

School of Social Work

Professional Standards for Social Work Education

These Standards include the following:

- 1) Criteria for Evaluating Academic and Professional Performance**
- 2) Policies & Procedures for Review of Academic and Professional Performance**
- 3) Grievance Processes**

The *Professional Standards for Social Work Education* articulated here became effective September 2003 and apply to all matriculated and non-matriculated students. Unless otherwise noted, the standards, procedures, and policies apply to both BSW and MSW students.

Grateful acknowledgement to the School of Social Work,
The University of Texas at Austin (1999)
from which this document is adapted.

Professional Standards for Social Work Education

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Professional Standards for Social Work Education

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Performance, Policies and Procedures for Review of Academic Performance, and Academic Grievances

1.0

Introduction

This document delineates *Salem State College Professional Standards for Social Work Education* – standards that apply to students enrolled at the School of Social Work at Salem State College effective Summer 2003.

Because of the nature of professional social work practice, the School of Social Work has different expectations of students than do non-professional programs. The standards are linked to students' abilities to become effective social work professionals and are provided to clarify expectations and procedures regarding concerns about academic performance. The ultimate goal of the *Standards* is to help students have a successful experience at the School of Social Work.

Because becoming a professional is a gradual process, it is not expected that all criteria will be met at all times. Persons who teach and supervise students, along with program coordinators, will assess student academic performance and apply their professional judgment to determine if standards are being met during a student's educational career. Professional judgment is the capacity to assess a situation by applying the values and knowledge of the social work profession, combined with a professional's own experience and practice wisdom. It also represents the application of knowledge, values, and skills to making decisions in a helping process. This assessment of performance and professional judgment occurs as the student progresses through academic and field education courses.

All social work students will be provided with the School's *Professional Standards for Social Work Education* and the *National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics* during their orientation meeting at the School. Students will be asked to sign an acknowledgment documenting that they have read, are aware of the contents of, and will abide by the *Standards*. When students enter field education, they will sign an additional document that states they have read the *NASW Code of Ethics* as well as the *MSW Field Education Curriculum Guide* or *BSW Fieldwork Manual* and that they understand and will abide by these documents. These acknowledgement forms will be kept in students' files.

2.0

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Performance in the School's BSW and MSW Programs

In order to meet its responsibilities to provide quality professional education and to ensure that its graduates are able to function in a broad variety of professional situations, the School of Social Work evaluates the academic performance of its students in four general areas: acquisition of professional skills; emotional abilities; professional performance in field; and scholastic performance. Meeting the criteria for scholastic achievement is necessary but not sufficient to ensure continued enrollment in a program. *Both professional behavior and scholastic performance* comprise academic standards in a professional social work program.

2.1

Acquisition of Professional Skills

The acquisition of each of the following skills is evaluated in accordance with undergraduate- and graduate-level educational standards.

2.1.1 Communication Skills

The student demonstrates sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings. The following distinctions and similarities are made between written and oral communication skills:

a) *Evaluation of Written Communication Skills:* The student writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling, and applies appropriate writing style, including referencing, appropriate source citation, and documentation in accordance with the latest edition of the *American Psychological Association Style Manual*. The student possesses sufficient skills in written English to demonstrate an understanding of content presented in the social work course or program in which the student is enrolled. The student is able to complete adequately all written assignments, as specified by classroom and field education faculty, and meets the College's established *Minimum Writing Standards* (see page 48).

b) *Evaluation of Oral Communication Skills:* The student communicates effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals. The student expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. The student possesses sufficient skills in spoken English to demonstrate understanding of content presented in the course or program in which the student is enrolled. The student is able to complete adequately all oral assignments, as specified by classroom and field education faculty.

2.1.2 Interpersonal Skills

The student demonstrates the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals and to fulfill the ethical obligations of the profession. These skills include demonstrated compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, and respect for and consideration of others. The student takes appropriate responsibility for his or her actions and considers the impact of these actions on others.

