completes a field practicum generally during his/her last semester that consists of a minimum of 472 of supervised practice in an agency setting. Mid-way through the field practicum the student evaluates herself and is evaluated by the agency field supervisor. The student and supervisor review the evaluation together at which time the student's educational needs for the remainder of the field experience are addressed. At the conclusion of the practicum a similar evaluation process occurs. These evaluations address the student's ability to integrate knowledge and skill and demonstrate this ability in a practice setting.

**Meaning of results:** The results of all three of the above measures provide some indication of the success of the curriculum content, program-driven assignments and instructional methods. Even allowing for individual student ability and effort, we can identify areas in which the curriculum content may need bolstering as well as determine effectiveness of program-driven assignments and instructional methods.

**Student Motivation Scale** The student motivation scale was developed by the assessment officer and given to students completing outcome assessment in social work at the conclusion of each semester since the Spring 1996 semester. This scale is designed to demonstrate the level of motivation of students completing the outcome assessment measures, specifically the comprehensive and oral exams in the social work major. Results have consistently indicated that social work majors take their participation in the assessment activities seriously and are motivated to perform well. According to the assessment officer, these are the highest reported motivation levels reported at JMU.

#### **IV. Uses of Evaluation/Assessment Results and Actions Taken.** Assessment has proven especially beneficial this past year by helping:

- serve as data source for revisions made as a result of the self-study process for reaccreditation
- achieve greater clarity and consensus among faculty in the area of program and educational objectives

- ensure that assessment methods are tied to program and educational objectives in a systematic, reliable manner
- determine when our curriculum design is in line with our assessment measures
- provide diagnostic information for advisement of graduating seniors concerning their strengths and weaknesses

The curriculum is reviewed annually with modifications and changes in courses being made as appropriate. Content areas identified through the assessment process as needing strengthening are reviewed across the curriculum to address the sequential nature of the nature. The most recent uses of assessment data include:

- Revisions made to the comprehensive and oral exams based on systematic evaluations of test results with assistance of the Office of Assessment and Research. This included minor modifications to the comprehensive exam based on data from the Assessment Office. Further refinement of the anchors for the oral exam was made in an attempt to improve inter-rater reliability.
- Faculty work together, as a result of the assessment process, to strengthen the sequential nature of the curriculum. For example, when an area is identified as a deficit, the faculty work together to insure that the content is sufficiently covered in all appropriate courses. Generally, this means that content is introduced in earlier courses and built upon in courses that follow.
- Faculty assessed the areas where there seemed to be difficulty on the part of a significant number of students and reviewed the way in which the materials in those particular areas is handled in the classroom, in the texts, and/or supplemental materials. Several program-driven assignments were modified as a result. This included:
  1. Incorporated professional work habits in all social work syllabi
  2. SOWK 287 – modification of the LAPS to only be reflection of service-learning incorporating other LAP entries into test questions
  3. Poverty Simulation (IIHHS) moved from 400 level practice courses to SOWK 288
  4. SOWK 288 – students take pre and post online test on APA style
  5. SOWK 317 process recording assignment revised
  6. SOWK 317 social history assignment revised
  7. SOWK 320 limited the number of theories to be presented in order to make theory more accessible to students as they enter the upper level practice courses
  8. SOWK 465 – modification of the family assessment project;
  9. Field Practicum –journals to be evaluated as plus-minus which will influence the final grade for each block; field integrating seminar to be used in figuring the field grade

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**Addenda:**

- Appendix A – Educational Objectives of the Social Work Program
- Appendix B - Educational Objectives of the Social Work Program Reflected through the Core Social Work Courses
- Appendix C– Program-Driven Assignments/Instructional Methods by Course
- Appendix D - Educational Objectives of the Social Work Program and Outcome Assessment Methods
- Appendix E - Social Work Senior Assessment Comprehensive Examination Results Summary for fall 2007 and spring 2008 prepared by the Center for Assessment and Research Studies
- Appendix F - Social Work Assessment Oral Exam Reports for fall 2007 and spring 2008 prepared by the Center for Assessment and Research Studies

# APPENDIX A

## EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM [Revised August 2006]

The Social Work Program prepares generalist Social Workers committed to strengthening community life for diverse individuals, families and organizations and promoting social justice through advocacy and action.

