

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA - KEARNEY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW
Guidelines for Retention and Termination**

Social work education serves the function of assuring that competent persons enter the social work profession, and UNK's Department of Social Work is committed to ensuring that students from our program are well-suited for the professional demands, roles, and responsibilities of social workers. Consequently, at times social work faculty may find it necessary to assess or reassess a student's motivation and/or suitability for a career in social work, and thus for continuation in the program. To fulfill this obligation, the social work faculty has defined herein the policies and procedures that govern how issues of student continuation in and termination from the Social Work Program are handled when a concern is raised about a student's performance. The Department of Social Work at the University of Nebraska at Kearney declares its commitment to equal educational opportunities that respect the diversity of all people. The Department shall not discriminate against anyone based on upon age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

Given the nature and scope of professional social work practice, academic performance standards, as defined in the program's Academic Performance Standards for Admission, Retention, and Graduation, are comprehensive. Students are introduced to these standards when they first enter the program and their student file is established. They are provided with a copy of the Academic Performance Standards.

Below is an illustrative but not exhaustive list of problems that might result in an Academic Performance Review, based on the program's Academic Performance Standards.

Students are seen as violating the Social Work Program's Academic Performance Standards and might be subject to performance review when they

- ◆ fail to demonstrate professional integrity in meeting the objectives of the social work program and in fulfilling all program requirements.
- ◆ perform at levels of C- and below in course and/or field work
- ◆ breach the standards for academic conduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, the giving or falsifying of any academic documents or materials, cheating, and the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in tests, examinations, or other assigned school work.
- ◆ are excessively absent from class, as defined in the instructor's syllabus.
- ◆ are consistently irresponsible in meeting classroom and program requirements; for example, they are involved in a high frequency of the following: tardiness and absences, absences on exam days, assignments are turned in late, required field experiences or group meetings to prepare for group projects are missed.
- ◆ do not meet the grade-point requirements that have been established at different points in the program.

Students must have a 2.50 overall GPA, earn a B or better in SOWK 170, and satisfactorily complete the volunteer experience in SOWK 172 in order to gain formal admittance into the program as a social work major. In order to enter field placement during the senior year, students must meet the same GPA requirements as for admission to the program and, additionally, must successfully complete all required social work (SOWK) courses with a C or better. Students may repeat only two required social work courses in which they received a grade of C- or below, and students who earn a grade of C- and below in the senior field placement may NOT repeat the course.

- ◆ continue to reject social work values as they proceed through the program or who do not comply with the *NASW Code of Ethics*.
- ◆ fail to engage in ethical behavior in the community commensurate with the professional role.
- ◆ are found to be in serious violation of the UNK Student Code of Conduct.
- ◆ are convicted of a violent crime or other felony.
- ◆ are under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the classroom or field settings, which causes them to function in an impaired manner, exhibit inappropriate behavior, or demonstrate negligence or unprofessional conduct, as defined in the *NASW Code of Ethics*.
- ◆ violate UNK's Drug-Free Campus/Workplace Policy,
- ◆ are unable to pass a drug screen, as required by the program or the field practicum.
- ◆ behave in ways that are inappropriate to the field of social work, as defined in the *NASW Code of Ethics* or Social Work Program's Academic Performance Standards
- ◆ are unable to demonstrate willingness to grow toward professionalism by responsibly and satisfactorily reconciling differences between personal and professional values/ethics in order to practice in an ethical and a professional manner, as required by the *NASW Code of Ethics*..
- ◆ interact inappropriately or ineffectively with faculty, staff, peers, field instructors, or in other collegial relationships

Composition of the Committee

The Performance Review Committee will be a committee of the whole Admissions Committee (excluding student members). The Admission Committee Chair will serve as chair of the committee.

Responsibility of the Committee

The Performance Review Committee will be concerned with problematic performance situations. Each student has the responsibility for discussing academic performance

difficulties with his/her instructors, faculty field liaison, and advisor, as appropriate to the situation. The committee chair shall see that all necessary information is compiled and available for committee use in deliberations.

Roles of Committee Chair and Complainant(s)

The committee chair is responsible for convening the committee, informing the student in writing that a complaint has come forward, gathering information, recording the review process, and communicating information to the student regarding committee action and decisions. The complainant is viewed as the person(s) most knowledgeable about the situation under review and is therefore responsible for presenting pertinent information on the nature of and facts about the problem under review.

