SCOTTISH INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
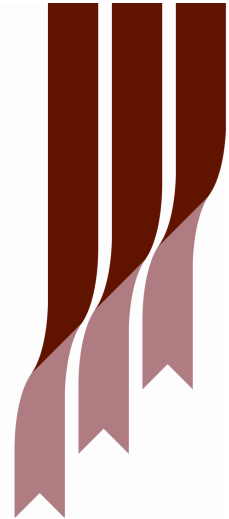
INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

New Assessment Methods

A practice audit
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Contents

1. Introduction

Assessment methods in Social Work education have changed considerably in recent years and continue to evolve and develop, reflecting changes in the nature of assessment in higher education more generally (Cree, 2000). Key changes have included moves from written examinations to coursework assignments and more emphasis on student participation in assessment (self and peer assessments), processes rather than products, and on competencies rather than content (Brown et al., 1997). Even the more traditional forms of assessment such as essays and examinations have undergone considerable innovations.

A Practice Audit of current assessment methods in social work education was commissioned by the Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (SIESWE) to provide a resource to assist the development of the new social work degree in Scotland. The aim of the audit was to provide a cross-sectional account of current and recent arrangements for the assessment of social work learning in the U.K., analysing educational approaches, resources, models and methods employed. A further objective of the audit was to summarise current best practice issues and indicators from across the U.K.

The practice audit was comprised of two components:

- A full audit of assessment practices in Scottish Schools of Social Work, focusing upon assessment methods employed in Dip.SW. programmes for the academic year 2003-2004 and innovations/ planned innovations in assessment.

- An audit of innovation and 'best practice' in assessment in social work education in all remaining U.K. schools of social work.

This report presents the findings of the audit. It provides a detailed account of assessment methods used in Scottish Schools of Social Work in the year 2003-2004. This not only provides a valuable 'resource' from which to inform the development of assessment methods in the new degree, but also represents a 'baseline' of contemporary practice from which subsequent developments may be critically evaluated. The report also summarises recent developments and innovations in assessment methods from schools of social work across the U.K. The identification of 'best practice' issues and indicators from these developments represents a knowledge base from which any future development of assessment methods within social work education may be informed.

This practice audit was complemented and supplemented by a review of published literature relating to assessment methods in social work education, which the research team were also commissioned to undertake on behalf of SIESWE (Crisp et al. 2004). The literature review provides an overview of the current literature on assessment methods being utilised in social work education both in the United Kingdom and beyond. The review further explores developing literature on the involvement of persons other than social work academics, such as students and service users, in assessment and considers the importance of developing assessment strategies in social work education.

2. Methodology

In order to audit current assessment practices in Scotland, the research team first contacted all nine Scottish Schools of Social Work in early December 2003. Schools were asked provide information regarding educational approaches, resources, models and methods used in the assessment of social work learning. Specifically, Schools were asked to provide the following information about the assessment of their Dip.SW. programme in the coming year:

- the overall assessment strategy for the programme, indicating the range of assessment methods employed

- details of individual assessments in the context of the specific Dip.SW. modules aims and learning outcomes

- the rationale for the use of individual assessments with reference to learning and teaching approaches adopted in each module

- evaluation/ feedback with regard to the individual assessment methods from:

    - external examiners/ assessors

    - markers (including lecturers and practice teachers)

    - students

Schools were also asked to provide information regarding all current or planned innovations in assessment, relating to academic work and practice learning. Follow up telephone calls and emails were sent in early and late January 2004 to schools which had not responded.

In addition to information provided directly by schools of social work, material on assessment methods was also drawn from an unpublished West of Scotland Consortium for Education and Training in Social Work Report. In 2002, following the commissioning and publishing of a report on assessment methods (Crisp and Green Lister, 2001), the West of Scotland Consortium undertook an analysis of the assessment of Part 1 Diploma in Social Work modules taught in all four participating universities. Module leaders were asked to provide information on methods of assessment, how these methods related to learning outcomes, student and external examiner/assessor evaluations/ assessments, and any planned changes for assessment. Module leaders from all routes, practitioners from statutory and voluntary sectors and members of the West of Scotland Consortium Assessment Issues Group then held a series of meetings to discuss the issues arising from the responses.

These various means of data collection resulted in at least partial information on assessment being obtained from seven schools of social work.

Further information was drawn from an interview held with two practice learning coordinators, who as members of Scottish Organisation for Practice Teachers, gave

feedback about the current issues being discussed with regard to the assessment of practice learning. The use of the Scottish Organisation of Practice Teachers (SCOPT) Toolkit for practice teachers was discussed in this meeting and will be referred to in the practice audit.

In addition to auditing the practice of Scottish Schools of Social Work, the project aimed to highlight examples of `best practice' and `innovation' from Schools of Social Work throughout the U.K. It was recognised many professional innovations never receive widespread attention. Often, for example, the promotion of such ideas is to limited audiences, such as colleagues or conference attendees. Even where innovations do make it into more widely distributed books or journals, it can be some years before this occurs. Accordingly, the audit employed a number of methods to gather information from throughout the U.K. regarding current or planned innovations in assessment.