### Social Work Context

**A.** The student will be knowledgeable in social welfare, including its historical development and contemporary issues affecting service delivery, and skilled in policy analysis, critique and change.

1. Identify major events in the history of social welfare including social welfare from ancient to current times and current events as they impact on social welfare institutions and their ability to address societal needs.
2. Identify major trends and issues in the development of the social work profession.
3. Discuss various conceptions of social welfare (residual, institutional, developmental) as they have an impact on social and economic justice, including all forms of human oppression and discrimination.
4. Identify the major value positions (conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical) and their probable effects on social welfare policy and practice.
5. Identify programmatic differences in developed and developing countries social service delivery systems, and the impact global issues have on social services in this country.

**B.** The student will be knowledgeable of the social work profession, including knowledge of values, professional organizations and literature, roles, social work education, career development, and regulation of practice.

6. Describe the orientation, role, and activities within the field of social work and discriminate social work from related fields of academic study and human service professions.
7. List the characteristics of a profession and describe how social work fits these criteria.
8. Describe social work from conservative, liberal and radical political perspectives.
9. Identify key components of the NASW Code of Ethics.
10. Describe the functions of the National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education.
11. Demonstrate knowledge of liability issues as they confront professional practice.
12. Demonstrate an understanding of credentialing and social work licensure.
13. Demonstrate an understanding of current trends in policy development.
14. Identify and describe various social work roles including enabler/facilitator, mobilizer, broker, advocate and mediator.
15. Identify and discuss some of the issues facing social work education such as levels of the profession, specialist and generalist practice.
16. Demonstrate knowledge and skill in use of integrated learning resources.

- C. The student will be knowledgeable of diverse population groups distinguished by class, race, ethnicity, culture, family structure, marital status, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, and national origin.
17. Describe the dynamics of differential power relationships in the structure of American society.
  18. Identify the major value positions (conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical) as they effect risk and protective factors.
  19. Identify issues that are unique to diverse populations.
  20. Describe implications of diversity for social work practice, policy practice and service delivery.

### **Social Work Practice**

D. The student will have the ability to identify, select, adapt, and apply traditional and emerging approaches of generalist social work practice.

21. Recognize and demonstrate the critical processes of engagement.
  22. Identify and critically assess problem situations. Apply knowledge about current societal issues and their impact on development and behavior.
  23. Apply basic research methodology.
  24. Develop and/or identify and appropriately implement intervention plans.
  25. Use research skills to critically evaluate the extent to which intervention objectives were achieved.
- E. The student will demonstrate understanding and use of communication skills on a professional level in verbal, non-verbal and written communication.
26. Identify and develop beginning level interviewing and interpersonal skills.
  27. Conduct an interview from the introductory phase through the developmental phase to termination.
  28. Demonstrate professional writing and documentation.
  29. Establish and maintain professional relationships in keeping with the NASW Code of Ethics.

### **Professional Identity**

F. The student will demonstrate self-awareness in the development of professional social work skills and subscribe to the NASW Code of Ethics.

30. Identify and differentiate personal, professional and client value systems.
31. Engage in ethical decision making.
32. Identify one's ability, personality, needs, motivations, and position.
33. Clarify one's role, purpose, and boundaries to develop and maintain helping relationships.
34. Recognize and accept one's strengths, limitations, reaction patterns and influence on helping relationships and a commitment to strengthening those areas deemed necessary for effective professional practice.
35. Demonstrate an attitude of responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and enhancement of services to the client, agency and community and to the use of such knowledge to inform practice.



