

Review #1 - Proposal for Graduate Certificate in Addiction - Social Work

This new certificate program is designed for MSW students who wish additional focused educational experiences in the area of problematic and dependent use of mood-altering substances. The plan includes two levels of accomplishments, both of which require completion of the 60-hour MSW degree. Level I certification would be additionally based on successful completion of 6 learning modules that will be developed, piloted, and evaluated during the coming semester. Level II will include successful completion of these modules along with completion of a MSW program concentration in Mental Health and Addictions and a specific course titled Social Work Practice in the Addictions.

This seems a very appropriate area for curriculum expansion considering the extent to which alcohol and drug problems interface with other adjustment difficulties, mental health services, and social services. Moreover this plan for certification appears compatible with coming changes in licensure regulations. In spite of these strengths I have a number of concerns and questions about the certificate program and also some suggestions about changes in the presentation that may be helpful.

As a reader I am not sure what 'substances' are covered and what is precisely meant by 'substance misuse' as presented in the purpose and rationale section and subsequently. What substances and what degree of substance-related problems? I assume alcohol and marijuana will be included but will the content also include nicotine and caffeine, prescription drugs, etc.? Does substance misuse mean dependent use or addiction, which implies a physical dependence, or does it have a broader meaning reflecting a range of problematic use that one encounters in society or clinically? I think this section can be more declarative and direct and be more consistent and clear with terms.

Will the 6 modules be offered with course credit and go through the course approval process? A syllabus for each or for the set would be helpful. Alternatively the authors could expand or elaborate more with the module descriptions so that the reader gets a sense of the content topography. For example, one module is presented as 'evidenced-based treatment.' Expanding on this and providing more detail as to which types of treatment approaches would give the reader a more useful understanding of the breadth and depth of these modules. It also states that the content will 'build on MSW course content' so I wonder about overlap between the modules and course content. So what is the difference between level II certification and the concentration in mental health and addictions, assuming that these students have completed the requisite courses that are the basis of the module content? Is this really then a 'stand alone' certification or just part of the concentration and major? Level I certification is essentially the 6 modules. How many credits would these modules represent, if any at all?

The content of the first module 'basic understanding of substance misuse/dependence as a brain disease' seems a very narrow perspective especially in light of apparently such a broad range of substances and problems. In the section on major student outcomes I do not understand why some outcomes are level I and others I and II. All seem anchored in some degree in the modules so both

levels will get this training. Furthermore Level II should be more comprehensive in knowledge than level I but the reverse is indicated.

The development and assessment plan for the modules seems a careful attempt to assess content validity and presentation effectiveness of the modules. What is the structure of the pre-test?

I am not sure what 'aging out' is (section VI). Why is addiction frequently if not always italicized?

My recommendation is to table and request more information about module content. If course credit is to be awarded for the modules then syllabi would be helpful in assessment of academic soundness. The syllabus for the addictions course required for Level II certification might be included as well. Is this a stand-alone certificate and is Level II really different from the MSW degree concentration in mental health and addictions? How many credit hours is this certificate?