Information about the study was placed on the SWAPltsn website in October 2003, inviting interested persons to contact the research team. Similar information about the project was distributed in the SWAPltsn monthly e-bulletin (October 2003), sent to all social work and social policy academics in the U.K. Information was also sent by email to all members of the Jiscmail Social-work-ltsn listserver. One response was received to these requests. The SWAPltsn and SCIE websites, however, provided further sources of information about innovations in assessment not available within published literature. These sites were comprehensively searched and information gathered was used to identify further examples of best practice from around the U.K. Specifically, the research team used case studies and journals of relevant discussion lists during the conduct of the audit.

3. Current Methods of Assessment in Dip.SW. Courses

The principles and purposes of assessment strategies have been identified in the literature review. In summary, through the development of assessment strategies, programmes can determine the kind of graduate they wish to produce (Gingerich, Kaye and Bailey, 1999). Assessment strategies provide a rationale for the types of assessment and levels of assessment across the programme. In addition, the structures, procedures and processes should be outlined. These would take into account the requirements of Higher Education Institutions, accrediting bodies and, in professional courses, other stakeholders such as employers (Mutch and Brown, 2001). Importantly, the different learning needs of students also contribute to the development of coherent assessment strategy (McCarthy and Hurst, 2001). Furthermore, the transparency of assessment processes and procedures would be made available to students in such a strategy. The constructive alignment of assessment tasks to learning outcomes would be a core feature of an assessment strategy (Biggs 2003). Finally, a strategy would be subject to ongoing evaluation through feedback from examiners, students, teaching staff and assignment results.

In the practice audit, Scottish programmes were asked to provide information on the assessment strategies of their programmes. We received limited information in this area. There may be several reasons for this. It could be that the rules and requirements of the Dip.SW. programme provide little scope for developing an individual assessment strategy, particularly in respect of practice learning. In the West of Scotland Consortium for example, although individual institutions are able to determine individual assessment methods, the core curriculum and overall assessment strategy are centrally determined. Alternatively, it may be that assessment strategies are implicit rather than explicit in programme planning and delivery. The responses we received which did comment on assessment strategies, gave examples of the range of methods used in postgraduate and undergraduate programmes. One programme provider focused on the procedural requirements of the assessment strategy. Another explained that their assessment strategy was balanced towards ensuring that students gained an underpinning understanding of the assessment process itself, and, thereby, how to apply it to practice. This involves the introduction of peer and self-assessment in the early stages of the programme.

Scottish programmes were also asked to indicate how their methods of assessment had been evaluated by students, lecturers and external examiners/assessors. The limited information provided to the audit suggests that current methods have been viewed favourably by all parties. The focus of the practice audit will, therefore, be on current methods of assessment used by programmes, criticisms of these methods as identified by programmes and planned innovations in assessing social work students.

Range of assessment methods

The presentation of audit findings will begin with an overview of assessment methods, identified by programme providers and found in course handbooks that were made available to the research team. The audit has found that Social Work programmes in Scotland employ a range of formative and summative assessment methods. The report will begin with a presentation of formative methods followed by one that examines the summative methods of assessment used in institutions. As the following analysis shows, particular assessment methods may be used for both summative and formative purposes. When asked to provide information on the types of assessment methods used in Dip.SW. programmes, some respondents provided a list of assessment methods. Others provided more detailed examples of specific methods. The following summary can, therefore, only provide a broad overview of the assessment methods currently used in social work education in Scotland. Furthermore, where programme providers supplied more detailed documentation, it was evident there were differences in terminology and definitions. So, for example, what one programme might refer to as method of self-assessment, another might include under the generic term of portfolio. T he categories used in the presentation of findings are, therefore, not discreet but broadly mirror those provided to us by programmes.
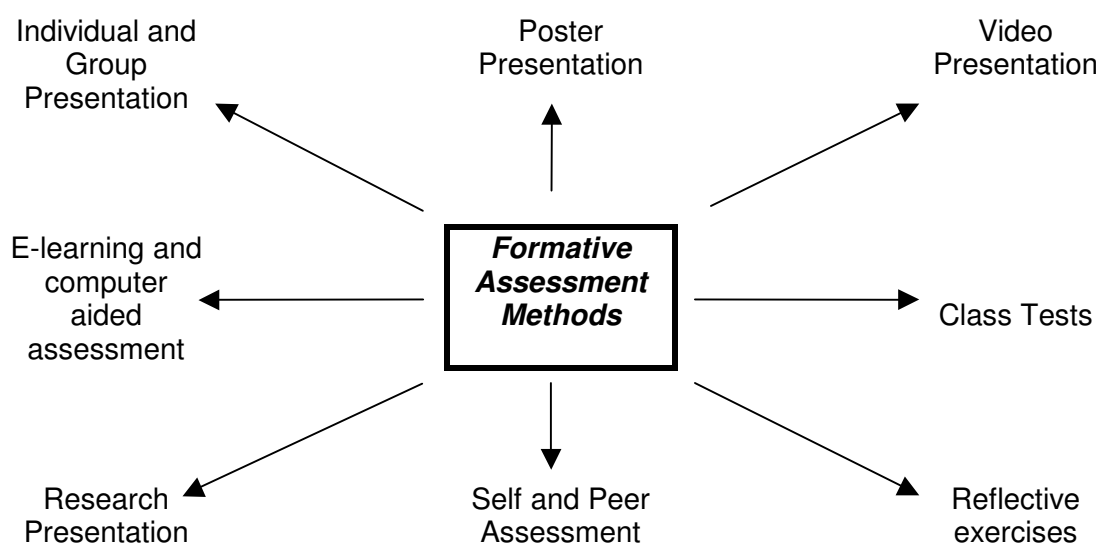
No specific information was provided by respondents regarding assessment of practice, although some information was gathered from course handbooks accessed by the research team. It is clear from this material that the format and content of student reports and integrative case/ practice studies are very similar, presumably as a result of the prescriptive requirements in these areas of the Dip.SW. Therefore, while these forms of summative assessment are acknowledged in the presentation of summative assessments, they will not be discussed in any depth. However, in the presentation of formative assessments, attention will be given to the variety of formative methods of assessment used by practice teachers with reference to the Scottish Organisation of Practice Teacher's Tool Kit (SCOPT 2002).