Core Social Work Courses	SOWK 287	SOWK 288	SOWK 305	SOWK 317	SOWK 320	SOWK 335	SOWK 465	SOWK 466	SOWK 467	SOWK 481/482	SOWK 494
13. Demonstrate an understanding of current trends in policy development.		X				X					
14. Identify and describe various social work roles including enabler/facilitator, mobilizer, broker, advocate and mediator.	X			X							
15. Identify and discuss some of the issues facing social work education such as levels of the profession, specialist and generalist practice.	X										
16. Demonstrate knowledge and skill in use of integrated learning resources.	X	X	X		X	X		X			
C. The student will be knowledgeable of diverse population groups distinguished by class, race, ethnicity, culture, family structure, marital status, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, and national origin.											
17. Describe the dynamics of differential power relationships in the structure of American society.	X	X			X	X		X			
18. Identify the major value positions (conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical) as they effect risk and protective factors.	X					X					
19. Identify issues that are unique to diverse populations.	X		X	X	X	X					
20. Describe implications of diversity for social work practice, policy practice and service delivery.	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
<b>SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE</b>											
D. The student will have the ability to identify, select, adapt, and apply traditional and emerging approaches of generalist social work practice.											
21. Recognize and demonstrate the critical processes of engagement.				X			X	X	X	X	
22. Identify and critically assess problem situations. Apply knowledge about current societal issues and their impact on development and behavior.				X	X		X	X	X	X	
23. Apply basic research methodology.			X						X		
24. Develop and/or identify and appropriately implement intervention plans.								X	X	X	
25. Use research skills to critically evaluate the extent to which intervention objectives were achieved.			X				X	X	X	X	
E. The student will demonstrate understanding and use of communication skills on a professional level in verbal, non-verbal and written communication.											
26. Identify and develop beginning level interviewing and interpersonal skills.				X			X	X		X	



## APPENDIX C

### INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS BY COURSE [Revised January 2008]

METHOD	SOWK 287	SOWK 288	SOWK 305	SOWK 317	SOWK 320	SOWK 335	SOWK 465	SOWK 466	SOWK 467	SOWK 481	SOWK 482	SOWK 494
Community Service-Learning	X											
Learning Activity Packets (LAPS)	X											
SW Information Literacy	X		X			X						
Just Practice: A Social Justice Approach to Social Work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Poverty Experience: U.S. & Global Perspectives		X										
Use of Novel :		X										
Connections of historical to current Policy		X										
APA Style Guidelines & Use		X	X		X	X						
JMU-IRB on-line exam			X									
Article Critiques			X					X				
Data Analysis			X									
Research Proposal			X									
Social History				X								
Video Taping				X				X				
Videotape Critique				X				X				
Process Recording				X				X	X			
Transactional Analysis							X					
Community Assignment												
Human Diversity Assessment					X							
Community Assessment					X				X	X		
Organizational Assessment					X					X		
Individual Assessment					X							
Eco-mapping					X			X			X	
Social Policy Analysis						X						
Media Log						X						

METHOD	SOWK 287	SOWK 288	SOWK 305	SOWK 317	SOWK 320	SOWK 335	SOWK 465	SOWK 466	SOWK 467	SOWK 481	SOWK 482	SOWK 494
Family Assessment							X					
Group Planning Assignment							X					
Group in-class lab sessions							X					
Cultural Competency Assignment							X					
Diagnostic Summary								X				
Learning Case Study Journals								X	X			
Ethical Decision-Making			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SW Information Literacy Assessment						X						
Universal Precautions										X	X	
HIPPA Training										X	X	
Poverty Simulation		X										
Multi-Cultural Competency Workshop							X	X	X			
Supervision Conference Report										X	X	
Professional Writing Sample										X	X	
Field Integrating Seminar										X	X	
Resume												X
Personal Statement*												X
Comprehensive Exam in Major												X
Oral Exam in Major												X

- Students also write a Personal Statement when they apply for Admission to the Program which occurs after the completion of SOWK 287 & 288.

**APPENDIX D**  
**Educational Objectives, Outcome Measurement Methods and Specific Items Assessing each Educational Objective (April 2008)**

