

## 2008-2009 COMPETENCIES FOR THE WRITTEN PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

### RESEARCH CORE

Students adequately prepared to respond to written preliminary examination questions drawing from/related to the area of research should be able to:

1. Thoroughly describe and discuss the fundamental conceptual foundations of the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Explicate the underlying differences in the conceptualization and conduct of these approaches.
2. Understand, synthesize, and critique the literature that discusses and debates the research frameworks, perspectives, and purposes that emanate from the different approaches to knowledge building.
3. Articulate the various roles of research in the field of social work/social welfare (e.g. intervention research, change process research, single-subject design research, etc.) and contrast the role of research in social work with the role of research in the social and behavioral sciences.
4. Address and resolve potential ethical concerns and dilemmas that may arise in social science research in general, or in the course of a specific research study. A thorough discussion of ethical concerns and dilemmas should include the basis on which a particular approach or method used in the research is an ethical concern, the possible choices that could be made, and a decision or resolution that is defended in an ethically sound manner.
5. Analyze and present the potential political aspects or consequences of a particular research study or research agenda. Appropriately distinguish among the ethical, political, methodological, and administrative aspects and considerations of a research study.
6. Understand and discuss the range of issues and strategies required to successfully conduct research that is collaborative with practitioners and consumers in the field.
7. Frame a meaningful research question within a particular area of interest that should be answered using quantitative methods. Either design and defend a study to answer that question or critique every step of a study that someone else has designed or conducted to answer that question. Discuss the study's strengths and limitations.
8. Frame a meaningful research question within a particular area of interest that should be answered using qualitative methods. Either design and defend a study to answer that question or critique every step of a study that someone else has designed or conducted to answer that question. Discuss the study's strengths and limitations.
9. Compare and contrast specific methods of data collection typically used in social and behavioral research. Explain the appropriate uses and the strengths and limitations of the specific methods.
10. Compare and contrast specific methods of sampling typically used in social and behavioral research.

Explain the appropriate uses and the strengths and limitations of specific types of samples and sampling plans.

11. Demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and importance of the concept of generalizability as it applies to probability and non-probability studies, including studies utilizing qualitative and quantitative data.
12. Understand and explain the centrality of the concepts of validity and reliability to the conduct and utilization of research, as well as how they are related. Accurately discern what specific threats may be of concern in quantitative and in qualitative research, and describe how to protect against specific threats within each paradigm.
13. Summarize and critique an area of the literature, point out gaps or contradictions within that literature, and design a research program to address these gaps or contradictions.

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### HISTORY CORE

The student adequately prepared for the history area of the preliminary written examination will be able to:

1. Describe accurately the chronological evolution of the formal American system of social welfare, from the colonial era to the present. The student will be able to:
  - Provide a general outline for the chronological emergence of a formal system of social welfare in the United States, tying specific developments to historical periods (e.g., the decline of reliance on outdoor relief in the early nineteenth century);
  - Identify trends, attitudes and beliefs that shaped a response to social need over time;
  - Discuss specific policies, programs and practices that emerged in various historical periods.
2. Distinguish among and discuss contributions to meeting social need from various sectors (e.g., government, organizations, specific identified segments within the population) over time. The student will be able to:
  - Understand and discuss historical developments in social welfare in the public as well as voluntary sectors;
  - Describe official responses (e.g., acts of legislation at various levels of governance, development of public institutions such as the Children's Bureau) to social need;
  - Discuss responses to social need that fall outside the formal policies and programs;
  - Understand and discuss critically how historians of social welfare have interpreted these events, particularly in relation to specific populations.
3. Discuss in historical context how various segments of the population were affected by policies and programs for social welfare in the public and voluntary sectors. The student will be able to:
  - Describe generally differences among indicators of social well being for various sectors of the population at different points in time from the colonial era to the present (e.g., status of well being of women, persons with serious and persistent mental illness, persons of color);
  - Discuss how policies and programs for social welfare targeted different segments of the populations;
  - Discuss the effect of policies and programs on various segments of the population over time.
4. Use evidence from the past to support an interpretation for the emergence of various policies and programs in social welfare. Students will be able to:
  - Connect policies, programs and social welfare responses to social conditions in different historical periods;
  - Discuss how policies and programs reflected values, beliefs and material conditions of various historical periods;
  - Critically assess arguments made by historians of social welfare based on the use of evidence to support an interpretation of the historical emergence of social welfare.
5. Understand and critique the interpretations of the past offered by historians of social welfare. Students will be able to:
  - Use various interpretations effectively to support or refute a particular explanation of social welfare history that the student would offer;