2.1.3 Cognitive Skills

The student exhibits sufficient knowledge of social work and clarity of thinking to process information and apply it to appropriate situations in classroom and field. The student demonstrates grounding in relevant social, behavioral and biological science knowledge and research—including knowledge and skills in relationship building, data gathering, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of practice. The student exhibits cognitive capacity sufficient to understand and execute the field education practicum.

2.1.4 Physical Skills

The student exhibits motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class, with or without reasonable accommodations. The student exhibits sufficient abilities to perform the essential functions of the field education practica, with or without reasonable accommodations. (See section 2.6 on *Accommodations for Disabilities* for clarification.)

2.2

Emotional Abilities Necessary for Performance in the BSW or MSW Program and Relevant Professional Practice

2.2.1 Stress Management

The student demonstrates ability to deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms. The student handles stress effectively by developing appropriate self-care, and supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others.

2.2.2 Emotional Abilities

The student uses sound judgment and demonstrates relational abilities in work with clients and colleagues. The student takes responsibility to seek and effectively use help, including resources outside the College, for medical or emotional problems that interfere with scholastic and professional performance. The student engages in counseling or seeks out support and help if personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties result in any of the following:

- compromise scholastic and other performance
- interfere with professional judgment and behavior, or
- jeopardize the best interests of those to whom the social work student has a professional responsibility (as outlined in the current Codes of Ethics by the National Association of Social Workers and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Registration for Social Work Licensure).

2.3

Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice

2.3.1 Professional Commitment

The student exhibits a strong commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession, as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics for Social Work Licensure in Massachusetts. The student demonstrates commitment to the essential values of social work that includes respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and a strong sense of social and economic justice.

2.3.2 Professional Behavior

The student exhibits behaviors that are in compliance with societal laws, institutional policies, program policies, and professional ethical standards in classroom, field education placement, and community. The student's appearance, dress, and general demeanor reflect a professional manner. The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of professional social work standards: respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and criticism in a positive manner.

The student works effectively with others, regardless of level of authority. The student advocates for him/herself in an appropriate and responsible manner and uses proper channels for conflict resolution. The student shows a willingness to receive and accept feedback in supervision in a positive manner. The student evidences the ability to use such feedback to enhance professional development and appropriately provides feedback to others.

2.3.3 Self Awareness

The student exhibits knowledge of how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships. The student accurately assesses his her own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. The student demonstrates an awareness of self and how others perceive him or her. The student is able to reflect on his or her own limitations as they relate to professional abilities and practice. The student is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes in working with clients and other professionals.

2.3.4 Ethical Obligations

The student's current behavior and classroom performance demonstrate adherence to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional social work practice standards. Ethical behaviors include:

- Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics and the Standards for Social Work Licensure in Massachusetts;
- Proper and timely disclosure of any convictions or offenses that may have an impact on the ability to practice professionally as well as willingness to engage in responsible collaborative decision making regarding how this history may affect the appropriate field practicum;
- Systematic evaluation of clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way;
- Sufficient suspension of personal biases during interactions with others;
- Empathic communication and support of the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship;
- Appreciation of the value of diversity, sensitivity and respect for another individual's lifestyle and values as well as effective and nonjudgmental intervention with others who are different from oneself;
- Willingness to provide appropriate service to all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or value system;
- The absence of the imposition of personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on clients;
- Demonstration of respect for the rights of others as well as commitment to clients' rights to freedom of choice and self-determination;
- Maintenance of confidentiality as it relates to human service, classroom activities, and field placement;
- Demonstration of honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications as well as doing one's own work, giving credit for the ideas of others, and providing proper citation of source materials;
- Demonstration of clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive personal and professional boundaries;
- Absence of sexual harassment of others, including absence of verbal or physical threats, becoming involved in sexual relationships with clients, supervisors, or faculty;
- Absence of physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse of others as well as absence of participation in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.