Educational Objectives	Measurement Methods & Specific Items Assessing each Educational Objective				Information Literacy Assessment
	Written Comprehensive Exam	Oral Exam	Field Evaluation		
<p><b>SOCIAL WORK CONTEXT</b>  <b>Goal A. The student will be knowledgeable in social welfare, including its historical development and contemporary issues affecting service delivery, and skilled in policy analysis, critique and change.</b></p>					
<p>1. Identify major events in the history of social welfare including social welfare from ancient to current times and current events as they impact on social welfare institutions and their ability to address societal needs.</p>	5-6, 14, 16-18				
<p>2. Identify major trends and issues in the development of the social work profession.</p>	1- 4, 19				
<p>3. Discuss various conceptions of social welfare (residual, institutional, developmental) as they have an impact on social and economic justice, including all forms of human oppression and discrimination.</p>	7-13, 15, 69, 70-71				
<p>4. Identify the major value positions (conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical) and their probable effects on social welfare policy and practice.</p>	119-122				
<p>5. Identify programmatic differences in developed and developing countries social service delivery systems, and the impact global issues have on social services in this country.</p>	116				
<p><b>Goal B. The student will be knowledgeable of the social work profession, including knowledge of values, professional organizations and literature, roles, social work education, career development, and regulation of practice.</b></p>					
<p>6. Describe the orientation, role, and activities within the field of social work and discriminate social work from related fields of academic study and human service professions.</p>	20				
<p>7. List the characteristics of a profession and describe how social work fits these criteria.</p>	21				
<p>8. Describe social work from conservative, liberal and radical political perspectives.</p>	119-122				
<p>9. Identify key components of the NASW Code of Ethics.</p>	28, 31	2			
<p>10. Describe the functions of the National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education.</p>	22				
<p>11. Demonstrate knowledge of liability issues as they confront professional practice.</p>	29				
<p>12. Demonstrate an understanding of credentialing and social work licensure.</p>	23				
<p>13. Demonstrate an understanding of current trends in policy development.</p>	29, 92	18	33		

Measurement Methods & Specific Items Assessing each Educational Objective					
Educational Objectives	Written Comprehensive Exam	Oral Exam	Field Evaluation	Information Literacy Assessment	
14. Identify and describe various social work roles including enabler/facilitator, mobilizer, broker, advocate and mediator.		11-13	10-14		
15. Identify and discuss some of the issues facing social work education such as levels of the profession, specialist and generalist practice.	24-25				
16. Demonstrate knowledge and skill in use of integrated learning resources.				22-68	
<b>Goal C. The student will be knowledgeable of diverse population groups distinguished by class, race, ethnicity, culture, family structure, marital status, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, and national origin.</b>					
17. Describe the dynamics of differential power relationships in the structure of American society.	34, 66-67, 88				
18. Identify the major value positions (conservative, liberal, libertarian, radical) as they effect risk and protective factors.		20			
19. Identify issues that are unique to diverse populations.	35, 37-38, 137	4	2		
20. Describe implications of diversity for social work practice, policy practice and service delivery.	32-33, 36	1	9, 33		
<b>SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE</b>					
<b>Goal D. The student will have the ability to identify, select, adapt, and apply traditional and emerging approaches of generalist social work practice.</b>					
21. Recognize and demonstrate the critical processes of engagement.	21, 39, 73, 74, 135, 141	1, 6	20-24		
22. Identify and critically assess problem situations. Apply knowledge about current societal issues and their impact on development and behavior.	26-27, 40-65, 68, 83-84, 106-107, 109-115, 133-134, 139	3-6, 16-17	25, 34		
23. Apply basic research methodology.	96-99, 101-105, 140, 142-143	21-22	37		
24. Develop and/or identify and appropriately implement intervention plans.	72, 89, 91-93, 95, 108, 116-118, 138, 123-132, 144-146	7-10	15-18, 26-27, 30-32		
25. Use research skills to critically evaluate the extent to which intervention objectives were achieved.		5, 14	28, 35, 36		
<b>Goal E. The student will demonstrate understanding and use of communication skills on a professional level in verbal, non-verbal and written communication.</b>					
26. Identify and develop beginning level interviewing and interpersonal skills.	75-82, 85-87, 94, 100	15	39-40		
27. Conduct an interview from the introductory phase through the developmental phase to termination.			24, 29		
28. Demonstrate professional writing and documentation.			38		
29. Establish and maintain professional relationships in keeping with the NASW Code of Ethics.			9, 20-23		

