

STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Skidmore College Social Work Program

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

1.0

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Performance in Skidmore College's BSW Program

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 Social Work Program evaluates the academic performance of its students in four general areas: Basic Abilities to Acquire Professional Skills; Mental and Emotional Abilities; Professional Performance Skills; 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.

1.1

Basic Abilities Necessary to Acquire Professional Skills

1.1.1 Communication Skills

Demonstrates sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings.

- a) Written: Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling, and applies appropriate writing style, including American Psychological Association (APA) referencing, appropriate source citation, and documentation. Demonstrates sufficient skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and to complete adequately all written assignments, as specified by faculty.
- b) Oral: Communicates effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates sufficient skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to complete adequately all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty.

1.1.2 Interpersonal Skills

Demonstrates the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, clients, and professionals and to fulfill the ethical obligations of the profession. These include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, and demonstration of respect for and consideration of others. Takes appropriate responsibility for own actions and considers the impact of these actions on others.

1.1.3 Cognitive Skills

Exhibits sufficient knowledge of social work and clarity of thinking to process information and apply it to appropriate situations in classroom and field. 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. Exhibits ability to conceptualize and integrate knowledge and apply the knowledge to professional practice.

1.1.4 Physical Skills

Exhibits sufficient motor and sensory abilities to attend and practice in class and practicum placement, with or without accommodations. (See section on Accommodations for Disabilities for clarification.)

1.2

Emotional and Mental Abilities Necessary for Performance in the Program and Professional Practice

1.2.1 Stress Management

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

1.2.2 Emotional and Mental Capacities

Uses sound judgment. Seeks and effectively uses help for medical and emotional problems that interfere with scholastic and professional performance. Engages in counseling or seeks out support and help if personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties do any of the following:

- a) Compromise scholastic and other performance,
- b) 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 Code of Ethics by the National Association of Social Workers.

1.3

Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice

1.3.1 Professional Commitment

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. Demonstrates commitment to the essential values of social work that includes the respect for the dignity and worth of every individual and his/her right to a just share of society's resources (social justice).

1.3.2 Professional Behavior

Exhibits behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, professional ethical standards, and societal laws in classroom, field, and community. Appearance, dress, and general demeanor reflect a professional manner. Shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, 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.

Works effectively with others, regardless of level of authority. Advocates for him/herself in an appropriate and responsible manner and uses proper channels for conflict resolution. Shows a willingness to receive and accept feedback and supervision in a positive manner, as well as use such feedback to enhance professional development.

1.3.3 Self Awareness

Exhibits knowledge of how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and past experiences affect thinking, behavior, and relationships. Accurately assesses one's own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Shows awareness of self and how one is perceived by others. Reflects on one's own limitations as they relate to professional capacities. Is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes in working with clients and other professionals.

1.3.4 Ethical Obligations

Current behavior and classroom performance demonstrates adherence to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional practice, noted in the NASW Code of Ethics. Ethical behaviors include:

- a) Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.
- b) No history of charges and/or convictions of an offense that is contrary to professional practice.
- c) Systematic evaluation of clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way. Suspension of personal biases during interactions with others.
- d) Comprehension of another individual's way of life and values. Empathetic communication and support of the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.
- e) Appreciation of the value of diversity. Effective and nonjudgmental relation to and work with others who are different from oneself. 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 values system. No imposition of personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on clients.
- f) Demonstration of respect for the rights of others. Commitment to clients' rights to freedom of choice and self-determination.
- g) Maintenance of confidentiality as it relates to human service, classroom activities, volunteer experience, and field placement.
- h) Demonstration of honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications; doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.

- i) Demonstration of clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. Does not sexually harass others; make verbal or physical threats; become involved in sexual relationships with clients, supervisors, or faculty; abuse others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways; or participate in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.

1.4

Scholastic Performance

Students are considered to be in academic difficulty if their GPA drops below 2.25. Students will be advised to withdraw from the Social Work Program if their grade point average falls below 2.0 overall or 2.5 in major. Failure to maintain a passing grade in Field Practicum (SW 382) will result in dismissal. A student who receives less than a C in a required Social Work course can be barred from enrolling in SW 382.