Formative Assessment Methods used in Scottish Dip.SW. Programmes

The role of formative assessments in the overall assessment strategy of programmes varies across the Scottish institutions. In particular, the ways in which formative methods of assessment contributed to the overall summative assessment differs between programmes. Some programmes require students to undertake formative assessments in order to fulfil module requirements, whilst others require formative assessment tasks to be included in a summative portfolio assessment. Formative feedback appears to be in the form of either verbal or written commentary. The audit did not reveal an example of where formative assessments were graded. From the material available to the audit, it appears that there is a greater diversity of formative tasks than summative tasks employed in the assessment process. We suggest this may be related to the formal regulations of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with regard to summative assessment methods.

The different types of formative assessment methods used in Scottish Schools of Social Work are detailed in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Formative Assessment Methods used in Scottish Dip.SW. programmes

The amount of information that respondents were able to provide varied. The discussion of each method reflects the variability of the information provided with regard to specific assessment methods.

Self and peer assessment

Self and peer assessment can be understood as an element of an overall assessment strategy and as a distinct method. Both ways of understanding self-assessment are found in the literature (Boud, 1999; Burgess, undated). Self-assessment involves students in identifying the criteria by which their understanding of a subject will be assessed. After participating in the learning and teaching of the subject and

completing the assessment, students then evaluate the extent to which they have met these criteria in their individual assessments. Self-assessment is understood to promote student's learning by developing their critical thinking skills and by providing them with the opportunity to develop their learning and assessment skills in action. Attention is given to individual student learning styles, the development of confidence and creativity in learning, as well as to students' understanding of the subject of study (Burgess, undated). Peer assessment has been developed alongside self-assessment. Peer assessment has been found to have similar advantages in respect of student learning as self-assessment. In addition, peer assessment offers students the opportunity to practice the skills of giving and receiving feedback (Burgess, undated).

In the Scottish audit, self and peer assessment featured significantly if not exclusively as a formative method of assessment. The kinds of self-assessment identified in the audit are mainly in the form of reflective exercises, which are discussed below. However, one university described how self and peer assessment is introduced to students at the beginning of the course as part of an overall assessment strategy.

Practice Example:
Formative Peer Assessment

One University introduces formative peer assessment in the introduction to Year 1 in order that students learn how to assess each others' work against specific criteria. This is supported by the introduction of self -assessment so that they can begin to measure their own performance both in practice and within their written course work. A mixture of formative developmental assessments is linked to a final summative assessment.

Reflective exercises

The literature identifies that reflective exercises have been used in the classroom to consider anti discriminatory practice (Razack, 1999) cultural diversity (Harris, 1997) and group processes (Baldwin, 2000). It is argued that reflective diaries or logs allow for a greater integration of learning and teaching activities (Marotta, Peters and Paliokas, 2000). Reflective exercises such as reflective diaries, learning logs and personal statements are widely used methods in formative assessment in social work education in Scotland. One university sets students an initial formative assessment, which requires students to reflect on how their experiences have influenced their values and brought them into social work. Another requires students to complete a personal statement to assist in personal and professional goal setting.

An interesting range of formative assessment tools, culled from a range of agencies is provided in the Scottish Organisation of Practice Teachers tool kit (SCOPT 2002). This publication marshals a considerable array of learning and teaching, and assessment tools for practice learning. A number of examples of formats for learning logs are included in the publication. The following example provides a basic clear outline to encourage student reflection.

