

Student Performance Policy



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1.0 INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The University of Oklahoma's Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work has established educational standards and expectations necessary for students to develop into skilled social work professionals. This document outlines the expectations for student success, specifically tailored to the requirements of professional practice. The School emphasizes both professionalism and academic achievement, aligning with the demands of the social work profession. These standards ensure clarity, underscore the School's commitment to fostering competent professionals and offer guidance for addressing performance issues.

This policy applies throughout students' journey from application to graduation. Admitted students must adhere to the Student Performance Policy and exhibit 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. Students must demonstrate commitment to the essential values of social work including respect for the strengths, dignity and worth of every individual and their rights to self-determination and a just share of society's resources (social and economic justice); and demonstrate active engagement with the learning process <https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics>

Just as students are expected to commit to high standards of professionalism and integrity, the School of Social Work equally commits to supporting and fostering students' growth, development, and success throughout their educational experience. The School upholds freedom of expression, maintains a commitment to due process, and consistently strives to ensure that students are treated with fairness and equity in all aspects of their academic and professional journey.

1.1 DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES

The University of Oklahoma operates on multiple institutional levels for reviewing student conduct including the University Level, College Level, and Department/School Level. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures that govern their conduct at different stages or levels.

University Level

Students are familiar with and abide by the University of Oklahoma's policies and procedures pertaining to student conduct - available at: <http://www.ou.edu/studentconduct/policies.html>

Graduate College Level

Graduate students are familiar with and abide by the University of Oklahoma's Graduate Student Handbook - available at: http://www.ou.edu/content/gradweb/student_resources.html

Graduate students are familiar with and abide by the University of Oklahoma's Graduate College Bulletin http://www.ou.edu/gradweb/student_resources.html

Department Level

Students are familiar with and abide by the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics – available at <https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics>

Graduate students are familiar with and abide by the Anne and Henry Zarrow Master of Social Work Handbook - available at <http://www.ou.edu/content/cas/socialwork/current-students/policies-procedures.html>

Undergraduate Students are familiar with and abide by the Anne and Henry Zarrow Master of Social Work Undergraduate Handbook - available at <http://socialwork.ou.edu/policies-and-procedures>

Students are familiar with and abide by field education policies and guidelines set forth in the Anne & Henry Zarrow School of Social Work Practicum Manual available at: <http://www.ou.edu/content/cas/socialwork/current-students/policies-procedures.html>

2.0 STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION CRITERIA

To fulfill the responsibility of offering quality professional education and ensuring graduates are proficient in diverse professional contexts, the School of Social Work assesses student performance in four main areas:

- Abilities Required to Acquire and Develop Professional Skills
- Mental and Emotional Abilities and Aptitudes
- Professional Performance Skills
- Academic Performance

Satisfying the criteria for academic achievement alone does not guarantee continued enrollment in the program. Both professional conduct and academic performance contribute to meeting academic standards.

Professional Skills:

To ensure students become effective social workers, the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work emphasizes the development of key skills. These skills are crucial for academic success and competent practice in the field. Addressing performance issues proactively involves understanding and meeting these professional standards.

Communication Skills:

- **Written:** Students must use correct grammar and spelling, follow APA writing style, and cite sources appropriately. Effective written communication is essential for understanding course content and completing assignments. Any use of AI must align with academic integrity. Students remain accountable for the originality, accuracy, and ethical standards of their work.
- **Oral:** Clear and sensitive communication with peers, faculty, clients, and other professionals is crucial. Students should be able to express ideas and listen actively, and demonstrate willingness and an ability to listen to others
- **Digital:** Understanding the use of technology in social work is necessary. Students should be knowledgeable and competent in using digital tools while adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics.

Interpersonal Skills:

Students must relate effectively with others. This includes being open to feedback, taking responsibility for actions, and considering their impact on others. Professional behavior involves following the School's administrative structure when addressing conflicts and abiding by the NASW Code of Ethics.