- Understand how different interpretations might apply to various populations over historical time;
  - Compare and contrast various interpretations of social welfare history offered by historians.
6. Describe the historical emergence of professional social work. Students will be able to:
- Identify significant individuals who shaped the profession and discuss, with specificity, the contributions that they made;
  - Describe approaches to social work practice as they developed within a historical context;
  - Describe major institutional and organizational influences that affected the historical development of the profession (e.g., contributions of the Charity Organization Society or State Boards of Charity);
  - Critique interpretations of the historical emergence of the profession that have been offered by historians of the profession, particularly looking at the arguments of LuBove, Wenocur and Reisch, Romanyshyn, and Wilensky and LeBeaux.
7. Trace the historical development of themes that have shaped social welfare policies and programs over time, with reference to both the public and voluntary sectors. The student will be able to:
- Describe several major themes (e.g., less eligibility, dependency, social control) as they are expressed in social welfare policies and programs over time;
  - Identify beliefs and values that have influenced the emergence of specific policies and programs of social welfare, and how they are expressed in the formal system of social welfare;
  - Discuss critically how historians of social welfare have identified and used these themes in discussions of differing historical periods and as applied to different populations.

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### POLICY CORE

Students adequately prepared to respond to written preliminary examination questions drawing from/related to the area of policy should be able to:

1. Describe, compare, and contrast at least two different conceptual frameworks for the analysis of social welfare or social services policies, including problem as well as policy/solution analysis. The student will be able to:
  - discuss the strengths and limitations of both approaches;
  - discuss their underlying theoretical assumptions, using examples to illustrate major differences.
2. Argue a position justifying the existence of the modern welfare state in a capitalist country such as the United States. The student will be able to:
  - discuss the notion of the welfare state based upon the theories of authors such as Tittmuss, Chatterjee, Gordon, Skocpol, Goodin;
  - take one's own position on what should be the nature of the welfare state, drawing upon the discussions of authors such as the above
3. Explain the method the U.S. federal government currently uses to determine the official poverty index. The student will be able to:
  - discuss shortcoming in this approach, suggesting changes;
  - describe the current state of poverty in the U.S.;
  - take a position on the major causes of poverty in our society, while disputing contrary positions prevalent among policy analysts.
4. Demonstrate a basic understanding of income transfer programs in U.S. welfare Policy. The student will be able to:
  - provide an evaluative analysis of the major U.S. transfer programs and their effectiveness;
  - use examples to demonstrate an understanding of the major income maintenance/transfer programs in the U.S.;
  - describe and analyze a current federal or state/federal income transfer policy or program, applying the principles of a framework for policy analysis (the analysis needs to be evaluative as well as descriptive).
5. Describe and critique different positions of contemporary policy analysts on what should be the purpose and nature of social welfare policy in the U.S.; The student will be able to:
  - describe several major themes on social problems (e.g. welfare dependency, intergenerational poverty, culture of poverty) that are common to the work of at least four contemporary policy analysts representing liberal and conservative views, e.g., Mead, Murray, Handler and Hassenfeld, Ambromovitz, Wilson, Blank, Schorr;
  - compare and contrast these themes as found in the work of these authors, as well as the solutions proposed by them;
  - critically discuss and evaluate the values and research underpinning the differences in their positions.