<table>
<tr><td align="center">***Practice Example:***
Reflective Writing Exercise</td></tr>
</table>

> *This is what I did*
> *This is why I did it*
> *This is what I think about what I did*
> *These are the values I demonstrated*
> *These are the competences I think I met*
> *This is what I learnt from this experience*
>
> (Scottish Organisation of Practice Teachers, 2002)

Presentations: individual, group, video and poster

Individual and group oral presentations offer students the opportunity to present arguments (Butler and Coleman, 1997) or discuss ideas in a forum (Crisp 1999). The literature review identified that poster presentations, which test professional presentation skills and provide students with rapid feedback, are gaining acceptance as an assessment method. The Scottish audit identified that individual and group oral presentations are widely used in social work education as formative assessable tasks. Video and poster presentations are both used by one university. However, most presentations are individual or group in format. Two examples of group presentations are given below.

<table>
<tr><td align="center">***Practice Example:***
Group presentations 1</td></tr>
</table>

> *One university requires students to undertake a simulations exercise to assist students to understand and apply organisational concepts. In small groups students generate organisational problems. They describe and identify problems which would occur in a social work organisation, work though the problem solving process and make proposals to change the organisation. They then constrict a virtual history charting the progress of the organisation up to a year after the changes. The group then makes a class presentation of the process of problem solving. Other students, practitioners and the module lecturer give verbal feedback. The work involved in the exercise prepares student for the summative assessment which is choice of essays requiring students to analyse aspects of organisations.*

> ***Practice Example:***
> ***Group presentations 2***
>
> *Students in one university construct a critical analysis framework in class, which assists them to critically analyse social work methods. In small groups students then use the framework to analyse a method of intervention. The analysis is then presented to the class. Verbal feedback is given to students. The exercise prepares them for the summative assignment of an essay that asks students to critically analyse social work methods.*

E-learning and computer aided assessment

There has been a growing use in higher education of computer-based assessment. The literature in this field tends to concentrate on the use of computers for objective testing which involves the automated marking of paper forms, and assessment in which the questions are presented and responses marked entirely by computer software (SWAPltsn, 2003). While some mention of the use of e-learning was found in the course handbooks provided to the audit, we did not identify a programme that used computer-aided assessment as a summative assessment tool. However, one university had a problem-based, e-learning module which examined human growth and development and sociology of the family. As shown in the following practice example, formative feedback, using e-learning was a feature of this module.

> ***Practice Example:***
> ***E learning and computer aided assessment***
>
> *Students work in small groups to study case material and, drawing on reading from subject areas, develop a set of hypotheses about what might be going on in the situation. The case material for the module is in the form of web based multi – media and CD-ROM. It consists of a virtual community with maps of the neighbourhoods, contextual information about the neighbourhoods, images of street scenes, and video and audio clips of family members. Students have access to online discussion with peers and tutors from whom they receive daily feedback on their work.*
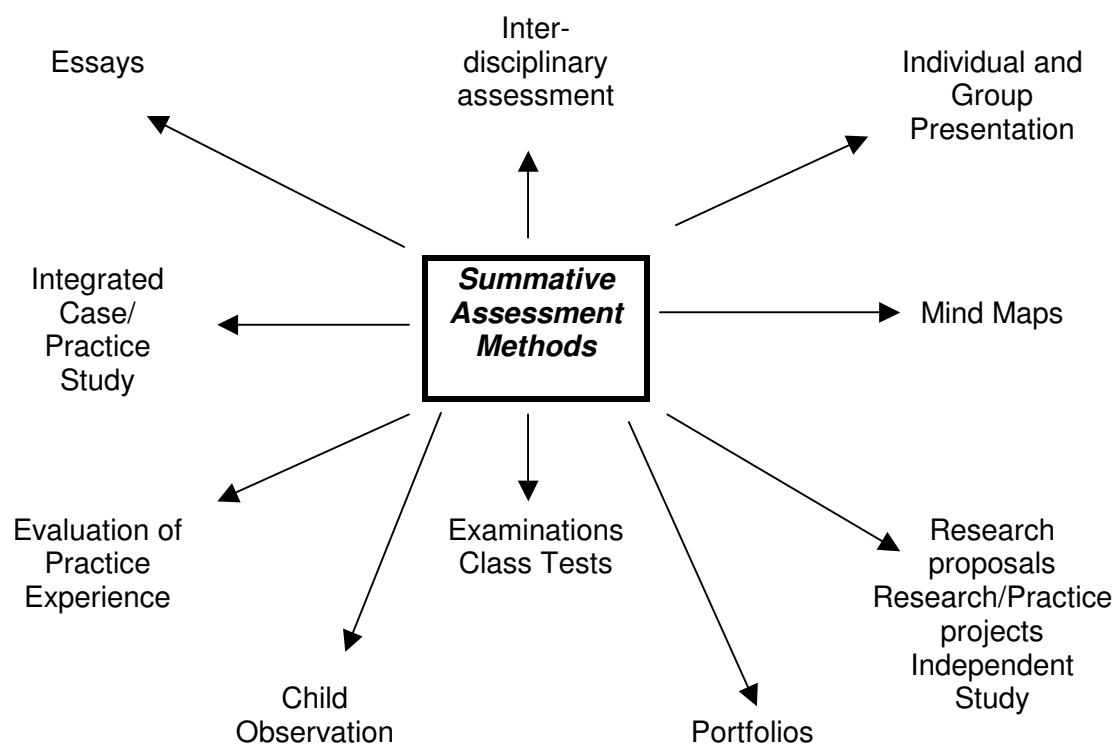
Research Proposals and Class Tests

Although research proposals and class tests were used in some programmes as formative assessments, these methods featured more significantly as summative assessment methods, so will be discussed in the following section.