2.4

Scholastic Performance

2.4.1 Undergraduate Students

A student must maintain at least a "C-" in every required course in the major. A student's grade point average (GPA) is evaluated at several points during her or his matriculation before being admitted to senior fieldwork. Students' grade point averages in required courses in the major are evaluated at two points prior to senior field work to ascertain whether students have mastered the foundation material and are ready to go on to more advanced work in the major.

The first cluster of required Social Work courses are SWK101, SWK102 and SWK200 in which the student must receive a cumulative grade point average of "B-" (2.7) prior to proceeding to SWK301. The student must receive a B- in SWK301 in order to move to SWK302. The student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of "B-" in six Social Work courses prior to being considered for a field work agency assignment. These six courses are: SWK101, SWK102, SWK200, SWK270, SWK301 and SWK302.

Transfer students must have maintained a "B-" average in these same five courses or in those courses for which they have received transfer credit. Students who fail to achieve a B- average at these points have the opportunity to retake one course from the cluster in order to achieve the necessary average. Students must maintain a passing grade in field practicum and in field seminar to complete the major.

Any student who fails to meet these academic requirements will be referred by the student's faculty advisor to the BSW Program Coordinator. The Coordinator may refer the student to the School's Student Progression Committee for review of the situation and for the Committee's recommendation, as detailed in sections 3.0 and 3.1 of this document.

2.4.2 Graduate Students

MSW students are considered to be in academic difficulty in their GPA drops below 3.0. Students in the Advanced Standing Study Plan are permitted one grade of "C"; a second "C" grade will result in dismissal from the MSW Program. Students in the any of the General Study Plans are permitted two grades of "C"; a third "C" grade will result in dismissal from the MSW Program. A *Student Progression Committee* meeting may be called if a student earns a grade of C in any two required social work courses.

Students must have a grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 to move from the foundation to the concentration curriculum. If a student is having difficulty meeting the GPA standard, they are permitted to repeat one required foundation year course over and may do so only one time. The option of repeating a required foundation course is not automatic and may be subject to review by the School's *Student Progression Committee*.

The receipt of an "F" grade in any course including field education results in the automatic termination of a student from the MSW Program.

A student must have a GPA of 3.0 to graduate. Students who are at risk of completing their course work without a 3.0 average must meet with their Academic Advisor and the MSW Program Coordinator to discuss the possibility of additional requirements. Such additional requirements must be approved in writing by the Director of the School of Social Work and subject to the final approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

A student who is dismissed for academic reasons has the right to a hearing before the College's *Graduate Education Council* for the purpose of presenting information in support of possible reinstatement. MSW students are expected to use all levels of review available to them within the School of Social Work prior to requesting a hearing before the *Graduate Education Council*.

2.5

Sources of Information on Academic Performance

Sources of information about whether academic performance criteria are being met by a student in the School of Social Work may include but are not limited to those listed below. Appropriate procedures and standards regarding informed consent and confidentiality will be adhered to in using any of the following sources of information:

- Performance in oral and written assignments, examinations, social work skills labs, or other coursework
- Written or verbal feedback from faculty, field practicum instructors, faculty field liaisons, or supervisors of volunteer human service activity
- Formal feedback from agency-based field instructors through evaluative tools
- Observation of classroom, volunteer, or field education behaviors
- Student's personal statements or self-assessments
- Interviews with faculty or other professionals
- Taped interview situations (audio or video)
- Feedback from faculty in other social work programs that the student may have attended
- Feedback from students, staff, other colleges and universities, helping professionals, or community
- Signed contracts between the School and the student, including the *Field Education Teaching/Learning Contract* as well as any signed confidentiality or scholastic honesty statements.

2.6

Accommodations for Disabilities

No otherwise qualified student shall, on the basis of disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in the School of Social Work. A student with a disability may be protected by the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* and be eligible for a reasonable accommodation that will provide an equal opportunity to meet the academic criteria related to professional behavior and scholastic performance.

