

Assessment of Professional Competencies

To assess whether students have acquired the competencies required by Erikson Institute and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the faculty have developed a set of culminating requirements for graduation which includes assessments to determine student mastery of the CSWE competencies and associated practice behaviors.

Culminating Requirements

The goal of the culminating requirements at Erikson is to ensure that upon graduation, all master’s degree students, regardless of program, have achieved an acceptable level of competence in each of three fundamental domains: knowledge, practice, and reflection. The system is designed to present a balanced, overall view of students’ professional preparation, while recognizing that students may perform better in one domain than in another. Culminating requirements are tailored to the specific variables of the degree program and are measured through a culminating portfolio with three key elements: 1) knowledge artifacts; 2) practice artifacts; and 3) reflection artifacts. The system culminates in an integrated assessment, referred to as “culminating requirements” which combines performance data across the domains of knowledge, practice, and reflection into a two-tiered numeric score structure that determines whether the student has fulfilled the requirements for graduation.

Culminating requirements for MSW students are defined below, followed by a description of each component of the requirements.

Culminating Requirements for MSW Students:

COMPETENCY			
	Knowledge	Practice	Reflection
Assessment Tools	Culminating Portfolio Artifacts assessing knowledge of: Development across the life course Integration of human development knowledge with social work theory and practice Issues of human rights and social justice Research-informed practice and practice-informed research	Culminating Portfolio Artifacts assessing practice skills: Engagement with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities Assessment with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities Intervention with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities Practice Evaluation Policy Practice	Culminating Portfolio Artifacts assessing reflective capacity Ethical and professional behavior Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion (ADEI)
Total Possible Score	Total possible = 40 points	Total possible = 40 points	Total possible = 40 points

Minimum Score	20 points	20 points	20 points
Minimum Graduation Score: 80 points			

Knowledge Requirement

The culminating portfolio includes a section on the Knowledge requirement. Students submit artifacts from coursework to demonstrate competency in three areas of knowledge:

- Students will integrate human development knowledge across the life span with social work theory.
- Students will critically analyze the complex issues around human rights and will engage in the advancement of social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
- Students will engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.

Practice Requirement

Practicum education provides an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge and skills through supervised social work practice. Each of the four semesters of practicum will be taken concurrently with reflective seminars and practice courses in order to enhance the blend of practice, reflection, and theory. Each semester's work in practicum is designed to provide content, sequence, and progression in learning. Practicum evaluation tools are used to measure a student's progress toward the development of social work practice competencies in practicum. The *MSW Generalist Practicum: Assessment and Self-Assessment of Student Practice* is utilized in the first year in practicum, and the *MSW (CAA or IECMH) Practicum: Assessment and Self-Assessment of Student Practice* is used during the specialized practice year. The student's practicum supervisor assesses the student's progress toward learning objectives both at the end of the first and end of the second semesters. The student's level of competence on each competency is rated using a 5-point Likert scale. A rating of "3" on a specific competency is considered the minimum requirement for acceptable performance. Ratings below 3 on any competency indicate that the student is performing at an unacceptable level, and the seminar instructor will work with the student and practicum supervisor to develop a plan for improvement. The student's progress toward the development of social work practice competencies and their willingness to reflect upon their progress will form the basis for evaluating the student's capacity for reflective practice during the first and second semesters of the student's final year. See the *Practicum Manual for Students: Master of Social Work (MSW) Program* for the definitive policies and procedures regarding the practicum education program.

Practicums

Practicum education is a pivotal component of social work education at Erikson and is designed to support student's emerging identity as developmentally-informed social workers. Beginning in their first year in the program, two-year students will be given the opportunity to engage in two year-long, supervised practicums, during which they will be expected and encouraged to integrate the knowledge and theory gained through course work with practice in the field.

For three-year students, their practicum opportunities will begin in their second year.

Erikson has connections with a wide range of available practicum sites, and students are matched individually with a site that best fulfills their educational, experiential, and developmental needs. Practicum sites are expected to have ample and clearly defined learning opportunities, an experienced supervisor with a Master's Degree from a CSWE–accredited school of social work, a commitment to meeting the requirements of the program, and demonstrated values compatible with those of Erikson Institute. The MSW program reinforces a social work perspective through the Reflective Practice Seminar and consultation with the seminar instructor on the rare occasion when a practicum supervisor has a master's degree in an area other than in social work and is otherwise qualified. Over the years Erikson has developed relationships with a broad network of private and public agencies, schools, hospitals, organizations, and programs that provide rich and varied practicum experiences. These agencies and organizations serve a diverse range of clients within a large metropolitan setting. It is expected, that as part of their preparation as social workers, students will develop a capacity for and commitment to working competently with various populations, and develop also a commitment to equity and social justice in the interests of serving all individuals and families in our communities.