Summative Assessment Methods

Scottish Schools of Social Work employ a range of summative assessment methods, which are detailed in Fig.2.

Fig. 2. Summative Assessment Methods used in Scottish Schools of Social Work.

Portfolios

The literature review identifies that portfolios are a developing means of assessing social work knowledge and skills, both in specific subject areas such as group work (Guitierrez and Alvarez, 2000), and across an entire degree programme (Cournoyer, 2001). Portfolios allow students to demonstrate complex learning (Guitierrez and Alvarez, 2000) and are an active method of learning (Taylor, Thomas and Sage 1999). Portfolios may evidence a wide range of skills, demonstrate student development in learning and reflect attitudes and values (Ashford, 2003; Taylor et al, 1999). However they may be time consuming to create and mark (Edwards and Kinsey, 1999; Horwarth and Shardlow, 2000) and there may be low inter-reliability between markers (Black, in Risler, 1999).

While portfolios can be described as an assessment method, they may also be understood as a key component of an overall assessment strategy. Both ways of understanding portfolios emerged from the Scottish audit. Some programmes described the package of placement documentation as a portfolio. A portfolio might be the summative assessment method for one module. One university introduces students to the concept of portfolio creation, peer and experiential learning and critical reflection in the first module of the course. In this first module it required students to

create a portfolio that included the formative tasks of a video presentation, a case study and a research presentation, along with a Mind Map (described below), and an essay. A portfolio might also represent students' work over an entire year. In one university students are required to submit extensive portfolios at intermediate and final assessment. The following practice example shows expectations of student portfolios at an interim stage.

Practice Example:
Portfolio creation

Portfolio requirements

Statement of confidentiality
Assessed work (all critique sheets on the following assignments along with PAB letters:
Social exclusion
Child Observation
Practice Study 1
Unseen Case study
Practice Teaches Report
Letter from PAP

Additional evidence of competence
Open Learning Materials evidenced in Reflective Journal
Reflective Journal
Record of learning
ADP Action Learning paper
Tutor and group evaluation of ADP task
IT Module Assessment Sheet

Personal and Professional Self Evaluation for Intermediate Assessment

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Essays

The literature review identified that most Schools of Social Work require some form of essay. Essays require students to search for information, analyse their findings and develop a coherent written argument. They have been used to analyse students' learning throughout a course (Cournoyer, 2001) or to develop learning (Simpson et al., 2000). The advantages of essays are that they allow students to demonstrate individual understanding of topics and writing skills. Disadvantages include the time consuming nature of writing and marking essays and issues of inequality with regard to student's previous leaning and marking subjectivity (Ashford, 2003).

The practice audit of Scottish Social Work Programmes has produced similar findings. All programmes made use of essays. Two programmes used essays as the sole means of summative assessment of university-based learning. Most programmes used essays alongside a range of other assessment tasks. From the material provided it appears that the expectations of essay content and format varied. All routes used standard essay question format, such as asking students to discuss a quotation, analyse, evaluate and propose strategies to social problems, and, in doing so, make reference to their practice experience. Some routes require the essay to be in the form

of a report and one route offered students the option in one module to negotiate an essay title with the module coordinator. Case studies were used as a basis for a number of essays. For example, in three universities, the testing of law was achieved by the production of an essay involving the analysis of case studies. From the information provided by the Universities, most additional modules, for example, those that relate to the award of a degree rather than the Dip.SW., also used essays as the main method of assessment.

Some interesting examples of the ways in which programme providers sought to address the disadvantages of essays were identified in the audit. Some essays gave students clear opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge to practice situations, as exemplified by the following two practice examples:

Practice Example:
Essay questions 1

Evidence based practice in criminal justice settings should be directed by principles of effective practice. Write a paper setting out how these principles should inform the design and delivery of a community based programme (1:1 or group) for offenders on probation.

Some essay questions took the form of a literature review. The following example shows how students are required to undertake a focused literature review with emphasis on application to practice.

Practice Example:
Essay questions 2

If I'm going to act in the best interests of the children and their families on my next placement, what three pieces of reading do I intend to draw on and how will these inform my practice?

One university took an imaginative approach to assisting students to reflect on experience and empathise by submitting a creative piece of writing.

Practice Example:
Essay questions 3

Write a short poem, short story or diary entry entitled ' Being Normal' from the point of view of a child or young person with a parent with HIV

Examinations and class tests

Examinations are considered to be cost and time effective, to encourage subject learning and to be a relatively easy means of ensuring equality of opportunity. However, a number of disadvantages of this method of assessment have been identified. These include the potential to encourage instrumental and surface learning,

to inhibit the applied use of theory and to increase marker' subjectivity (Ashford, 2003). The literature review has shown how examinations have been used in social work education to assess social work theory and knowledge with written exams being used for assessing knowledge in psychology (Dillenberger, Godina and Burton, 1997; law (Henderson, Lloyd and Scott, 2002) and research methods (Petracchi and Patchner, 2001; Sieppert and Krysik, 1996). The material available for this practice audit suggests that while examinations are not a common form of assessment, they are used to assess the context of professional practice, and introductory learning about social work practice and law. Relatedly, summative class tests are used in a number of institutions to test law.