Any otherwise qualified student with a disability that substantially limits one or more life activities, and who requests a reasonable accommodation, must notify the College's *Office for Students with Disabilities* and provide documentation as needed. Only the *Office for Students with Disabilities* may make recommendations for accommodations. It is against School and College policies for individual instructors to provide accommodations that have not been recommended by the *Office for Students with Disabilities*. The School of Social Work will review academic performance criteria in light of individual student circumstances. **In the event of a request for accommodations in field education or placement, the request must be documented, reviewed, and approved by the *Office of Students with Disabilities*, and be reasonable according to the resources of the field education site and the essential duties of the student's practicum role.**

3.0

Policies and Procedures for Review of Academic Performance

Three levels for review of students' academic performance are available at the School of Social Work. The level of review depends upon the potential severity of the concern. Information disclosed during student

meetings with faculty, program coordinators, or school administrators will not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about professional performance. Faculty and/or program coordinators will share pertinent information with each other for the professional purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns. Faculty are obligated to follow College procedures related to student performance issues.

3.1 Performance Relevant to Review and/or Possible Dismissal from the School of Social Work

Salem State College assumes that all students come to the College with serious educational intent and expects them to be mature, responsible individuals who exhibit high standards of honesty and integrity in their personal, academic, and professional conduct. A review of a student's performance and possible dismissal may occur under any of the following circumstances:

- Failure to meet or maintain *School of Social Work Criteria for Academic Performance* as delineated in this document (see Sections 2.0 through 2.4 above)
- Behavior judged to be in violation of the current *NASW Code of Ethics*
- Any threat or attempt to harm oneself or someone else
- Commission of a criminal act that is contrary to professional practice, occurring during the course of study or occurring prior to admission to the School of Social Work and becoming known after admission
- Consistent pattern of unprofessional behavior
- Scholastic dishonesty, including cheating, lying, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to misrepresent one's own work or give oneself unfair academic advantage.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty

All forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, are considered to be serious offenses against the College community.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Submitting another person's work as one's own. This includes, for example, copying another person's work during examinations; purchasing papers; copying papers, reports or portions of papers, material from a website; copying laboratory or computer results; and presenting material from another course or paper without proper acknowledgment, citations and references.

Penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty may include **an automatic grade of F for the course** as well as being reported to the Vice President, Academic Affairs, and may lead to **suspension or expulsion from the college**. See the current *Salem State College Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogues* for complete descriptions of College policies on academic dishonest and the appeals procedures.

3.2 Three Levels of Review

Level One – Flagging and Conferencing

A Level One Review involves a faculty member and a student. When a faculty member has concerns about a student's ability to meet the academic criteria, whether related to professional behavior or scholastic performance, that faculty member will:

- Discuss those concerns directly with the student and seek to work with the student to resolve the difficulties.
- Inform the appropriate advisor, program coordinator (BSW or MSW) or field education coordinator (BSW or MSW) of the concerns via use of a “flagging form” in order to identify potential patterns and issues related to the student. The student will be provided with a copy of the Flagging Form. Concerns to be noted include the following areas:
 - Attendance
 - Assignments
 - Writing Skills
 - Oral Communication Skills
 - Professional Behavior

If a problem arises in field education, the agency-based field instructor will discuss concerns directly with the student and with the faculty field liaison. It is the responsibility of the faculty field liaison to inform the appropriate coordinator of the concerns through a flagging form and to insure that the student receives a copy of the flagging form.

Faculty will make every effort to meet with a student to discuss the content of a flagging form; in any case, a copy of the flagging form will be sent to the student or placed in their “mailbox” at the School. Flagging forms are not kept in a student’s file unless the forms become part of a Level Three or Four Review.

In many instances, meetings between faculty and students resolve the concerns and do not necessarily lead to further reviews, pursuant to this section.