Educational Objectives	Measurement Methods & Specific Items Assessing each Educational Objective			
	Written Comprehensive Exam	Oral Exam	Field Evaluation	Information Literacy Assessment
<b>PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY</b> <b>Goal F. The student will demonstrate self-awareness in the development of professional social work skills and subscribe to the NASW Code of Ethics.</b>				
30. Identify and differentiate personal, professional and client value systems.	30	20	1-2	
31. Engage in ethical decision making.		2, 20	25	
32. Identify one's ability, personality, needs, motivations, and position.		19	3	
33. Clarify one's role, purpose, and boundaries to develop and maintain helping relationships.		19	3, 4	
34. Recognize and accept one's strengths, limitations, reaction patterns and influence on helping relationships and a commitment to strengthening those areas deemed necessary for effective professional practice.		23	3, 5-7, 41	
35. Demonstrate an attitude of responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and enhancement of services to the client, agency and community and to the use of such knowledge to inform practice.		21	8	

## APPENDIX E

### SOCIAL WORK COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Fall 2007

Social Work Senior Assessment

Comprehensive Examination

Results Summary

Objective Assessed	Items Assessing
<i>Social Work Context</i>	Items: 1-23, 31-33, 70, 88, 90, 113, 116-119 34 Items (24% of test) Mean=24.93 (73.32% correct)      SD=3.50 Alpha = .62
<b>Social Work Knowledge Base</b>	Items: 24, 25, 29, 35-69, 93, 96-104, 106-112, 114, 120-127, 129, 130, 133, 136-139, 142 72 Items (50% of test) Mean=55.29 (77.87% correct)      SD=5.59 Alpha = .67
<i>Social Work Practice</i>	Items: 26-30, 34, 71-89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 105, 115, 128-132, 134, 135, 137, 140, 141, 143 43 Items (26% of test) Mean=34.57 (82.31% correct)      SD=1.87 Alpha = -.332 <b>check this!</b>
<b>Total Test</b>  N = 14 Graduating Social Work Seniors	Items: 1-143 (100% of test) Mean=110.79 (77.47% correct)      SD=8.10 Alpha = .70

**SOCIAL WORK COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Social Work Senior Assessment**  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Results Summary**

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<b>Objective Assessed</b>	<b>Items Assessing</b>
<b>Social Work Context</b>	Items: 1-23, 31-33, 70, 88, 90, 113, 116-119  34 Items (24% of test)  Mean=26.28 (77.29% correct)      SD=3.48  Alpha = .63
<b>Social Work Knowledge Base</b>	Items: 24, 25, 29, 35-69, 93, 96-104, 106-112, 114, 120-127, 129, 130, 133, 136-139, 142  72 Items (50% of test)  Mean=55.28 (77.86% correct)      SD=4.85  Alpha = .59
<b>Social Work Practice</b>	Items: 26-30, 34, 71-89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 105, 115, 128-132, 134, 135, 137, 140, 141, 143  43 Items (26% of test)  Mean=34.44 (82.00% correct)      SD=2.08  Alpha = -.12
<b>Total Test</b>  N = 25 Graduating Social Work Seniors	Items: 1-143 (100% of test)  Mean=112.12 (78.41% correct)      SD=7.43  Alpha = .67

\*Though 17 additional items were piloted at the end of the exam, those results shall be provided in a separate report.

## APPENDIX F

### Fall 2007 Social Work Assessment Oral Exam

Prepared by: Amy D. Thelk JMU CARS

March 2008

The following report presents the findings of the James Madison University senior Social Work oral exam given in fall 2007, along with selected results from previous years. Although the Social Work program requires that students pass a written exam prior to participating in the oral exam, only the results from the oral exam are discussed herein. The oral exam measures two domains: professional practice (pp) and professional identity (pi). These domains are evaluated separately.

For previous administrations, generalizability (*G*) theory was used to evaluate the dependability of the oral exam. The social work exam is defined by three facets: persons (examinees), raters, and items. All three of these components affect the final score. A *G* study provides a method for understanding the variability associated with each of these components. Once variance components have been estimated in a *G* study, they may be used to evaluate the dependability of the current assessment as well as the dependability of alternative assessment designs. This process is called a *D* study.

There are practical constraints that affect the *G* and *D* study results, two of which are time and the number of examinees. Since raters are faculty members with other responsibilities, a limited amount of time can be spent on this task each semester. Some *D* study designs may achieve a high level of dependability, but temporal constraints preclude implementation of the design. For example, a study that employs more raters may result in more dependable findings, but recruiting more raters may be expensive for the department and/or force additional faculty members away from other departmental work. Therefore, choosing an assessment design is a matter of optimizing dependability in the face of practical constraints. Also, only a limited number of students take the social work oral exam each year. Small sample sizes are known to produce unstable variance estimates that can vary widely from year to year when an assessment is given annually.