Mind Map

Mind mapping or concept mapping has developed in recent years in several areas of higher education. Mind maps assist students to represent their knowledge of a particular topic, to make links between different ideas about the topic and to allow students to capture the most relevant information and present it in a structured way (Anglia Polytechnic University Module outline, undated). There are a number of web-based tutorials to assist staff and students in using mind maps (Open University 2003; University of Surrey, 2003). Mind maps were used by one programme to chart student learning throughout a module. As explained in the discussion of portfolios above, this mind map formed part of a summative assessment in the form of a portfolio. The process of mind mapping is described in the following practice example:

Practice Example:
Mind Mapping

Students are required to complete a mind map at the beginning of the module in order to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject area at that stage. Throughout the module students are asked to develop this mind map by adding to it evidence of their learning in relation to four key units of the module: critical evaluation and reflection; critical thinking and research; communication and interpersonal skills and ethics. At the end of the module students are required to submit the developed mind map as part of a portfolio assessment.

Research Proposals and Research, Practice and Independent Study Projects

The audit found that universities teaching social work education used a range of independent study and research projects. Typically, these projects require students to develop skills in empirical research. Students are expected to develop a research proposal; undertake a literature review; engage in data gathering and analysis; and produce a report in which they present and discuss findings and make conclusions and recommendations. One university required students to undertake a series of formative assessments and summative assessments over four modules. All assessments are then presented in a final portfolio. Student learning is supported by a range of activities such as peer seminars, workshops, tutorials, group reflection and planning. The following practice example shows the content of the final portfolio.

> **Practice Example:**
> **Research Project**
>
> *Formative assessments:*
> *Group presentation on collaborative working*
> *Individual presentation*
> *Visit write up*
> *Leading to one summative assessment:*
> *Assignment of 5,000 words which forms part of the literature review for the research project*
>
> *Three further summative assessment for the portfolio:*
> *Ethics assignment of 2,500 words*
> *Research proposal of 2,500 words*
> *Project Write up of 7,000 words*
> *.*

Child Observation

One university used an assignment based on child observation as a method of summative assessment.

> **Practice Example:**
> **Child Observation**
>
> *In this assignment students have to demonstrate knowledge of child development through reading and child observation. They are expected to spend thirty minutes with a child under five years of age, observing the child's appearance and activities, and provide a description and analysis of the observation.*

Inter-disciplinary assessments

One programme provides two inter-disciplinary modules jointly with Education and Community Education Departments, which share a joint assessment. Different elements of these modules are marked both within the Social Work Department and across Departments.

Individual and Group Presentations

One programme stated that they used group seminar presentations as a form of summative assessment. As indicated in the discussion of formative methods, from the material available to the audit, it appears that most programmes use these presentations as formative assessments and their uses were discussed in the previous section.

Integrated Case or Practice Study and Evaluation of Practice Experience

As noted in the introduction to this section these two methods are common to all programmes and there is a great deal of similarity in the content and format of these assignments. Therefore, this audit will not provide a detailed commentary on these forms of assessment. In line with CCETSW guidelines, the evaluation of practice takes the form of student and practice teacher reports, where students provide evidence of competency achievement and practice teachers evaluate and supplement this evidence. The integrated case/practice studies require students to integrate university-based learning into their practice experience, in the form of a narrative account of practice.

Critique of methods used

The information provided to the audit in this area is limited. However, a number of concerns were raised with regard to current assessment strategies and methods. The first concerns the alignment of learning outcomes and assessment methods, which Biggs (2003) argues is critical in developing quality learning, teaching and assessment strategies. A number of universities identified problems in developing assessment methods that could adequately test learning outcomes. For example, one cause for concern was over-ambitious learning outcomes that existed in some Dip.SW. modules. Where modules specified a 'wish list' of outcomes, the constructive alignment of the assessment instrument to these outcomes was considered 'impossible'. Relatedly, some universities were concerned that innovations in learning and teaching approaches are not matched by innovative assessment methods and so mis-alignment also occurs in this area of curriculum development. Two programmes had developed problem-based online learning and teaching material but were using essays to assess learning. Both were considering the development of alternative methods such as group presentations and online assessment work. However, one module leader expressed concern that the assessment of online discussion might alter the dynamic in an unhelpful way.

A further concern expressed by one university related to the complications arising from differences in assessment regulations of the Dip.SW. and the HEIs, which were perceived as preventing the introduction of innovative assessment methods. Finally, the difficulties in constructing an assessment tool which assessed 'the application of knowledge rather than [its] acquisition' were of concern in one university. Relatedly, a second university identified that where assignments were submitted prior to placement, the assessment of student's applied use of knowledge was difficult.