6. Provide a broad overview of social welfare from an international perspective. The student will be able to:
  - outline and evaluate key approaches (social development, etc.) and welfare institutions (NGOs, international organizations, national public service agencies, etc.);
  - describe historical trends in service delivery;
  - place the United States' welfare system within an international framework, particularly in regards to ideologies, institutions, and financing.
7. Be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary approaches to policy analysis and program evaluation. The student will be able to:
  - discuss the use of major tools used in policy analysis and program evaluation (benefit-cost analysis, economic forecasting, cost & income estimates, experimental design, etc.);
  - critically evaluate a social program (i.e. state welfare-to-work programs, effectiveness of jobs programs, affirmative action, etc.);
  - critique the policy evaluation process, and discuss the role of policy evaluation in the era of policy devolution.
8. Be able to discuss how major trends in society, such as globalization, devolution of services, privatization, demographic changes, etc., are affecting the structure and delivery of social services.
9. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the public policy process, from formulation through implementation and evaluation; and be able to discuss the major issues involved in developing and influencing social policy legislation.

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### PRACTICE CORE

The reading list in the practice area is designed to prepare students with familiarity with theories, issues, values, and research related to social work practice at multiple system levels. Students are expected to be familiar with both the most influential models and theories over time and those on the list which are more recently developed. While comparisons of models and expecting extensive knowledge of more than one model or theory is a frequent arena for questions, students should not assume that such questions will be asked or that they will be free to select their own theories and models. Questions are aimed at areas of some scope such that the student could (and should) use multiple readings on the list to answer the question. Students are free to augment the reading list with other readings that they feel particularly apt to the question. They should not do so, however, to the exclusion of pertinent readings from the list. Frequently questions will include a practice situation or vignette which is used as a basis for analysis with resources from the list. In other cases, you may be asked to supply your own practice situation as part of the assessment of a practice situation.

Students adequately prepared to respond to written preliminary examination questions drawing from/related to the area of practice should be able to:

1. Describe, compare and contrast at least two social work practice models including their strengths, limitations, theoretical and value assumptions, advantages for specific circumstances or kinds of problems or issues. Students should not assume that they could select any two models: you might be directed, for example to select two models from the Turner text. Those models may be of casework, group work, family work, or community organization or multi-modal models. Among the relevant sources from the reading list are Compton & Galaway; Gambrill, Hasenfeld, Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen; Rivera & Erlich; Rothman, Erlich & Tropman; Saleebey, Toseland. & Rivas and Turner. A typical question might ask the student to compare an aspect of practice such as assessment, contracting, evaluation from two practice models and include an explication of theoretical assumptions.
2. Assess the cultural competence or ethnic sensitivity of any practice model, often of your choice, according to criteria suggested by readings such as Iglehart & Becerra and Lum. A typical question would include explication of critical features of culturally competent, ethically sensitive practice and an assessment of those features in two models.
3. Assess the empirical foundation of practice models drawing on sources such as Reid, Witkin and Gambrill. A typical question might include an assessment of the empirical foundation of two models and a review of the history of empirically based practice.
4. Be able to trace key developments in the historical evolution of social work practice models drawing on source such as Roberts. This might include tracing the development of key concepts and perspectives such as the person-and-situation or systems perspective in social work practice.
5. Be able to identify critical value and ethical issues in social work practice. For example, implications of managed care for social work practice is one recent such issue (see Davidson & Davidson). Reamer is a critical source for ethical issues. A typical question might include an exploration of issues related to informed consent or due process in forms of social work practice.

6. Be able to explore current critical issues and themes in social work practice. That exploration may include comparison with earlier models of casework, family and group work. Such themes include empowerment, strengths perspectives, work with involuntary clients and attachment theory. The following resources are key in these areas. In the areas of values: Reamer; Davidson & Davidson; involuntary clients: Rooney; strengths: Kwang, Sung-Chu & Cowger; empowerment: Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox; attachment theory: Akister. A typical question might include a review of the premises of attachment theory and an examination of its implications for social work practice or within a specific model. Similarly, a student might be asked to compare strengths and empowerment approaches.