Cognitive Skills:

A foundational knowledge of social work, social, behavioral, and biological sciences is essential. Students must demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge in classroom and practicum settings. Those with cognitive or learning disabilities should seek assistance through the University of Oklahoma Accessibility and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

Physical Skills:

Students must possess the motor and sensory skills needed to participate in classes and practicum placements. Accommodation for physical disabilities are available through the ADRC, and students should coordinate these needs through the proper channels. Accommodation based on disability may only be approved through ADRC, not an individual instructor or department.

Emotional & Mental Abilities Necessary for Program Performance:

- **Stress Management Abilities:** Students need to manage life stressors effectively, utilize appropriate coping strategies, self-care, and supportive relationships, and monitor and self-regulate emotional reactivity and intensity.
- **Emotional and Mental Abilities:** Students must use rational judgment and seek help for medical or emotional issues that may affect their academic or professional performance or interfere with their professional judgement or behavior.

2.3.2 PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

Students will present themselves appropriately for their roles and settings during the educational experience. They will demonstrate responsible and accountable behavior by:

- Practicing within the scope of social work
- Respecting others
- Being punctual and dependable
- Prioritizing responsibilities
- Attending class and practicum regularly
- Reporting absences to instructors
- Meeting deadlines and completing assignments on time
- Displaying respectful interaction and behavior online
- Using computers and electronic devices appropriately

Students will work effectively and cooperatively with others, advocate for themselves through established conflict resolution channels, actively engage as learners, and use feedback and supervision to enhance their professional development.

2.3.3 SELF AWARENESS

Students will understand how values, beliefs, emotions, and experiences influence behavior and relationships. They will assess their strengths and limitations, be open to feedback, and be aware of how others perceive them. Students will set clear educational goals and adjust behavior as needed for effective work.

2.3.4 ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

The NASW Code of Ethics applies to the professional practice of social work and to academic and classroom experience. Behavior and classroom performance must show adherence to the ethical expectations of social work. Ethical behavioral expectations include but are not limited to:

- Comprehension of another individual's unique motivations, way of life and values in order to engage in a strengths-based manner, including clear communication and support of others as a basis for productive relationships.
- Systematic evaluation of situations in an unbiased, factual way, with a suspension of personal biases and personal impressions during interactions with others.
- Ability to relate in a nondiscriminatory manner with a variety of individuals regardless of personal opinions and beliefs, demonstration of respect for the rights of others.
- Maintenance of confidentiality as it relates to human services, classroom activities, and practicum.
- 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.
- If the student has a felony or misdemeanor conviction, they do not attempt to engage in social work practice/activities where that history could inhibit the ethical delivery of services.

2.3.5 PRACTICUM ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Through the practicum, the standards are linked to the well-being of clients served by students during their educational experience and after they graduate. The practicum is an academic experience that seeks to develop but also depends on the student's ability to interact competently and professionally with clients, supervisors, and colleagues. If, in the judgment of the School faculty, a student does not possess the basic skills or abilities (set forth in these standards) necessary to acquire and perform professional practice skills, the student will not be allowed to go forward with a practicum experience until those skills or abilities have been developed. In these situations, students will be expected to demonstrate that they have reflected upon their deficits, achieved insight into the nature of their difficulties and integrated this insight into a workable plan to meet basic requirements before they will be allowed to begin practicum. If, in the faculty's professional judgment, a student cannot design a workable plan to meet these basic requirements, they may recommend disenrollment from the program in accordance with applicable policy.

The practicum standards are directly tied to the well-being of clients served by students during their educational and professional journey. The practicum aims to foster the development of students' ability to interact competently and professionally with clients, supervisors, and colleagues. If faculty determine that a student needs to strengthen basic skills or abilities required for professional practice. Practicum may be suspended or delayed while a student is supported in developing these competencies through the performance review process. If a student requires further assistance in creating a plan to meet these standards, faculty may recommend additional support or guidance to ensure readiness for the practicum experience.