Students must complete the prerequisites outlined in their appropriate courses of study, as outlined in the course catalog. Students may not have grade of incomplete in any prerequisites if they are to continue course work.

1.5

Sources of Data for Academic Performance Criteria

Verification regarding meeting academic performance criteria in the Social Work Program may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- a) Feedback, formal evaluation forms, or reference letters from faculty, work supervisors, or supervisors of volunteer human service activity or other field experiences
- b) Feedback and/or formal evaluations from agency-based field instructors
- c) Observation of classroom, volunteers, or field experiences
- d) Performance in oral and written assignments, examinations, social work skills labs, or other appropriate coursework
- e) Student personal statements or self-assessments
- f) Interviews with faculty or other professionals
- g) Taped interview situations (audio or video)
- h) Feedback from students, staff, college, helping professionals, or community
- i) Signed confidentiality statements, scholastic honesty statements, contract to adhere to NASW Code of Ethics or the Standards, other contracts between the college and the student.

1.6

Accommodations for Disabilities

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

Any otherwise qualified student with a protected disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must notify the Dean of Studies Office and provide documentation as needed. The Dean of Studies Office makes recommendations for accommodations. The Social Work Program will review academic performance criteria in light of individual student circumstances to explore issues of appropriateness and accommodation. An initial assessment, subsequent plan, use of outside experts (including the Dean of Studies Office), and periodic checks between the Social Work Program and the students are appropriate courses of action in making accommodations.

2.0 Policies and Procedures for Review of Academic Performance and Academic Grievances

2.1 Program Standards Acceptance

When admitted to the major, students will sign a form indicating they have read, understand, and are willing to comply with the Program Standards, NASW Code of Ethics, and the policies presented in Skidmore College's Social Work Program Student Manual.

2.2 Level 1 Interview

Students who have difficulty in complying with the Standards will be required to engage in a Level 1 Interview. Faculty who identify potential or actual social work majors who are having difficulties in compliance with Program Standards, NASW Code of Ethics, or Skidmore College's Social Work Program Student Manual policies will be asked to participate in an interview to discuss relevant issues. The interview is collaborative in nature and will focus on the student's coping strengths and issues related to non-compliance. Students are expected to actively collaborate in the development of strategies to remedy the problem and ways to engage in scholastic, professional, and personal growth in the problem solving process. Part of the problem-solving process may include: a written plan, follow-up meetings with faculty, the student, and other involved parties, or the collection of other pertinent data that demonstrates movement towards agreed upon scholastic, personal, or professional growth goals. Participating faculty will document a student's participation in a Level 1 Interview. Students will be asked to sign the documentation indicating their participation in a Level 1 interview. That documentation will become part of the student's Social Work Program file.

2.3 Level 2 Interview

Students who do not show progress toward the resolution of the issues identified in the Level 1 Interview will be asked to participate in a Level 2 Interview. Level 2 Interview participants include the Director of the Social Work Program, the other members of the Social Work faculty, and the student. The student may choose to invite the Chair of the

Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. The goal of the Level 2 Interview is to help the student identify issues that are impeding his/her progress toward the solutions identified during the Level 1 Interview and to further problem-solve to ensure compliance with the Standards, NASW Code of Ethics, and Skidmore College's Social Work Program Policies Manual. At Level 2, faculty may determine that the student is willing to and capable of participating in the change process OR that the student should discontinue the participation in the Social Work major. As with a Level 1 Interview, students are expected to actively collaborate in the problem-solving process. Part of the problem solving process may include: a written plan; follow-up meetings with faculty, the student, and other involved parties; and/or the collection of other pertinent data that demonstrates movement towards agreed upon scholastic, personal, or professional growth goals. Participating faculty will document a student's participation in a Level 2 Interview. Students will be asked to sign the documentation indicating their participation in a Level 2 interview. That documentation will become part of the student's Social Work Program file.

2.4 Grievance Procedure

At any time during the Level 1 or Level 2 Interview process, students have the option to invoke the College's Grievance procedures.

These Standards were adapted with permission from The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.