Organizations serving as practicum sites make a significant investment in Erikson students. In return, students and the Institute both have an obligation to fulfill the terms of the practicum site agreement. Students will be expected to work the hours agreed upon, respect the organization's goals and procedures, and adhere to a code of professional ethics and confidentiality. In addition, students will be expected to adhere to the student responsibilities that apply to all students of Erikson Institute and that are discussed in more details in the "Student Rights and Responsibilities" section of the Student Handbook.

Prior to beginning a practicum, each student will be required to undergo and successfully complete a name-based student background check. The existence of a conviction in an applicant's record does not necessarily mean that they will be dismissed from the program. Each case is evaluated individually on its facts and not all convictions or disciplinary actions are considered disqualifying to the course of study at the Institute. Students must have, at minimum, a 3.0 grade point average (i.e., good academic standing) to enter practicum. Therefore, if a student is on academic probation, they are not allowed to enter practicum.

In assigning both generalist year and specialized practice level practicums, Erikson considers the student's interests, long-term professional goals, previous experiences, and area of specialized practice in the context of Erikson's broad knowledge of agency resources. Students submit an updated resume and an application expressing their interests and educational goals to the practicum office. Practicum faculty will advise students around connecting with a site that best fulfills their educational, experiential, and developmental needs, and facilitate the process for securing a placement. An orientation to practicum education will be provided to students prior to their generalist year practicum. A similar placement process occurs for the specialized practice year practicum.

Throughout their practicums, Erikson's MSW students are expected to exemplify the Institute's mission by demonstrating their knowledge of both social work and child development at increasingly complex levels. Students will be guided toward demonstrating their increasing ability to implement appropriate and effective methods and strategies in a variety of social work settings in order to provide optimal environments for children and their families. See *the Practicum Manual for Students: Master of Social Work (MSW) Program* for the definitive policies and procedures regarding the practicum education program.

Admission to practicum

Generalist year—2-year program

All students who meet criteria for admission to Erikson Institute's MSW program and who have completed the *Generalist Year Practicum Application* form are eligible to engage in a generalist year level practicum. The practicum is arranged by practicum faculty in conjunction with the student and practicum supervisor of the designated site. Most practicum sites require interviews.

An orientation to practicum, Practicum 101, will be provided by Erikson to students prior to beginning their practicum. This orientation will include workshops on professionalism and ethics, safety, DCFS mandated reporting responsibilities, working with diverse populations, basic interviewing skills, and crisis intervention. Students are expected to successfully complete 400 hours in the generalist year.

Generalist year—3-year program

Students in the 3-year program are expected to have successfully completed coursework from the first academic year of the 3-year MSW program in order to be eligible for a generalist year level practicum in the 2nd year of their studies. Three-year students are expected to follow the same eligibility process as students in the 2-year program as described above.

At the conclusion of their specialized practice year, as part of their culminating portfolio, students will submit artifacts demonstrating competency in these practice areas:

- Students will demonstrate effective and culturally relevant engagement skills with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Students will demonstrate effective and ethical assessment skills with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Students will critically analyze and effectively choose intervention strategies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Students will effectively and ethically evaluate practice individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze, formulate, implement, and evaluate policies aimed at addressing social issues.

Reflection Requirement

The reflective practice essays, journals, and discussion in the reflective practice seminar during both the generalist and specialized practice years are means by which students demonstrate their competence in critical reflection. As part of their reflective seminars, students are asked to reflect on aspects of their professional practice in a systematic, rigorous way, demonstrating their ability to turn their experience into understanding, and ultimately, competence. The goal is to relate their practice to theory and research and to demonstrate an understanding of how their history, experience, and cultural background may influence their work with children, families, and colleagues. The essays should illustrate their ability to articulate a philosophy and rationale for their decisions and to evaluate the effects of their choices and actions on others. They should also reveal the students' ability to respond to others with sensitivity and to use relationships to encourage growth in others.