2.4 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2.4.1 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

- Students must achieve a Combined-Retention GPA of 2.50 in the social work major, and an overall OU Retention GPA of 2.50 to graduate. They must also earn a minimum grade of "C" in pre-requisite and courses credited to the social work major.
- Students who earn a grade of "D" or "F" in sequenced courses (e.g., Research I) may not enroll in the subsequent course in the sequence until a grade of "C" is earned in its pre-requisite. They may, however, continue with courses that do not have a prerequisite requirement with the approval of their Undergraduate Program Director. Students should be advised that this may delay their graduation by one year or more. Case by case expectations are reviewed by the Undergraduate Program Director.
- Students who earn a "U" (unsatisfactory) or an "I" (incomplete) in SWK 4313 (Practicum Seminar I) and/or SWK 4315 (Practicum I) may not enroll in SWK 4323 (Practicum Seminar II) and SWK 4325 (Practicum II) until they earn a satisfactory grade in both prerequisites.
- No independent study, directed reading, or honors course may be substituted for credit in required social work courses.

- At the end of each semester, the Undergraduate Program Director will be apprised of any student earning a “D” or “F” in social work courses. Students may be advised to withdraw from the program if their grade point average falls below a Combined-Retention GPA of 2.0.

2.4.2 GRADUATE STUDENTS

- An overall GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Falling below a 3.0 GPA for a second time may result in dismissal from the program.
- A progress review is possible, and a Graduate College progress contract is initiated if a student’s GPA falls below a 3.0. Students and the graduate programs’ Liaisons are notified by the graduate college when this occurs.
- A student admitted conditionally or retained with conditions of probation from the Graduate College is terminated from the program if those conditions are not met.
- OU Graduate College policy allows students to take the comprehensive exam (Practicum IV) a maximum of two times (and only once in any semester). Students who fail their comprehensive exam two times fail the program. See the full comprehensive exam policy listed in the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work Graduate Program Manual.
- To receive a passing grade in practicum, all practice competencies must be demonstrated through practice behaviors set forth in the Field Practicum Contract. Failure to maintain a satisfactory grade in practicum may result in program dismissal.
- Students are bound by the University of Oklahoma policy on academic retention, probation and suspension regulations as outlined here:
http://www.ou.edu/enrollment/policies/grading_policies.html

3.0 STUDENT PERFORMANCE CONCERNS

Performance is assessed utilizing program academic standards throughout the school career of all social work students. It is important that students receive feedback and clear direction when concerns are raised about performance, or when there is concern about students’ well-being. When concerns emerge, the school will initiate a review of the concern(s) in question.

Three types of review can occur at the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work.

- Support Meeting
- Performance Review
- Critical Performance Review

The type of review depends upon the type of concern. Each type of meeting is intended to provide structured, supportive frameworks to help students address performance issues and succeed in their academic and professional development. By fostering open communication and collaboration, these processes aim to create a positive and effective path for student improvement and success.

Information Sources Used to Assess Academic and Professional Performance

Information about students' meeting academic performance criteria in the School of Social Work may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Feedback or reference letters from faculty, work supervisors, or supervisors of practicum experiences
- Feedback from site-based field instructors and preceptors, faculty liaisons, practicum unit coordinators, CWPEP staff, practicum agency administrators, employers of employment-based practicum students
- Observation of classroom, organized student activities and practicum behaviors
- Performance in oral and written assignments, examinations, social work skills labs, practicum seminars or other coursework.
- Student personal statements or self-assessments
- Interviews with faculty, practicum sites or allied professionals
- Taped interview situations (audio or video)
- Feedback from students, staff, university (OU or other colleges and universities), helping professionals, or community
- Feedback from faculty in other social work programs that the student may have attended

3.2 STUDENT REVIEW PROCEDURES

When student performance concerns are identified, a review is initiated. There are three types of Review: a Support Meeting, a Performance Review, and a Critical Performance Review. Each is defined below as well as the policies and procedures that regulate them.

At any stage of a review process, it may become necessary for the faculty, program director, or the Director/Associate Director to consult with other University members to help address concerns. The University may consult a variety of resources to help make sure that students are supported in their academic journey including the Provost's office, Student Affairs, and the Accessibility & Disability Resources Center.

Information Sharing

Students are required to speak on their own behalf during these meetings. If legal representation or other individuals plan to attend, advance notice of 5 business days must be provided. Faculty, administrators, staff, and field instructors will share relevant information with and about students to address concerns and facilitate problem-solving. Information disclosed during meetings with faculty, school administrators, staff, field instructors, and field liaisons will not remain confidential if it raises concerns about the student's professional or academic performance. All information sharing will comply with FERPA standards, ensuring that only necessary and relevant information is disclosed.