For the Fall 2007 administration, the number of students was too low to execute a generalizability study. Therefore, only subtest descriptives and rater agreement will be discussed in the remainder of the report.

### Results

#### *Sample and Design Characteristics*

In fall 2007, 13 students took the Social Work oral exam. For training purposes, two exams were rated by all seven raters. The remaining exams were rated by three “teams” of faculty raters. Team 1 employed three raters for three students. Two raters rated four student exams for Team 2; however, one of the exams was rated by one unique rater, so that record has not been included in this analysis, since rater agreement is being examined. Team 3 used two raters to score four students. As a result, two teams had two raters, and one team had three raters.

Table 1 shows the sample sizes for examinees (persons), items, raters, and teams. Analyses were conducted separately for each team. Since examinees, raters, and teams were confounded (different raters and students assigned to each team), combining every facet into one analysis was not possible.

Table 1  
*Sample Sizes for Each Facet*

Domain	Facet	Fall 2007		
		Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
Professional Practice	Persons	3	3	4
	Items	19	19	19
	Raters	3	2	2
Professional Identity	Persons	3	3	4
	Items	12	12	12
	Raters	3	2	2

*Professional Practice*

Items 3-18, 21, 22, and 28 make up the professional practice domain. The means and standard deviations for each team and rater can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Professional Practice means and standard deviations*

Team	Rater	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
1	CH	2.46	1.01
	AS	2.54	1.03
	AM	2.41	0.87
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>0.97</b>
2	Katz	2.78	0.89
	Poe	2.78	1.05
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>0.97</b>
3	HY	2.66	0.83
	KF	2.79	0.68
<b>Combined</b>		<b>2.73</b>	<b>.76</b>

Table 3  
*Professional Practice rater agreement for each team*

Team	Raters		
	Rater agreement*		
1	CH & AS	AS & AM	CH & AM
	.71	.77	.88
2	Katz & Poe		
			.75
3	HY & KF		
			.74

\*Rater agreement is expressed as Pearson's *r*, which ranges from -1 (perfect negative relationship) to +1 (perfect positive relationship). A correlation near or at 0 indicates weak or no relationship.

*Professional Identity*

Items 1, 2, 14, 15, 19, 20, and 23 – 28 comprise the professional identity domain. The means and standard deviations for each team and rater can be viewed in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Professional Identity means and standard deviations*

Team	Rater	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
1	CH	2.36	0.90
	AS	2.43	0.92
	AM	2.32	0.69
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>0.84</b>
2	Katz	2.82	0.79
	Poe	2.96	0.96
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.87</b>
3	HY	2.77	0.61
	KF	2.97	0.50
<b>Combined</b>		<b>2.87</b>	<b>0.56</b>

Table 5  
*Professional Identity rater agreement for each team and rater pairs*

Team	<u>Raters</u>		
	Rater agreement*		
1	CH & AS .75	AS & AM .79	CH & AM .87
2		Katz & Poe .62	
3		HY & KF .61	

\*Rater agreement is expressed as Pearson's  $r$ , which ranges from -1 (perfect negative relationship) to +1 (perfect positive relationship). A correlation near or at 0 indicates weak or no relationship.

#### .Discussion

Social Work faculty members are invited to further interpret these findings in terms of the context of the testing situation.

**Spring 2008 Social Work Assessment Oral Exam**  
**Prepared by: Amy D. Thelk JMU CARS**  
**June 2, 2008**

This report presents the results of the James Madison University senior Social Work oral exam administered to graduating seniors during the spring 2008 semester. The results are presented along with findings from previous years.

In James Madison University's Social Work program, students must pass a written exam prior to participating in the oral exam. The oral exam measures two constructs: professional practice and professional identity. These domains are evaluated separately.

As with previous administrations, generalizability (*G*) theory was used to evaluate the dependability of the oral exam. The social work exam is defined by three facets: examinees (referred to as "persons" in the remainder of the report), raters, and items. All three of these components affect the final score.