Innovations

A range of innovations with regard to the processes and methods of assessment are being planned across Scottish Schools of Social Work. Involving stakeholders other than university lecturers in the assessment of students was a key feature of innovations being considered in Scottish HEIs. With regard to assessment processes, the involvement of users and carers was a planned innovation cited by a number of programmes providers. The use of practice teacher direct observations to form part of a university-based assessment was also being considered by one programme provider. One institution envisaged the use of more interdisciplinary arrangements for the setting and marking of joint assignments. The same institution was considering the establishment of split summative assessments, which would involve different percentage weighting to different parts of the summative assessment, for example, a project report and presentation of findings with a 70%/30% split. Relatedly, this institution was concerned to develop assessment strategies that were linked throughout the year, rather than being located within modules. Their aim in this innovation was to allow for the incremental progression of learning. The development of a problem-based approach to learning and teaching heralded significant changes for a second institution. With a view to ensuring the constructive alignment of assessment processes with learning and teaching approaches, this programme provider was involved in a wholesale revision of assessment strategies.

Innovations to specific methods of assessment were identified by a number of institutions. Several respondents indicated that they intended to introduce a degree of self and peer assessment. For two universities, this was related to a change in learning and teaching approaches. They considered that staged self-assessment and peer feedback would facilitate the use of problem-based learning. The practice learning advisors who contributed to the audit were particularly keen to develop a range of assessment methods for the new kinds of practice learning envisaged in the new award. They envisaged that shorter more focused periods of practice learning, which might involve, for example, more observational learning could be assessed in more innovative ways. These methods, which would involve a range of stakeholders in the process of assessment, would lead to the construction of a student portfolio. Finally, assessment methods identified by programme providers for introduction or development in the new award were: portfolios; project work; individual and group presentations; e-learning; child observation; examinations and research critiques.

In this section of the report, we have presented the range of assessment methods currently being employed in social work education in Scotland that were made known to the audit. Criticisms of the current methods have been summarised and planned innovations in assessment methods presented. In the following section of the report we will provide a cross-sectional analysis of contemporary assessment innovations from across the U.K., drawn from the grey literature, web sites and discussion lists.

4. U.K. developments in the assessment in social work education.

A range of assessment methods, detailed in the published literature, has been identified in the literature review (Crisp et al., 2004). Our analysis of the case-based material drawn from the SWAPltsn and SCiE websites and responses from the SWAPltsn discussion list has identified a number of developments in the assessment of social work students across the U.K. This case material is limited in terms of quantity but can be broadly categorised into three areas: student portfolios, self and peer assessment, and computer-aided assessment. Examples of all three developments are provided below.

Portfolios

The following example of portfolio creation was provided to the audit by Anglia Polytechnic University

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UK Practice Example:
Portfolio
Assessment in Developing Reflective Learning: Anglia Polytechnic University

Anglia Polytechnic University have developed a 10 credit 'Developing Reflective Learning Module' designed to assist students to integrate their learning from modules studied in their 1st semester and to help them reflect on the processes of their learning. The module learning outcomes are:

Undertake self-assessment of own learning needs
Identify areas for self-development and formulate an action plan to address these
Compare and contrast the different subject areas studied
Reflect on the group learning process and identify your part in it
Evidence the range of communication skills you have used in the module

Students are required to keep a record of their learning throughout the semester noting their individual and group learning. The module assignment consists of a portfolio file of five extracts which are designed to assists the students to meet the five learning outcomes:

A Completed Reflections on Learning Inventory
A brief plan in which students explain how they intend to address the issues raised in the learning inventory (1,000 words)
A concept map that compares and contrasts the different subject areas studied with reference to case scenarios
A summary reflection of group learning
A checklist of communication skills inventory

Self and peer assessment

The Self-Assessment in Professional and Higher Education (SAPHE) Project has produced a range of informative material about the process of student self-assessment. This project is based in the Universities of Bristol, Bath and the West of England (Burgess, Baldwin, Dalrymple and Thomas, 1999). The three project sites have developed independently and social work educators have identified a number of issues for consideration.

Burgess (undated) identifies eight examples of the forms of assessment tools which can be used in the process of self-assessment, all of which may be developed into forms of peer assessment: early essay title, self-evaluation profile, lecture notes, presentations/ exercises, completing self- assessment as a formal requirement, skills assessment, reflective diaries, portfolios and placement learning. The following practice example shows how self-assessment methods are used to assist students in planning and reflecting for skills development in the University of Bristol.