3.2.1 SUPPORT MEETING

Purpose

A support meeting is designed to address minor student performance concerns that may require additional support or referral. This process is collaborative, aiming to build upon the student's strengths and connect them to resources that can support their improvement.

Process

A support meeting can be called by any faculty member who identifies a performance concern. As part of

routine instructional practices and ongoing feedback, the faculty member will meet with the student to discuss the issue in detail. To document the discussion and any agreed-upon actions, the faculty member will then send a meeting summary email to both the student and the appropriate Program or Field Director.

Examples of Concerns Addressed by Support Meetings

- **Plagiarism (Unintentional or Citation Errors):** Plagiarism involving unintentional errors or misunderstanding of citation rules. This might include incorrect citation formats, incomplete references, insufficient citation of paraphrased material, or unintentional use of AI-generated content without proper attribution/ misunderstanding the guidelines for using AI tools.
- **Unprofessional Behavior:** Managing rude, demeaning, or unprofessional behavior in communication or interactions with peers, staff, faculty, or practicum staff.
- **Academic Performance:** Addressing low grades, missing or late assignments, or inconsistent attendance.
- **Personal Well-being:** Concerns about mental health, self-care, or stressful life events affecting academic performance or professional behavior.
- **Field Performance:** Issues such as absences, missing documentation, missed deadlines, or difficulty performing practicum activities to standard.

3.2.2 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

A Performance Review addresses moderate performance concerns that interfere with a student's capacity to meet program standards. The review is collaborative, focusing on addressing concerns, building on strengths, and identifying support mechanisms to help the student improve. Students are actively involved in identifying barriers and planning to utilize support mechanisms to improve performance.

When a performance concern requires review, the faculty member will initiate the process by contacting the appropriate Program Director or Field Director and the student to request a Performance Review. Additional participants may be included as needed based on the nature of the concerns. The Program Director will lead meetings related to academic concerns, while the Field Director or Field Coordinator will lead meetings involving field education matters.

Following the meeting, the leader will provide comprehensive documentation by sending a summary email to all participants. This summary will detail the key points discussed, outline a specific action plan for improvement, and establish clear expectations with associated deadlines. The email will also identify any necessary follow-up meetings, check-ins, and available resources to support the student's progress toward satisfactory performance.

Examples of Concerns Requiring Performance Review:

Examples

- **Plagiarism (Improper Paraphrasing or Self-Plagiarism):** Plagiarism that involves a significant misunderstanding or disregard for citation practices. This may include improper paraphrasing, using material from previous assignments without acknowledgment, paraphrasing the source material without sufficient originality or proper citation, or work includes a significant portion of AI-generated content that is improperly attributed or used in a way that goes beyond acceptable academic practices.

- **Concerns Issues Occurring in Multiple Settings or Contexts:** Unprofessional behavior or academic concerns that arise in repeatedly or in multiple academic or professional environments, conduct is not aligned with professional standards, and/or student struggles to adopt and demonstrate core social work principles and values.
- **Concerns About Practicum Readiness** Doubts about a student's preparedness for practicum experiences.
- **Field Performance:** Potential to fail the practicum because of inadequate performance, unsatisfactory grade or termination from practicum that can be addressed through a structured plan (in lieu of a Critical Performance Review)
- **Unresolved Issues:** Problems discussed in a previous support meeting that have not improved or have become more serious or lack of progress to resolve academic probation conditions.

3.2.3 CRITICAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Purpose

A Critical Performance Review addresses significant concerns about student performance or behavior that may jeopardize the student's continuation in the program. This highest level of review requires collaboration between the student, relevant faculty, and senior administration including the appropriate Program Director and the Director/Associate Director. While the primary goal is to develop an improvement plan for student success, this review may result in program dismissal if concerns cannot be adequately resolved.

Process

When a Critical Performance Review is needed, the lead administrative faculty will initiate the process by sending a detailed email to the student outlining the specific performance concerns requiring attention. This communication will also be shared with relevant faculty members as appropriate. Students have one week to provide a written response addressing the concerns and highlighting any relevant contributing factors. This response allows students to share their perspective before the formal review meeting.