Level Two – Assisted Conferencing on Student Academic Needs

A Level Two Review involves the faculty member, student, and the BSW or MSW Program Coordinator. The focus here remains on the student learning. Faculty and program coordinator will meet with the student when the student is not meeting or following Program or College standards, policies, and procedures, or when concerns have not been resolved at Level One. If a problem arises in Field Education, the agency-based field instructor, faculty liaison, and BSW or MSW Field Education Coordinator will conduct the review with the student.

During a Level Two information-gathering process, the appropriate program coordinator will determine the nature of the concern and gather sufficient information to develop a plan to address that concern, if one is needed. If the problem is determined to be a faculty/student conflict, the program coordinator will refer the matter to the Chairperson. No further action may be required, or the student may be asked, in writing, to modify his or her behavior and/or seek appropriate help. This process is designed to assist students in dealing with identified concerns that have a current or potential impact on their performance or progress.

The BSW or MSW Program Coordinator or Field Education Coordinators will assess the nature of Level Two concerns with appropriate faculty, consult with the Chairperson or Director, maintain documentation, and decide if it is necessary to conduct a more comprehensive review, pursuant to Level Three – a *Student Progression Committee* meeting.

Level Two –Faculty/Student Conflict Resolution

The School of Social Work recognizes that instances of faculty and student conflict do occur. These conflicts often include, but are not limited to, conflicts about grades, communication, and evaluation.

Faculty/student conflict may range in seriousness from the relatively trivial to significant charges of violations of professional ethics. Each situation must be evaluated on its own merits. Some conflicts are resolvable within the School of Social Work, and some are appropriate to take to the formal complaint level either within or outside the School of Social Work. The conflict resolution process should be followed by students who are experiencing some difficulty with a professor but either do not wish to file a formal complaint or do not believe that grounds for filing a formal complaint exist (see below under *Complaint Procedure 4.1*).

Sometimes faculty/student conflicts impact the student's progress through the program and, hence, may be confused with issues that might be resolved through a Level Three Review, i.e., a *Student Progression Committee* meeting and review. **However, faculty/student conflict CANNOT be addressed in a *Student Progression Committee* meeting or review.**

It is important to emphasize that resolution of student and full-time faculty conflicts must occur through mediation with the Chairperson of the Department in consultation with the School's Director and may NOT involve other faculty. In an instance of conflict between an MSW student and an MSW adjunct faculty member, mediation occurs with the MSW Program Coordinator who may also consult with the School's Director.

It is important for students at Salem State College to know that faculty (including academic advisors), in accordance with their respective faculty contracts, are prohibited from discussing the work or behavior of their colleagues with students.

Procedure:

1. Ideally, a student having a concern or a problem with a faculty member should discuss his or her concern with that faculty member and agree on a mutually satisfactory solution.
2. The entire conflict resolution process will be conducted orally and no written record of the process will be maintained.
3. If the problem is not resolved, or if the student believes there is a compelling reason why she or he does not wish to speak privately with the faculty member concerned, the student should discuss the concern with the Chairperson (in the case of full-time faculty or BSW adjunct faculty) or with the MSW Program Coordinator (in the case of MSW Program adjunct faculty).
4. The Chairperson, or MSW Program Coordinator, will attempt to address the issue between the student and the faculty member by a variety of means including but not limited to meeting with both faculty and student singly or together.
4. If the student is not satisfied by the resolution of the conflict resolution process, the student may file a formal complaint if grounds for filing a formal complaint exist (see Complaint procedure 4.1).
5. If the Chairperson is the faculty member with whom the student has a conflict, the Director of the School shall act as mediator; if the MSW Program Coordinator is the faculty member with whom the student has a conflict, the Chairperson shall act as mediator.

