Once the field supervisor establishes a baseline assessment of the field student, the next step is to identify appropriate learning tasks. However, in identifying student tasks, the supervisor needs to understand adult learning styles and individual preferences. Not everyone learns in the same way—consideration must be given to special needs, the educational context, and a preferred style of learning. Therefore, it is important to explore using a variety of learning experiences for the student. All learning experiences should enhance the student's ability to meet his/her educational objectives.

The following is a list of learning experiences to help stimulate thinking about identifying learning experiences for social work students. This list is not exhaustive, some of the items may not apply to your setting, and there may be additional learning opportunities unique to your specific agency/organization or area of practice to consider.


Have the student:

1. Read case records, committee meeting minutes, and agency reports/newsletters/webpage.
2. Read journal articles and review websites pertaining specifically to the agency/organization or area of practice.
3. Observe the field instructor or other appropriate agency personnel in interactions with clients, colleagues, and other community organizations. Prepare a summary or assessment of the interaction. Write an assessment of the client.
4. Listen to a tape-recorded interaction or lecture or watch an audio-visual presentation. Prepare a critique for discussion.
5. Attend a meeting (e.g., staff/team, agency committee, agency board, community group). Take notes on the dynamics of the discussion. Provide a written summary of the content.
6. Visit the agency in the evening or on weekends to observe agency activities during these “off-hour” times.
7. Audio- or video-tape an interaction with a client. Review and critique it.
8. Interview the field instructor and take a social history. Discuss the interview process.
9. Sit in the waiting area and observe the atmosphere, behaviors of individuals, and interactions between clients and staff.
10. Be responsible for a caseload of clients (number assigned may vary based on responsibilities involved and School of Social Work requirements). Conduct interviews with clients and provide direct services.
11. Visit other community agencies and organizations (e.g., referral sources, collaborative partners).
12. Attend a court hearing.
13. Attend related professional workshops, seminars, and lectures in the community.
14. Attend in-service staff development programs.
15. Prepare an in-service staff development program.
16. Co-facilitate or lead a group. Participate in the pre-planning.
17. Co-facilitate or lead a meeting. Participate in the pre-planning.
18. Go out on home visits. Conduct or participate in the interview.
19. Take on-call (after hours) responsibilities.
20. Role play with the field supervisor to try out new skills and techniques.
21. Participate in orienting new students or staff to the agency/organization.
22. Keep a daily log of experiences and reactions to them. Use a critical thinking approach in reflecting on the experiences.
23. Prepare a process recording of an individual interaction, group session, meeting, or telephone contact.
24. Participate in a one-way mirror observation as an observer or as a subject.
25. Interview administrators, managers, or other staff to gather specific information about their roles.
26. Assist in writing or revising the agency’s policy and procedures manual.
27. Assist in writing or revising the agency’s manual/resource file for student interns.
28. Assist in gathering information for and prepare an annual program or agency budget.
29. Develop, or assist in developing, a grant proposal.
30. Identify new funding opportunities.
31. Assist in writing a newsletter. Prepare a webpage item.
32. Assist with a marketing or public relations project.
33. Participate on an agency committee to plan an event (e.g., fund-raising, educational workshop, community activity).
34. Develop outcome measures for a program or special project.
35. Design and conduct a research project.

Don’t forget your “wish list” of activities you have on your Things To Do list (written or otherwise) that could match well with the student’s educational objectives. These activities may be great learning opportunities for the student. For example, that coalition meeting you never have time for may be perfect for your student. Perhaps your student can update the agency’s community resources directory. What about those clients who need a follow-up phone call after having received services from your agency? Even within the parameters of educational objectives, you can be creative in identifying learning experiences for the social work intern.