During both the generalist year and specialized practice year reflective seminars, students also present a major case study based on their practicum. The assignment is designed to encourage students to reflect on their current practice and to integrate their understanding of cultural, systemic, developmental, theoretical, and clinical factors.

At the conclusion of their specialized practice year, as part of their culminating portfolio, students will submit artifacts demonstrating competency in these reflection areas:

- Students will demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
- Students will engage anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in practice.

These reflection points are then aggregated with student's scores on the knowledge and practice domains. The highest possible score on each of the three domains is 40 points, for a total possible score of 120 on the culminating requirements. The minimum total passing score is 80, with a minimal passing score on each domain of 20.

Policy for students who achieve passing scores in each domain but do not achieve a total of 80 points

If a student passes (i.e., receives 20 or more points) in each of the three areas of assessment in the Culminating Requirements, knowledge, practice, and reflection, but does not achieve the overall minimum of 80 points required for graduation (for example, earning 25, 25, 25 points respectively in the three required areas), the student will meet with the Dean of Students to pursue the following steps:

1. Establish a 3-person committee including the Program Director to oversee the completion and assessment of additional work assigned by the committee. Possible people on the committee may include the Dean of Students, seminar instructor, and other faculty.
2. The committee will work with the student to determine the appropriate additional work to be completed based on a discussion of the student's relative strengths and areas for potential growth as reflected in their culminating scores profile.
3. The committee will establish a timeline for the completion of the additional work. All work will be completed within one year, at most, of the initial meeting with the Dean of Students.
4. The committee and Program Director will evaluate the student's additional work, once completed.

Assessment for Attainment of CSWE's Competencies

In addition to the culminating requirements, Erikson has developed an assessment plan tied specifically to measuring student attainment of the competencies that are core to social work practice as specified in the CSWE 2022 EPAS. Each competency in the generalist and specialized practice curriculum has been mapped to course content, readings, and assignments.

Erikson faculty have identified two measures for assessment of student achievement of competencies for both the generalist and specialized practice years. One measure of student achievement of competency during both years is the faculty rating of student's level of competency as demonstrated by an assignment that is linked to the CSWE competencies. Utilizing a rubric with a 1 to 5 Likert scale ranging from (1) equivalent to: Absent/Unacceptable to (5) Fully Developed, faculty determine a rating for the specific dimension of competency (i.e. knowledge, values, skills, cognitive processes, and affective reactions) being measured, along with a grade for the assignment. Students are rated using this rubric which operationalize the CSWE competencies at both the Generalist and Specialized Practice year Levels. The faculty ratings of student demonstration of competence on the linked assignments specified will be utilized for Measure I of the assessment of competency. The criterion for student attainment of competency for both generalist and specialized practice years is a rating of 3 or higher on the linked assignments.

The second measure is in the practice domain. The student's level of competency on each of the competencies and their associated dimensions is assessed by the practicum supervisor in both the generalist year and specialized practice year practicums using the appropriate practicum assessment tool. During the generalist year practicum, the practicum supervisor, student, and seminar instructor create a learning agreement to identify opportunities for students to practice, develop, and evaluate their developing social work practice skills which are reinforced in the Reflective Practice Seminar. Similarly, during the specialized practice practicum, the practicum supervisor, student, and seminar instructor create a learning agreement to solidify foundational skills, and to build upon them to reach an advanced level of competency in the student's area of specialized practice.

At the end of each semester, the practicum supervisor rates the student's level of achievement of each dimension using the appropriate practicum assessment tool (generalist or specialized practice). Student's development of competency is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) equivalent to: Absent/Unacceptable to (5) Fully Developed. To meet criteria for attainment of competency students are expected to score 3 or higher on each of the competencies by the end of both their generalist and specialized practice years.

The two measures—faculty rating of student's level of competency on assignments and ratings from practicum evaluation tools—will contribute equally to determine the degree to which the competencies have been achieved by students. Scores of individual students on both measures will be aggregated, and mean calculated. If the aggregate mean score for each competency is 3 or above, then mastery of that particular competency is considered acquired.

Erikson Institute has set the benchmark that 80% of students in the MSW program will achieve mastery of the social work competencies essential to professional social work practice. Results from the competency measures are analyzed by the Erikson Institute Assessment Committee and MSW faculty and utilized to strengthen and adjust MSW curriculum as needed. Results of the most recent assessment outcomes are published on Erikson's web site every two years.