Initiating a Performance Review

Any faculty member or field instructor who has a special concern about any aspect of a student's performance may bring the concern before the Performance Review Committee. The concern must be forwarded in writing by the complainant to the Program Director who chairs the committee. A student who has a concern about another student may bring that concern to the Program Director. If the Program Director initiates a complaint against a student or there is another conflict of interest, another faculty member will be designated as chair of the committee.

Student Privacy and Confidentiality

All procedures relating to the performance review shall be carried out in a manner that will protect the student's right to privacy consistent with federal and state privacy law. Members of the committee and all other persons who appear at the review meeting are expected to observe the confidential nature of the information made available to them, as well as any discussion held during the meeting. Actions and recommendations of the committee are to be confidential and shared only with those persons involved with the student in an educational capacity or University personnel on a need-to-know basis.

The faculty operates under the professional concept of a "circle of confidentiality," which means that departmental personnel and field instructors have a right and an obligation to exchange information on students as this impacts the operation of any part of the program, the integrity of the program in meeting its goals and objectives, the performance status of a student in the program, and the safety and well-being of any UNK personnel, other students, or field agency personnel.

Procedures and Process

A review meeting should be scheduled soon as possible following the emergence of a concern or complaint, and the chair shall notify the student, the complainant, and the committee of the meeting time and place, as well as the nature of the problem(s) to be considered by the committee.

Attendance at the review meeting will be governed as follows.

- 1) The student whose performance will be reviewed is expected to attend the performance review meeting. However, if the student has been contacted but refuses to attend, the review will be conducted in his/her absence. Prior to the meeting date, the student is responsible for contacting the chair to

confirm his/her intent to attend the meeting. The student may remain in the meeting until the point at which the committee begins its deliberations.

- 2) The student may invite another student or staff person from within the institution to attend the Performance Review Committee meeting, and it is the student's responsibility to notify the chair of the committee ahead of time regarding who is being invited to attend.
- 3) Other persons who have significant knowledge of the problem or of the student's academic performance also may be invited by either the student or the committee chair. The chair may invite additional administrative resources from within the institution, as appropriate.
- 4) The chair has the authority to limit the number of people who will be attending the review.

In all cases, the department shall insure the Student's Due Process, which requires the following:

- 1) The student shall be advised of the time and place of the hearing.
- 2) The student shall be advised of the breach of regulations of which she/he is charged.
- 3) The student shall be advised of the following rights:
 - a. The right to present his or her case.
 - b. The right to be accompanied by an advisor.
 - c. The right to call witnesses in his or her behalf.
 - d. The right to confront witnesses against him or her.
- 4) The student shall be advised of the method of appeal.

Meeting Agenda

- 1) Fact Finding
 - a. Presentation of facts leading to the performance review (instructor bringing concern, chair)
 - b. Presentation of additional facts or clarification of facts related to investigation (student; others)
 - c. Summation of Facts (chair)
- 2) Deliberation and Recommendation—Only the committee members, as well as additional administrative resources from within the institution, shall be present for this part of the meeting.

Recommendations of or actions taken by the committee shall be forwarded in writing to the student in a prompt and reasonable time period following the meeting of the committee. See *"Possible Outcomes of Performance Review,"* below, for illustrative recommendations.

The chair will keep copies of all materials prepared for the committee in advance of the meeting and generated by the committee during the meeting. A copy of the letter outlining the committee's recommendations and actions will be placed in the student's file that is maintained in the social work department.

The student may put in writing his or her opinions about or reactions to the review process and/or the committee's recommendations/actions. This written response should be sent to the chair of the committee, who will place a copy in the student's file.

Possible Outcomes of Performance Review

The following are some possible outcomes of a performance review, applied as appropriate to the severity of the offense. This list is to be seen as illustrative rather than exhaustive.

- Mutually agreed upon counseling
- Mandatory participation in, and satisfactory completion of, an alcohol or drug rehabilitation program,
- Mandated sobriety while completing all degree requirements and drug/alcohol testing while in the program
- Authorization to release all information and records related to treatment, including test results of blood/urine samples for alcohol and drugs
- Responsibility for payment of any required alcohol and drug screens
- A written performance plan
- Required human service activity
- Extra coursework or educational experiences
- A departmental probationary period during which specified criteria must be met
- Referral to a college Disciplinary Committee
- Suspension or expulsion from the program

Appeal

The student has the right to appeal the committee's decision within 10 days of being notified of the decision. Since an Academic Performance Review is not a student disciplinary hearing, the level of appeal shall be to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.