Once the student's response is received, the lead administrative faculty will coordinate a meeting with all involved parties. During this meeting, participants will thoroughly discuss the concerns, assess the student's progress, and explore potential pathways forward. After the meeting, the lead administrative faculty will email a copy of the meeting summary to the student and all involved parties.

During the review, a student may be suspended from a practicum or not allowed to attend classes. Students may not accumulate practicum hours or course credit while suspended.

Student appeals: If student issue involves a matter for which the student or the University has initiated a separate University administrative process (e.g., grade appeal, academic integrity charge, EEO or Title 9 charge or investigation), the Critical Performance Review meeting is delayed until the charge/investigation is completed.

Examples

- **Severe Plagiarism (Blatant Copying or Ghostwriting):** Plagiarism involves blatant copying, submitting work that is not the student's own, any deliberate attempt to deceive or fabricating sources, or intentional use of AI to generate substantial parts or the entirety of the work.
- **Unresolved Performance Deficits:** Ongoing issues that were not resolved in previous reviews.

- **Consideration for Withdrawal or Dismissal:** Situations where a student is being considered for removal from the program.
- **Falsification of Documents:** Instances where a student has falsified documents related to a practicum placement or class assignment.
- **Serious Behavior Problems:** Reports of severe behavior issues in the classroom, practicum, or professional settings (e.g., hostile, intimidating, or threatening behavior, or legal incidents that impact the ability to practice social work).
- **Academic Dishonesty:** Acts of cheating, lying, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, or any behavior intended to give an unfair academic advantage (faculty must follow university guidelines).
- **Violation of NASW Code of Ethics:** Behavior that clearly and severely breaches the current NASW Code of Ethics.
- **University Policy Violations:** Breaches of any university policies as outlined in the OU Student Code of Conduct.
- **Criminal Acts:** Commission of a criminal act that conflicts with professional practice, whether occurring during the course of study or discovered after admission.
- **Practicum Facility Policy Violations:** Failure to adhere to the policies and regulations of a practicum facility.
- **Failure to Meet Performance Improvement Plan Requirements:** Not fulfilling the conditions outlined in a performance improvement plan.
- **Practicum Termination or Grade of "U":** Termination from a practicum or receiving a failing grade where student behavior raises concerns about their ability to safely interact with clients and others in a professional capacity.
- **Misrepresentation of self:** Utilization of the social work title or implication that one has a social work degree completed when they do not. Use of the letters associated with social work licensure when unlicensed or other misrepresentations of credentials, degrees, or affiliations.

Expectations and Outcomes for Critical Performance Review Meetings

Initial Critical Performance Review Meeting

In the Critical Performance Review meeting, the student will be asked to:

- Reflect upon performance concerns, identify contributing factors, and take responsibility for their part in the situation.
- Identify specific areas of performance improvement.
- Express ideas for a strategy to overcome these problems if allowed to continue in the program.
- Contribute to the development of a plan/strategy that realistically addresses the performance issues.

Meeting Follow-Up

The social work faculty will exercise academic judgment in determining the review outcomes. The student must demonstrate reasonable prospects of improved performance to remain in the program.

Faculty present at the meeting will submit a recommendation to the Director or Associate Director, including a review summary and proposed outcome of one of the following:

1. Continuation without conditions: The concern is addressed, and no further action by the student or program is required.
2. Continuation with formal conditions: Specific conditions must be met for the student to stay in the program. Expectations are clearly communicated to the student in writing and may include the student's proposal with or without modification.
3. Termination: In cases where the student cannot meet or sustain academic and professional standards. The student is provided with documentation regarding the specific reasons and any conditions under which they may reapply.

If the Director's decision is to endorse the recommendation of termination, a letter is written to the Dean with a copy to the student. The letter will describe the academic or professional standards violated and the outcomes of the review meeting with the student. If the Dean approves the recommendation, the student will be notified of disenrollment from the program and advised of the right to file an academic appeal. The Academic Appeals Board for the College will hear appeals of disenrollment made under the provisions of this policy.