

**The following policy is recommended to the MSW Committee and Faculty Senate for action in February, 2010 as a revision of the SPRAC.**

#### **A. MSW Policy on Student Continuation, Review and Dismissal**

All students are admitted to the MSW Program based on evidence in their admissions applications that they have the potential *academic ability and personal suitability* for completing the professional graduate social work program. Once admitted, all students in the MSW Program are expected to maintain the standards established by the School of Social Work and those held by the social work profession.

#### **Student Continuation**

##### **Academic Requirements**

*For continuation in and graduation from the program, students are required to:*

1. earn at least a “C” in each Social Work course;
2. maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in graduate Social Work courses;
3. have satisfactorily fulfilled any and all contracts for grades of Incomplete (see policy on Grades of Incomplete);
4. earn a grade of “Satisfactory” in any practicum course (S555, S651 & S652).

##### **Professional Requirements**

Students are expected to behave in a manner consistent with the *Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct Handbook*, the *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*, and other professional guidelines established in the Handbook. Refer to the section below that outlines some examples of conduct that violates professional and ethical standards.

#### **Ongoing Academic Student Performance Review**

At the end of each academic semester (December and May), at the end of each summer session (June and August), or at any time a delayed grade is submitted, the students’ advisors will review academic performance for adherence to the requirements listed above.

#### **Academic Probation**

The Program Director may place a student on academic probation if she/he violates any of the academic requirements above. The condition of probation for each requirement shall be:

1. If a student earns a grade lower than “C” in any social work course, she/he must repeat that course in timely fashion in order to progress in the program. A failing grade due to academic dishonesty is a distinct case and subject to automatic dismissal from the program.
2. If a student’s GPA falls below the required 3.0, she/he will have 12 additional credit hours of coursework to raise it to 3.0. The student must thereafter maintain a 3.0 GPA or be subject to automatic dismissal.
3. If a student receives a grade entry of Incomplete in any one semester, the advisor and Program Director will monitor the timely completion of the course. If the same student receives grades of Incomplete in subsequent semesters, the Program Director will place the student on academic probation and advise the student that she/he cannot progress in the program until all Incompletes are satisfied.
4. There is no probationary period or condition for a student who earns a failing grade in any practicum. If a student feels in jeopardy of not passing a practicum, she/he should seek guidance from her/his field liaison and advisor to remedy the situation.

### **Conduct that violates academic, professional and ethical standards**

The following list provides examples of academic and professional conduct that may subject a student to a performance review, probation, or dismissal:

1. Conduct that is not congruent with the values and ethics of the social work profession (e.g., NASW, NABSW, CSWE) and the academic code of conduct for students at Indiana University. This includes behavior in the student's field work and the classroom that is not appropriate or professional.
2. Behavior that interferes with the student's functioning and/or jeopardizes the welfare of those to whom the student has responsibility, such as clients and co-workers.
3. Failure to communicate effectively, both verbally and in written form, including interviewing skills and interpersonal skills which permit comfortable interaction with other people.
4. Failure to adhere to the School's field policies or practicum agency's policies and professional standards.
5. Failure to use sound judgment, both in work with clients and in regard to oneself, such as failure to seek professional help for physical or emotional problems which interfere with professional functioning.
6. Academic dishonesty, including cheating on examinations or plagiarism, which involves presenting the work of someone else as one's own. Plagiarism typically results in a failing grade that makes the student subject to automatic dismissal on academic grounds as well.
7. A request by a faculty member for a review due to student's poor course work performance or classroom behavior.

### **Procedures for Review of Academic and Professional Performance and Dismissal**

The MSW Program has established mechanisms to respond to requests for students' performance reviews. A request for a student performance review can be initiated at any time by a faculty member, advisor, field coordinator, field instructor or liaison, the student her/himself, or the Program Director. The request is made to the Program Director on the student's campus – IUPUI (including IPFW), IUE, IUSB, or IUN. The performance review is conceptualized as a mechanism to address as early as possible any developing problems with students' academic and/or professional performance.

Upon receiving the request, the Program Director will form a committee comprised of the individual/s making the request, the student and the student's advisor, at a minimum, and an additional faculty member if appropriate. The Program Director may decide to chair the committee. If deemed appropriate by the Program Director, the student may invite up to 2 guests to attend, but only those with direct information about the issue may speak. The committee determines what, if any, course of action could bring the student's performance into compliance with School and professional standards. In situations where such action is feasible and desirable, a contract will be created. The contract will set forth problems to be solved, actions to be taken to solve said problems, and a time period for completion of designated actions and re-evaluation of student performance. Consequences for non-performance also will be included in the contract. The advisor will then work with the student and other relevant parties.

If the student fails to fulfill the contract, or, if while working on the contract some serious impropriety or failing academic performance occurs, the Program Director may decide that the student cannot continue in the MSW program. Discontinuance can occur during any semester of enrollment in the MSW Program, including the last semester of enrollment. The Program Director will send by certified mail a written letter to the student indicating that she/he has been discontinued from the program for non-compliance with the contract and explain the due process procedures. Copies of the letter will be forwarded to the student's advisor and student file. Such notice will occur in sufficient time for the student to withdraw from classes in the subsequent semester.