UK Practice Example: Self- Assessment *Bristol University*						
SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR PLANNING AND REFLECTION FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT						
1 *Learning Objective*	*2* *How will you work towards this*	*3* *How will you know about your progress*	*4* *Progress in reaching objective*	*5* *Evidence*	*6* *What got in the way*	*7* *Further work needed*
Examples						
To learn about and develop skills in use of tone and timing	*Reading Role-play Observation to other*	*Feedback from others How confident I feel Taping a session*	*I feel much clearer in how to do this I read relevant chapter in Kadushin I participated in 2 role-plays, working on tone and timing*	*Feedback from others* *Confidence*	*Not being able to tape a session*	*More practice*
To develop skills in motivational interviewing & apply to clients other than those using drugs	*Reading presentation to group*	*Feedback from others? Assignment result*	*I feel ready to try this approach with clients Read Miller & Rollinck Reviewed wider literature*	*Feedback from others Assignment result*	*Needed more time*	*More practice & reading Perhaps co-work with colleague*
(Burgess, H., undated)						

Computer-Aided Assessment

The SWAPltsn website provides a useful summary of Computer-Aided Assessment. The article argues that the key aim of Computer-Aided Assessment is to provide more efficient assessment of student learning. It is suggested that the benefits of this form of assessment include emphasis and time spent on assessment design rather than student marking resulting in greater efficiency and speed in assessment; an increase in consistency and objectivity in marking; the expansion of alternative tools such as multimedia, which are not available in paper-based assessment; and an increase in the frequency of testing and feedback which may increase student motivation. A range of methods used in Computer-Aided Assessment are identified:

- Online test and questionnaires
- Online submission of assignments
- Worksheets signed off on line-online peer assessment
- Group projects online that assess participation levels and quality of interactions
- Individual students progression profiles completed on line
- Self assessment
- Diagnostics of learners skills and knowledge

(SWAPltsn 2003)

While the following practice example is based on teaching social policy students, both the content and the method are relevant to social work education.

> *UK Practice Example:*
> *Computer-Aided Assessment –*
> *Multiple Choice assessment on a Government and institutions module*
>
> *This form of assessment was developed when it was found that first year social policy students had gaps in their foundational knowledge about government and institutions. Two different forms of assessment were employed. The first written assignment is a paper-based multiple-choice exam to test basic knowledge. Students are prepared for this exam by weekly formative assessments in the form of multiple choice type questions. The second assignment involves students in using the Internet to search a government document and explain the processes of finding the document. They are required to provide a summary of the document to which the original is attached.*
>
> (Driver, S., undated)

Planned UK innovations in assessment

The SCiE position paper *A framework for supporting and assessing practice lear*ning suggests that

> In year one, a student moves from learning about practice, to leaning from the practice of others, and on to learning through a limited experience of their own involvement in practice (SCiE, undated p.14).

It suggests a range of methods that could be employed to assess students at his stage in their practice learning including an observational placement.

Anglia Polytechnic University are developing a module, to be delivered later this year, which is designed to guide students through an Observational Practice Learning module of 60 hours observation. The assessment will be through a 4,000-word assignment that consists of four 'patches' as the following practice example shows. Students will present drafts of their 'patch' assignments in seminar groups and will receive feedback from colleagues and a tutor.

UK Practice Example:
Planned innovation 'The 4 patch test in Observational placements'

Patch 1
Students must write a report outlining the range of local statutory, voluntary and private agencies which provide services to a specific client group, acknowledging the significance of other agencies and lack of resources - 1,000 words.

Patch 2
Students are required to directly observe a qualified social worker carrying out a specific task and must complete a specified pro-forma. They must discuss their observations with the social worker and add their own reflections -1,000 words

Patch 3
'Try to see it my way'. Students must write a fictionalised account of a particular event from the point of view of the service user revealing their understanding of clients' individual circumstances and needs and reflect on aspects of difference, isolation and social exclusions.

Patch 4
Making reference to specific entries in a record of learning and previous 'patches', students must write a reflective summary of how being an observer has contributed to their professional development and prepared them for practice.

Anglia Polytechnic University (2003)

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5. Conclusion.

This report has detailed the findings of the practice audit of assessment methods in social work education in the U.K. The report has outlined the range and diversity of assessment methods currently employed by Scottish Schools of Social Work. In particular, the report has indicated the various methods used to assess Dip.SW. programmes in Scotland in the academic year 2003-2004. Innovations and developments in these programmes have also been highlighted. This may be seen as providing a cross-sectional account of contemporary assessment methods and practice in social work education in Scotland. As such, it provides a 'baseline' from which any future developments may be critically evaluated. The research team are aware that some institutions, because of their involvement in other SIESWE projects, and in the development of the new award, were not able to provide information to the audit in the necessary timescales. Therefore, there will be examples of assessment methods and planned innovations, which are not available to the audit.

The report has also provided a cross-sectional account of contemporary developments and innovations in methods of assessment from Schools of Social Work from across the U.K. Although the material available at the time of this audit is limited, the authors trust that the identification of pertinent innovation and 'best practice' provides a resource from which to inform any future developments in the assessment of social work education. It is hoped, therefore, that this audit will represent a valuable reference for those involved in planning and developing the new social work degree in Scotland.

Significantly, the methods employed to undertake this audit enabled the inclusion of a wealth of material and information, which, for various reasons, has not been hitherto available in the extant published literature in this field. In this sense, it represents an important addition to contemporary resources on methods of assessment in social work education. This report is, however, complemented by an extensive review of published literature relating to methods of assessment in social work education, also undertaken by the research team on behalf of SIESWE (Crisp et al., 2004)

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