Additional comments about possible areas of conflict:

1) Grades - As a general rule, faculty members' decisions about grades are accepted as the final word as part of the faculty member's academic freedom to exercise his or her own professional judgment. It is therefore highly unlikely that an administrator would ask a faculty member to change a grade and the administration itself does not have the authority to change a grade. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss grades, grading standards, and performance expectations with instructors in person. In order to successfully

challenge a grade, the student must demonstrate that the grading was not conducted according to the standards set by the appropriate program (BSW or MSW), the School or the stated criteria of the individual syllabus, course or instructor.

2) Insensitivity and discrimination – A student sometimes experiences a faculty member as insensitive to their concerns or as biased against particular groups of which the student may or may not be members. Although faculty strive to be fair with students, difficulties can arise. Conflicts in this area might range from unintentional and relatively mild insensitivity to outright bias, prejudice or discrimination.

Student/faculty conflict growing out of the less intense insensitivity might well be handled at the conflict resolution level. Serious violations of students' rights by virtue of bias or discrimination based on the student's racial, ethnic, religious, language, age, social class, or sexual preference group violate both College regulations and professional ethics. These situations, while hopefully quite rare, are taken seriously by the School and the College. **Complaints about discriminatory practice must be made directly to the College's Office of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity rather than through the School of Social Work.** Addressing these issues within the School of Social Work might interfere with due process for either the student or faculty member if the student files a formal complaint against a faculty member.

3) Sexual harassment charges are treated equally as serious as discrimination charges by both the School of Social Work and the College. **Reports or complaints of sexual harassment must be made directly to the College's Office of Human Resources Equal Opportunity and Human Rights.** Addressing these issues within the School of Social Work might interfere with due process for either the student or faculty member if the student files a formal complaint against a faculty member. (See the College's *Policy Against Sexual Harassment* in the Undergraduate or Graduate College Catalog).

4) Faculty also have the right to be protected from the bias, prejudice and discriminatory behavior of students. Should the faculty/student conflict be related to the student's insensitivity or bias against the faculty member in connection with the professor's race, ethnicity, age, social class, gender or sexual orientation, the student's bias or behaviors may be considered in determining the student's appropriateness for the field of social work.

Level Three Review – Student Progression Committee Procedures

The *Student Progression Committee* is a standing committee of the School of Social Work. The standing members of the *Student Progression Committee* include the School's Chairperson (who serves as Chair of the Committee), one full-time faculty member who represents the BSW Program, and one full-time faculty member who represents the MSW Program.

The *Student Progression Committee* is used on behalf of students in both BSW and MSW Programs. Its function is to work collaboratively with students to enable them to finish their education while maintaining the standards of the School. The *Student Progression Committee* makes recommendations regarding appropriate planning for students who are in academic or other difficulty, and individualizes study plans for unusually well prepared students. Reviews ensure that students meet standards of performance set by the School and the social work profession in addition to providing a forum for discussion and resolution of difficulties. The goal of the Committee is to find a way to balance student needs and the integrity of the School's programs. A review may be initiated by faculty or students or may be triggered automatically as indicated below. The Committee meets as requests or demands indicate.

The *Student Progression Committee* should be distinguished from other levels of review as outlined in this document. Concerns brought to the *Student Progression Committee* are related to the student's successful progress through the BSW or MSW Programs. The focus of the Committee's work shall be on the student and her or his learning needs. The *Student Progression Committee* cannot be a forum to resolve interpersonal student/faculty conflicts, grading or evaluation disputes, or perceived discrimination or sexual harassment.

Any difficulties with student/faculty relations must be resolved through the conflict resolution process or the formal complaint procedures as explained in other parts of this document.

A Level Three Review involves the members of the *Student Progression Committee*, the student, and faculty or field education faculty who have had direct experience with the student in classroom or field. Generally, a *Student Progression Committee* meeting is called when problematic student patterns are identified or when the educational issues warrant formal consultation among faculty and the student. A *Student Progression Committee* meeting is often conducted when concerns have not been resolved in prior reviews; when issues relate to a student not meeting the criteria for academic performance (often involving professional or ethical behaviors); or when the student is being considered for withdrawal or discontinuance in the BSW or MSW Program. Level One and Two Reviews need not occur in order to proceed to a Level Three Review.

