

## DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF FIELD

Sweitzer, H., & King, M. (2004). *The successful internship: Transformation and empowerment in experiential learning*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Phase	What it Looks Like	Getting Through it Together
<b>Anticipation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This stage begins even before the student arrives at the agency, clear back to the time of interviewing and accepting the placement.</li> <li>• “What if...” is the question in the student’s mind throughout this stage.</li> <li>• Students often feel both excitement and anxiety at the same time.</li> <li>• Students feel anxiety across a variety of areas in this stage, including about their own abilities, interactions with their supervisor and co-workers, adjusting to the site, and beginning to work with clients.</li> <li>• Students often also see the placement through rose-colored glasses, so there is some disconnect between reality versus the student’s idealized expectations and fears.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now is the time for supervisors and students to build a foundation of rapport and trust. It is very important for supervisors to be available and make regular times to meet with the student.</li> <li>• Supervisors should identify realistic, clear, specific goals and expectations for the student to help reduce anxiety.</li> <li>• It is helpful for supervisors to begin your assessment of the student immediately by listening for areas of disconnect in what the student says.</li> <li>• Students: SPEAK UP. Be open with your supervisor about what you are feeling and ask questions that you have.</li> <li>• Discuss frequently how the student is doing and what has/hasn’t met their expectations. Supervisors, this means ASKING directly and LISTENING for any areas of disconnect.</li> <li>• Both supervisor and student should communicate about any concerns with the School of Social Work’s Field Coordinator, who is your liaison between the placement and the school.</li> </ul>
<b>Disillusionment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxieties from the anticipation stage can quickly spin into the basis for disillusionment.</li> <li>• Disillusionment in students can range from subtle (where the student may barely recognize it themselves) to externalized (where everyone around knows what is wrong).</li> <li>• Students may also experience a variety of emotions, sometimes at the same time. This can include anger, frustration, confusion, disappointment, and even panic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both students and supervisors should expect this stage. LOOK for the signs and INITIATE the conversation, even if it is difficult.</li> <li>• Supervisors should acknowledge, clarify, and NORMALIZE the gaps between student expectations and reality.</li> <li>• The trust and rapport established during the Anticipation Stage are really critical here as a foundation to build off of and work through disillusionment.</li> </ul>
<b>Confrontation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have to confront themselves (which could mean asking for help, being an adult learner, or tempering pieces of their personality, etc.)</li> <li>• Students ACKNOWLEDGE what areas they have to work on during the placement and then TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for their own learning.</li> <li>• The ultimate outcome is for the student to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Re-assess their choice of field placement</li> <li>○ Consciously choose the agency and/or profession again, from a more informed place</li> <li>○ Move on to the competence stage</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The only way out of this stage is working through it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Again, it is not the supervisor’s role to confront the student to push them through this stage.</li> <li>• Supervisors can support students in confronting themselves by recognizing that this is a normal developmental stage and initiating discussion about what the student may be experiencing.</li> <li>• Students should not only be aware that this is a normal developmental stage, but also that going through this stage does not mean that you choose the ‘wrong’ placement or that you shouldn’t be in the social work field.</li> <li>• Open dialog is key throughout this process.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Competence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By this stage, students' initial anxieties have eased.</li> <li>• Students have a sense of being grounded.</li> <li>• Students begin to feel capable, are able to accept greater responsibilities, have a sense of autonomy and require less supervision.</li> <li>• The agency ultimately reaps the benefits of having a student who can accomplish tasks and be a productive member of the team. This is the agency's greatest 'return on investment' for taking on a student.</li> <li>• Students typically begin to feel that the tasks they are doing are purposeful.</li> <li>• Students feel acknowledged and respected by their field instructor, coworkers, and clients.</li> <li>• Students experience self-determination (the freedom to create and carry out tasks) and self-actualization (creative expressions and personal growth).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this stage, the supervisory relationship begins to change and supervision needs to be redefined.</li> <li>• The focus shifts to more towards the delivery of services for clients and the community and less on personal development and processing.</li> <li>• The relationship itself becomes more of a mentoring relationship, so more interpersonal and consultative in nature.</li> <li>• Power in the relationship has shifted to being more equally balanced.</li> <li>• The supervisor can focus on coaching the student for general professional success at this point as opposed to strictly task management and basic skill development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Culmination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This stage is the entire task of ending. It is more than just termination.</li> <li>• Students have to redefine their relationships with clients, supervisors, and coworkers.</li> <li>• There is a danger of students disengaging prematurely as they plan for the future, looking towards a new job or field placement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any unfinished business needs to be identified and worked with to bring closure to the experience. This can include professional closure to tasks, such as termination with clients or handing projects off to other staff, as well as personal closure in saying goodbye to new colleagues.</li> <li>• Students need to identify their own feelings and find a safe place to express them.</li> <li>• Typically, there are a mixture of emotions from both the student and the supervisor's perspectives that all have a place in this stage.</li> <li>• Goodbyes in general are difficult, but students may need support in terminating with clients in an appropriate manner. Preparing for and saying goodbye can be an excellent learning experience.</li> <li>• Open dialog about and preparation for the placement concluding is the best support a supervisor can provide a student during this stage.</li> </ul>

The most important thing to remember here is that **all of these stages are the student's work, not the supervisors.**