In the case of academic probation, the Program Director is not required to convene a performance review committee for each student, but may review the progress of all probationary students with their advisors to decide if conditions are met. The Program Director will then inform students in writing of release from probation or dismissal.

The student must immediately meet with her/his advisor should she/he wish to discuss options for reinstatement (see Reinstatement Procedures below).

### **Reinstatement Procedures**

Within 15 working days following receipt of a letter of dismissal, the student who wishes reinstatement must petition the Program Director. The petition should be presented in writing and should address two major points. First, the student should identify extenuating factors, if any, which contributed to the reasons for dismissal. Second, the student should discuss the steps which she/he would take to alleviate the impact of those factors and to improve performance if permitted to continue in the program.

Upon receiving the student's petition, the Program Director will review the case, including consultation with appropriate faculty such as the student's advisor, and make a decision about whether the process for reinstatement will go forward. The Program Director controls the process and outcomes for all petitions for reinstatement. She/he may decide to readmit or utilize a performance review committee to assist in the decision if one had not been previously formed to address the student issue. If the Program Director accepts the petition, she/he will advise the student and advisor of the decision verbally and in writing and include a statement that the student must comply with all academic and professional requirements as a condition of reinstatement and no further opportunities for reinstatement will be considered. If the Program Director denies the petition, she/he will also advise the student of her/his right to petition for reconsideration by the Dean's Office.

### **Appeal Procedures at the Dean's Office Level**

Within 15 days of receiving a Program Director's decision to deny a petition for reinstatement, the student may send an appeal to the Dean's Office. The appeal is reviewed by the Dean or Associate Dean (as his designee). This Office is the final option for appeal within the School of Social Work.

In conducting a review of the case, the Dean or Associate Dean (as his designee) may decide to convene an Appeal Committee if more information is needed. This step is entirely at the discretion of the Dean or Associate Dean. The Appeal Committee will consist of at least three full-time faculty members who are not primary actors in the reason for the student's dismissal.

If an Appeal Committee is convened, the Chair of the Committee will inform all parties involved. The student will receive at least two week's notice by certified mail of its meeting date. The student will have the right to:

1. Present information on her/his behalf;
2. Have up to two additional guests present. The student should inform the Chair of the Committee in advance regarding the names of guests and the nature of information they bring. The Chair reserves the right to structure the hearing and the length of time each party can speak. Generally, only those guests with information relevant to the issue that led to the dismissal are invited to speak.

The student and student's guests may be present only for the information-giving portion of the meeting and must leave prior to deliberation by the Committee.

The student's advisor will meet with her/him prior to the hearing and, in the hearing, present comprehensive information concerning the student's overall academic/professional performance. To

prepare this background statement, the advisor shall secure performance information from classroom and field faculty who have taught the student. The advisor may ask questions at any time during the hearing, including during the committee's deliberations. The advisor may also recommend actions to resolve the performance problem. However, the advisor shall not have a vote in the proceedings.

The recommended actions of the Appeal Committee shall be forwarded in writing to the Dean's Office of the School of Social Work. Copies will be sent to the student, student's advisor, and placed in the student's file. The action by the Dean or Associate Dean (as his designee) is final.

### **Confidentiality**

In accordance with applicable requirements, all procedures must be carried out in a manner that assures protection of the student's right to privacy regarding information about her/his academic records, performance, or any of her/his personal affairs. All written documents prepared for dismissal or review will be placed in the student's permanent file. The student has the right to review all written information that is presented to either the Performance Review or the Appeal Committee.

Members of the committees are expected to maintain confidentiality with regard to all aspects of the process. Actions of the committee, the Director and the Dean are to remain confidential and are to be shared only with those persons involved with the student in an educational capacity.

### **B. Grade Appeal Policies and Procedures**

If a student believes that a course grade was improper and capricious, she/he must use the following steps to seek resolution of the matter:

1. The student must meet with the instructor of the course in an attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter is not resolved between the faculty member and the student, the student should discuss the issue with the Program Director on her/his campus. The Program Director will then consult the instructor to attempt a resolution. The Program Director may wish to meet with the student and faculty member separately or jointly. The Program Director will provide the student and the instructor of the outcome of this discussion in writing. If the Program Director is the instructor of the course in question, the student should proceed to discuss the grade issue with another Program Director, or with the Associate Dean.
3. If such a consultation does not result in a mutually agreeable solution, the student may submit a formal appeal to the Office of the Dean. The Associate Dean typically handles all student issues on behalf of the Office of the Dean. However, if the Associate Dean has already been involved in the grade issue because the instructor is a Program Director, the appeal will be handled by the Dean.
4. If the appeal is denied through the Office of the Dean, the student may consult the University grade appeal policies and procedures for further action.