Procedures for *Student Progression Committee* Review and Meeting

A *Student Progression Committee* meeting is required under the following circumstances:

- for BSW students who have not attained a B- average in the first two courses in the major needed to enter Generalist Practice I or who have not attained a B- average in the five courses needed to enter field education;
- for BSW students who have taken a required course in the major two times without achieving a grade of C- or better;
- for BSW students who have received two “Incompletes” in social work courses in one semester;
- for Advanced Standing MSW students who have received a C in an academic course other than field education;
- for General Study Plan MSW students who have received a second grade of C in an academic course other than field education;
- for all students involved in any instance of alleged plagiarism or other alleged ethical violations.

Subject to the Chairperson’s discretion and discussion with relevant faculty, a *Student Progression Committee* meeting may be convened for reasons other than those listed above. In addition, any student who is asked to leave the School may request a *Student Progression Committee* meeting to review her or his situation.

Any one of the following individuals may initiate a *Student Progression Committee* meeting:

- A student
- The student’s Academic Advisor
- One of the student’s current instructors
- The student’s Faculty Field Liaison.

The individual initiating the *Student Progression Committee* Meeting must submit to the Chairperson a written statement regarding the current educational issues and prior attempts to resolve them. In advance of the Committee’s meeting, the Chairperson will request additional written summaries pertinent to the student’s educational progress from relevant faculty. Also in advance of the meeting, the Chairperson distributes all written materials to standing members of the Committee, the student’s Academic Advisor (who attends the meeting), and the student who is the subject of the meeting. While the student is free to share written materials with others, the materials are considered confidential to other individuals involved.

Students may solicit written materials (letters of support, grades, etc.) from faculty not formally involved in the *Student Progression Committee* meeting. Students may also invite one guest to the meeting but that guest will not be allowed to participate in the Committee’s review or recommendation process. All members attending may participate in the discussion of the information contained in the reports to clarify the issues and best address the student’s educational progress.

The student and any guest are excused while the Committee determines specific recommendations. The Chairperson will meet with the student immediately following the Committee's deliberations and delineate the Committee's recommendations. A written copy of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations is prepared by the Chairperson, posted by "certified, return receipt" mail, and sent, if at all possible, within five working days of the Committee's meeting. The letter will be sent to the most recent address on record at the School.

By way of examples, the recommendations from the *Student Progression Committee* may include one or more of the following actions:

- *Recommend student's continuation in the relevant program with no conditions.*
In these situations, the concern has been addressed and no further action by the student or program is required.
- *Establish formal conditions for the student's continuance in the program.*
In these situations, specific conditions must be met in order for the student to continue her or his progress through the social work program. Action may include establishing goals, a plan, a timeline, and appropriate monitoring; providing mentoring and support; referring the student to counseling and/or advising or supportive services; allowing the student to follow a reduced course load or delay entry to the field practicum; change their academic plan or, in the case of the MSW program, recommend a change in study plan or withdrawal from a particular course.
- *Counsel the student to change majors/degree programs or withdraw from the relevant program*
In some situations, the Committee may recommend that a student delay or no longer continue her or his social work education. For example, the Committee may counsel a BSW student to voluntarily change majors or degree program. If a voluntary change does not occur, an undergraduate student may be prevented from assignment to a field placement, thereby eliminating the chance that the student will be able to finish the BSW program.

In any Level Three Review, there must be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as well as verification that these concerns have been discussed with the student and attempted to be ameliorated, where appropriate. In most instances, a Level Three Review is sufficient to deal with student performance and is the last decision-making step in the review process at the School of Social Work. If the student believes that a violation of academic regulations has occurred prior to or during the *Student Progression Committee's* meeting and/or process, she or he may file a formal complaint at any time (See Formal Complaint Procedures 4.1.)