A *G* study provides a method for understanding the variability associated with each of these components. Variability associated with examinees is acceptable; students bring various skills to an exam, which naturally leads to variability among examinees. On the other hand, variability associated with raters is often considered to be problematic. Raters should be consistent in assigning scores to examinee performance. A large amount of variability associated with raters suggests that exams are not being scored in a reliable manner. Interpretation of variance components for other facets such as items or the examinee-by-item interaction depends on the context of the assessment.

Once variance components have been estimated in a *G* study, they may be used to evaluate the dependability of the current assessment as well as the dependability of other potential assessment designs. At this time, the social work program uses the oral exam to make *absolute* decisions (pass/fail). A phi coefficient ( $\phi$ ) serves as an index of dependability when absolute decisions are made based on test scores. The phi coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 reflects a poor level of dependability and 1 indicates a highly consistent level of measurement. This index is arrived at through a decision (*D*) study.

There are practical constraints that affect the *G* study and *D* study results, two of which are the number of examinees and time. Only a limited number of students take the social work oral exam each year. Small sample sizes are known to produce unstable variance estimates that can vary widely from year to year when an assessment is given annually. Also, raters have a limited amount of time. These time constraints may result in unintended inconsistency on a rater's behalf. Some alternative *D* study designs may achieve a high level of dependability, but temporal constraints preclude implementation of the design. Choosing an assessment design is a matter of optimizing dependability in the face of practical constraints.

## **Results**

### *Sample and Design Characteristics*

Twenty-five students took the Social Work oral exam in Spring 2008. Three students were used in the training and calibration of raters. Therefore, the final number of students available for the *G* study was 22. These students were rated by three teams of raters (two raters comprised each team; each rater was only on one team).

Table 1 shows the sample sizes for persons, items, raters, and teams. Analyses were conducted separately for each team. Since examinees, raters, and teams were confounded in the study's design, combining every facet into one analysis was not possible.

Table 1  
*Sample Sizes for Each Facet*

		Spring 2008		
Domain	Facet	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
<i>Professional Practice</i>	<i>Persons</i>	7	8	7
	<i>Items</i>	19	19	19
	<i>Raters</i>	2	2	2
<i>Professional Identity</i>	<i>Persons</i>	7	8	7
	<i>Items</i>	12	12	12
	<i>Raters</i>	2	2	2

**Professional Practice**

Items 3-18, 21, 22, and 28 make up the professional practice domain. The variance component estimates are shown in Table 2. For all three teams, the largest amount of variance was due to the examinee-by-item interaction. The smallest amount of variance was due to raters and raters crossed with another facet.

The PxIxR facet represents error, the variance that we cannot separate out because it is due to a confounding of all three facets together. You will note that the amount of error for all three teams is admirably low: 6% or less. When error is high, it could be because there are facets present in the enactment of the process that are being modeled in the analysis. However, this does not seem to be an issue for the Professional Practice domain items.

All three teams had comparable results in terms of variance accounted for by each facet for the Spring 2008 administration. Regardless of differences among teams, the examinee-by-item interaction could be considered large; interpreting the item and examinee facets in isolation may not be meaningful. The person-by-item interaction indicates that student performance varied across items. That is, examinees who performed well on one item may not have performed well on another item. This interaction suggests that the individual facets (e.g., persons, items) may not be interpretable without qualification.

The variance associated with raters was low across all teams for both administrations, indicating that raters (averaged across examinees and items) provided similar scores.

Table 2  
*Professional Practice G-Study Variance Components*

		Spring 2008					
		Team 1		Team 2		Team 3	
Facet	Variance	% of Total	Variance	% of Total	Variance	% of Total	
Persons (P)	0.201	20.53	0.554	35.90	0.227	25.71	
Items (I)	0.217	22.17	0.286	18.54	0.096	10.87	
Raters (R)	0.001	0.10	0.008	0.52	0.000	0.00	
PxI	0.523	53.42	0.593	38.43	0.491	55.61	
PxR	0.000	0.00	0.011	0.71	0.015	1.70	
IxR	0.001	0.10	0.002	0.13	0.000	0.00	
PxIxR	0.036	3.68	0.089	5.77	0.054	6.12	

Two *D* studies for each team was conducted to evaluate the dependability of assessing the professional practice domain. The first *D* study was the actual design used in the current assessment. Table 3 lists the phi coefficients for each team for the Spring 2008 administration and from six previous Spring oral exams. All phi coefficients for 2008 were comparable to those from previous years. Differences may be simply due to sampling variability. Given the small number of students who take the social work oral exam, wide fluctuations in variance component estimates and phi coefficients are somewhat expected.

