BSc4 & MSW2 - Semester 1 SSLC (17/10/24)

Staff: Sangeeta Chatterji (MSW PD); Georgia Cole (Dissertation CO); Steve Kirkwood (Head of Social Work); Avril McIvor (Director of Practice Learning); Eve Mullins (BSc PD), Will Rennie (Student Adviser)

Student reps: CJ Janes (BSc4); Rob Robinson (BSc4); Jelani McGadney (student rep, MSW2)

Apologies: Shayna Britto (student rep, MSW2); Sydni Kuczeryk (Student rep, MSW2)

Feedback

BSc4

- **CJ:** reps conducted a survey:
    1. *How are you finding semester?:* 3/5
        - feels very rushed, limited time between WwRTC and starting placement
    2. *How would you rate teaching?:* 4/5
        - really relevant, have been enjoying lectures and workshops. Easy to put theory into practice. Occasional lectures are vague and make it a bit difficult to connect theory with practice.
    3. *How prepared do you feel for upcoming assessment?* 3/5
        - Struggling with WwRTC: bit complex, very specific theory
    4. *Preparedness for placement?*: Mixed
        - Very mixed responses in terms of preparedness. Not much time to research dissertation.
- Accessibility issues:
    1. **CJ**: some students have struggled with physical access to some classes, but better than last year.
        - **SK**: do you know which specific rooms?
        - **RR**: Paterson's Land, Old Medical School and travelling between the two. Also tutorial rooms in Buccleuch Place
    2. **CJ**: not clear where lift is in Medical School. Could this be signposted in Learn notification, for example? Or in Uni accessibility guide.
- **CJ:** overall, people have really been enjoying the teaching but there is anxiety about placement in conjunction with dissertation as well as other courses. We've suggested peer support meet-ups which we think we'll go ahead with.
    1. **EM**: in terms of teaching difference between semester 1 this year and last, would you put that down to the content itself, or the experience of placement making it easier to see the relevance of the teaching?
        - **RR**: general feeling that things have been better organised this year given the staffing problems last year. Reports that things are less repetitive this year (last year's lectures felt repetitive after Year 2).
        - **CJ**: feels better structured, students have more confidence as a result. Less chaotic situation. Increased relevance to practice has also helped, as mentioned above.
- **CJ**: a couple of students are going into adoption and kinship care, but haven't had lectures specific to adoption services. Theories we've covered do feed into that but could this be tailored more specifically to adoption?
    1. **EM**: that's great feedback, thank you.
- **EM:** any questions with regard to dissertation classes?
    1. **CJ**: we've really liked Georgia's lectures and they've been very well-resourced.
    2. **GC**: the work in progress we do isn't currently compulsory, but do you know why people might not have managed it? And how stressful would it be if it was encouraged more?

        - **CJ:** personally think it should be more compulsory than it currently is. Was really helpful to think about it over the summer.
        - **RR**: some people mentioned there were summer barriers to completing work, e.g. childcare. However, also agree that it should be mandatory, with a hand-in maybe a few days after the first day of term. This year, the hand-in of the first day of semester caused a bit of confusion when the dropbox wasn't easily accessed.
    3. **EM**: Will, is there any possibility that students could get help with childcare funding from day one?
        - **WR**: probably not due to turnaround times, but the Student Funding team will be able to advise.
- **EM:** anything else to discuss?
    1. **CJ:** we don't have a tutorial this week but a few students do have questions that they felt might have been best answered in a tutorial context.
    2. **RR**: student parents are also concerned about the inflexibility of placement timings, feels punitive when students need to respond to an emergency concerning their child. Feeling that the need to leave might result in student's getting into trouble in some way.
        - **AM**: employers are well-versed in terms of emergencies, but the extra rigidity in placement comes about through quite strict regulations around placement. However, there will be policies in place within agencies which should be set up to cover situations like this. It's less about penalising students and more about monitoring to ensure that situations don't occur e.g. at the same time every week. I can clarify this at the next class.
- **EM:** main takeaways:
    1. happy with teaching
    2. happy with relevance of courses
    3. concerns about accessibility
    4. concern about intensity of courses in run-up to placement:
        - any suggestions about how we could lessen this?
            - **RR**: is there any possible flexibility in terms of timing? Could an extra week be added in before placement?
            - **AM**: it's more the end of the placement where time gets tight regarding graduation. We work back from when marks need to be ratified in order to ensure there's a month's space at the end for work on dissertations, which doesn't leave much room for flexibility.
            - **CJ**: not the most ideal, but doesn't seem that there's much which can be done. Stressful from the students' side but is good in a way as the pressure is brought up and there's an understanding that this is the level students need to operate at. Perhaps a mindfulness session with Pearse around that time might be useful?
            - **AM**: would be happy to take this forward in terms of placement preparation. I'd hoped that the early lead-in of placement locations would reduce pressure but it doesn't sound as if it's had the desired effect
            - **RR**: I think this has reduced it, at least compared to last year.
- **EM**: there are things we can take forward in terms of self-care and accessibility. Many thanks for the feedback.

MSW2

- **JM**: was listening to CJ and Rob's feedback, and a lot of that can be echoed for MSW students
    - feels more stable, courses feel better linked to practice
    - students who had prior experience or study in Social Work have found this more relevant than last year
    - regarding dissertation, no especially unique anxieties. Resources have been helpful. Let's see how people feel when they're in the thick of it, but right now people seem to be in a good place generally.
    - one hardship to report: lack of travel reimbursement, particularly for the MSW cohort. It's a common cause of concern and the one thing I would flag.
        - **SC**: great to see how similar the feedback is. We've been discussing and advocating this lack of travel reimbursement and we and other HEIs are advocating for this.
- **SC:** Was it helpful to have the note over the summer to update your academic supervisor?
    - **JM**: don't have any specific feedback on that, but the optional dissertation proposal was helpful.
- **JM**: funding issues have really affected US students, and the hardship fund appears now to be closed.
    - **SC**: we're really sorry about this situation, and we're looking into possibilities about opening up the hardship fund.
    - **JM**: the closing of the hardship funding obviously doesn't just impact US MSW students, but perhaps students across the University more generally
    - **SC**: do you know if the most-impacted students have further information about the prospects of a second Advice Place loan?
    - **JM**: not yet, but I expect to be speaking to them later today.
    - **AM**: I want on record that we're gravely concerned about this situation not having been addressed sooner than now, as we've got a duty of care to students who are now about to go out on placement. Unsure if more should have been done at management level but there hasn't been sufficient action to resolve this. Without being melodramatic, my concern is that students on placement are going to meet service users at the food bank. Asking students to meet the needs of service users while we can't meet the needs of students as a University is a disgusting situation that can't be allowed to continue.
        - **SK**: you're right Avril, and we are doing things in the background to try to mitigate this.
- **SC**: thanks to all representatives for your time and feedback.