If a student wishes to appeal the *Student Progression Committee's* recommendations, he or she must do so in writing within ten working days of receipt of above letter from the Chairperson. The student's letter should be addressed to the Director of the School of Social Work and delineate areas of disagreement or concern. The School's Director will have access to all materials pertinent to the *Student Progression Committee's* recommendations and may or may not meet with a student who presents an appeal. In any case, the Director will respond to the student's appeal in writing within ten working days of receiving a written appeal. The response is posted "certified, return receipt" to the most recent address on record at the School.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the School's Director, the student may address the issue with the Dean of the Schools of Human Services (for undergraduates); the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate Education Council (for graduate students); the Vice President for Academic Affairs; and ultimately the President of the College. It should be noted that the lines of appeal outside the School of Social Work include the same College personnel involved in responses to students' formal complaints.

4.0 Formal Complaints

Students enrolled in the School of Social Work have the right to file formal complaints against a faculty member, or the School of Social Work per se, when they believe that a violation of an academic regulation has occurred. This policy includes, but is not limited to, a student's challenge of a course or field education grade or evaluation. An "academic regulation" refers to a formal, published policy of the College or the School of Social Work. In addition to the present document (*Professional Standards for Social Work Education*), such regulations include standards or procedures for grading or evaluating students as published in a course syllabus, the School's *Student Handbook*, or field education manuals as well as the written documentation of any meetings or hearings as outlined in Section 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 above.

Resolution of a formal complaint regarding an academic regulation rests solely with the administration of the School of Social Work or College and may not involve any other faculty member.

Students also have the right to file formal complaints against a faculty member under the College's *Discrimination Complaint Procedures* or, in the case of sexual harassment, the College's *Institutional Complaint Procedures*. In order to protect students' rights in these circumstances, students should not address these issues at the School of Social Work but rather immediately consult the College's *Office of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity*.

Students are assured freedom from reprisals for bringing a formal complaint against a faculty member either in the School of Social Work itself or through the *Office of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity*.

4.1 Procedures for Handling Formal Complaints

Prior to filing a formal complaint, the student is encouraged to complete all the informal conflict resolution processes including meeting with the professor and participating in mediation with the appropriate administrator as noted in Section 3.2.

In order to file a formal complaint, the student must submit a written and signed statement, outlining the complaint and specifying the academic regulation the student believes was violated, **within 30 days of the alleged violation**. In complaints regarding grades, the 30-day period commences at the point in time that the grade was recorded and available to the student through the College Registrar's Office; in the case of a Field Education evaluation, the 30-day period commences at the point in time that the evaluation was reviewed with the student.

The student's formal complaint statement should also specify what remedy would be regarded as satisfactory in order to resolve the complaint. Formal complaints involving full-time faculty members are addressed to the Chairperson and formal complaints involving an adjunct teaching in the MSW Program are addressed to the MSW Program Coordinator. The School's current *Student Handbook* lists the names of all full-time faculty members and administrators. The Chairperson or, as relevant, the MSW Program Coordinator, will confer with the faculty member who is the object of the complaint and other appropriate parties. He or she will rule on whether a violation of an academic regulation has occurred, whether the proposed remedy has merit, and communicate her or his decision to the student and the faculty member in writing within three weeks of receiving the complaint. All communications between students and administrators regarding complaints must be in writing.

The student who wishes to appeal the ruling on a formal complaint, must do so in writing to the School's Director **within three weeks** of receiving the Chairperson or MSW Program's Coordinator's ruling. The Director will respond within three weeks of receipt of the appeal. Subsequent appeals are made to the Dean

of the Schools of Human Services (for undergraduates); the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate Education Council (for graduate students); the Vice President for Academic Affairs; and ultimately to the President of the College. **MSW students should note that appeals to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate Education Council must be filed within two weeks of exhausting all processes available at the School of Social Work.**

At any point in a formal complaint process, faculty may avail themselves of the protections available to them in the relevant faculty contracts.