Table 3  
Professional Practice D Study Phi Coefficients for Spring Administrations

Team	Year						
	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
1	.83	.97	.89	.52	.25	.71	.82
2	.91	.92	.77	.71	.33	.88	.78
3	.85	.95	.69	.51	.79	.69	--

Note: Teams differed in composition across years.

A second D study conducted for each team shows the dependability of the study had three raters been employed, instead of two. Table 4 displays the phi coefficients for the two study designs. Since the dependability is the same across teams whether two or three raters are utilized, there would have been no obvious benefit to implementing a greater number of raters in the project.

Table 4  
Phi coefficients for two and three rater designs for Spring 2008 results

Team	Study Design	
	2 raters	3 raters
1	.83	.83
2	.91	.91
3	.85	.86

### Professional Identity

Items 1, 2, 14, 15, 19, 20, and 23 – 28 comprise the professional identity domain. As seen with the professional practice domain, the examinee-by-item interaction was quite large, accounting for the most variance in Team 1's ratings (see Table 5). Variance due to examinees accounted for a much larger proportion of variance for the professional identity domain than for professional practice. The proportion of variance attributable to raters is low for Professional Practice. As mentioned earlier, this is a positive outcome, meaning that raters tended to score consistently over students and items.

Table 5  
Professional Identity G Study Variance Components

Facet	Spring 2008					
	Team 1		Team 2		Team 3	
	Variance	% of Total	Variance	% of Total	Variance	% of Total
Persons (P)	0.520	43.37	0.546	42.52	0.510	59.03
Items (I)	0.009	0.75	0.133	10.36	0.093	10.76
Raters (R)	0.004	0.33	0.004	0.31	0.000	0.00
PxI	0.627	52.29	0.474	36.92	0.168	19.44
PxR	0.000	0.00	0.017	1.32	0.029	3.36
IxR	0.000	0.00	0.000	0.00	0.001	0.12
PxIxR	0.039	3.25	0.110	8.57	0.063	7.29

The professional identity domain D studies again reflected the actual design employed in Spring 2008 (Table 6) as well as a three-rater design (Table 7). The dependability indices resulting from Spring 2008 scores are the among highest in the period from 2002 to 2008. Team 2 had the lowest D coefficient, although its magnitude suggests high dependability nonetheless. Overall, some variability is expected due to differences in sample size and error from year to year.

Table 6  
*Professional Identity D Study Phi Coefficients from Spring Administrations*

Team	Year						
	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
1	.90	.98	.92	.84	.73	.73	.81
2	.89	.87	.75	.80	.78	.91	.70
3	.93	.96	.78	.74	.51	.55	--

*Note:* Teams differed in composition across years.

A second *D* study conducted for each team shows the projected dependability coefficients had the design utilized three raters instead of two. Table 7 displays the phi coefficients for both study designs. Since the dependability differs little whether two or three raters are utilized, there would have been no obvious benefit to implementing a greater number of raters in the project.

Table 7  
*Phi coefficients for two and three rater designs for Spring 2008 results*

Team	Study Design	
	2 raters	3 raters
1	.90	.90
2	.89	.90
3	.93	.94

#### Discussion

The Spring 2008 senior Social Work assessment oral exam showed evidence of high levels of dependability. As seen in previous years, dependability tends to vary by team. This is understandable since teams score differently, resulting in unique variance components for each facet within a team. Some differences in dependability are also attributable to error. The results for 2008 are very strong, suggesting that the rater training and calibration were useful. Also, if raters conducted their scoring in one session, the consistency is likely to be higher. Social Work faculty members are encouraged to discuss other reasons for the results for this cohort, and to further interpret the findings in ways which are most meaningful to the department.