

MSW PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR STUDENT: RETENTION, REVIEW, AND TERMINATION

The USI MSW Program has an expectation that all students will develop and demonstrate the knowledge, values, and skills required of professional social workers. Students are continuously and comprehensively evaluated in the classroom and in field placement settings. Standards in the social work program include those that are scholastic and professional in nature; in combination, both are seen as the primary indicators of readiness for professional practice. Retention, continuation and/or termination in the MSW program are based on performance standards which include evaluation of cognitive abilities, demonstration of skills, scholastic performance, behavioral and professional components.

These standards are guided by the competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education (CWSE), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the USI Code of Student Behavior, and the MSW Student Handbook along with the MSW Program Mission and Goals. All students in the MSW Program are expected to maintain the standards established by the Social Work Department, the social work profession and the competencies established by the CSWE. Information on performance standards, criteria and expectations are set forth in the following documents:

- The *Student Rights and Responsibilities* section of the *USI Graduate Bulletin* (includes policies on student rights, disciplinary offenses and academic misconduct such as plagiarism and cheating): <http://bulletin.usi.edu/index.php?catoid=14>
- Graduate Studies Resources: <http://www.usi.edu/graduatestudies/student-resources/>
- The MSW Student Handbook: <https://www.usi.edu/media/5604704/msw-handbook-71117-1.pdf>
- Council on Social Work Education Competencies: <https://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/social-work/cswe-accreditation/>
- National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics: <https://www.socialworkers.org/about/ethics/code-of-ethics>

Student Performance Standards and Criteria

The USI Social Work Department has the goal of educating quality professional practitioners. Students are admitted with the understanding that they have the academic ability and personal suitability for completing the professional social work degree. The MSW performance criteria, examples of expected behavior, and indicators of concerns clarify expectations for student behavior and achievement. The criteria also ensure that students are capable of meeting the standards, demands, roles and responsibilities of professional social workers. For retention and graduation from the program, students must meet the following Performance Criteria which include but are not limited to:

1. Grade Point Average (GPA)

- The student receives a C+ or lower in any course;

- Falls below a 3.0 GPA;
- Receives a failing grade in Field Practicum I or II
- Social Work students are expected to follow the academic policies set forth by the Office of Graduate Studies. Policies on academic progress, retention, probation, and dismissal can be found in the USI Graduate Bulletin.

Indicators of Concern

- Failure to maintain a 3.0 overall GPA once admitted to the MSW Program
- Failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA in all required social work courses
- Failure to successfully complete either Field Seminar or Field Practicum
- Earns a grade of C or less in a required social work major course
- Have more than one class with a grade of incomplete
- Fail to comply with incomplete grade contracts in a timely manner

Repeating Social Work Courses

- Students who earn less than a C+ in a required social work course are eligible to repeat the course one-time only
- Students will be allowed to repeat only two required social work courses in which they received a grade of C or lower
- Students may request an exception to these policies by submitting a written statement to the MSW Program Director requesting readmission to a social work course and attach documentation to support extraordinary circumstances that contributed to the academic problems. The statement should include how the student has resolved barriers to successfully complete required work and readiness to meet performance standards.

2. Accountability

- Attend class, arrive on time, and return from breaks in a timely manner
- Abide by class attendance policy as designated in the syllabus of each course
- Participate in group activities and assignments at equal levels
- Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided
- Come to class prepared, with reading and other assignments completed
- Plan and organize work effectively
- Develop and follow a plan of study with the proper sequencing of courses
- Meet deadlines for advisement, registration, admission applications, etc.
- Take responsibility for the quality of completed tests and assignments
- Demonstrate the ability to follow school and agency protocols, policies and professional standards
- Make arrangements for special needs in a timely manner

Indicators of Concern

- Multiple absences from class or field placement
- Multiple late arrivals for class or field

- Poor organizational skills
- Failure to come to class prepared to participate in group activities or discussions
- Repeated requests for extensions on assignments and exams
- Late or incomplete assignments
- Failure to keep or cancel appointments
- Failure to adhere to practicum agency policies and professional standards
- Lying, cheating, or plagiarizing

3. Respect and Conduct

- Treat all peers, instructors, and others with dignity and respect at all times
- Listen while others are speaking
- Show respect for other's opinions
- Give feedback to peers and faculty in a constructive manner
- Approach conflict with peers and instructors in a cooperative manner
- Remain open to positive or negative feedback from peers and faculty
- Use positive and nonjudgmental language
- Demonstrate a willingness to understand diversity in people regarding age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation
- Demonstrate conduct in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics
- Demonstrate conduct in accordance with established laws and professional agency policies
- Support the concept of client self-determination

Indicators of Concern

- Create conflict in class
- Uncooperative or unwilling to participate in class activities
- Consistently late for class or field placement or consistently leave class or field placement early
- Sleep during class
- Disrupt class process by talking to others
- Frequently interrupt when others are speaking
- Use cell phone inappropriately during class
- Use derogatory language or demeaning remarks
- Appear unwilling or unable to accept feedback from faculty and peers
- Monopolize class discussion
- Unwilling or unable to develop an understanding of people different from oneself
- Discriminatory behavior or harassment toward others on the basis of age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation
- Academic misconduct

4. Confidentiality

- Treat any personal information heard about a peer or instructor as strictly confidential
- Maintain confidentiality of any information shared in class, dyads, or smaller groups within that unit
- Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in the classroom. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral to counseling.)
- Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information

Indicators of Concern

- Share or discuss information about faculty or peers inappropriately
- Share information disclosed in class discussions with individuals external to the learning environment
- Demonstrate poor judgment in self-disclosure
- Disclose names or other identifying information about clients in the classroom or other settings

5. Communication Skills

- Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills with peers and instructors (i.e. body language, empathy, listening, etc.)
- Demonstrate use of critical thinking skills in communication
- Clearly articulate ideas, thoughts, and concepts verbally and in writing
- Communicate clearly with clients, supervisors, peers, and faculty
- Strive to continually improve both verbal and written communication skills as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also in creating client records
- Accept and benefit from constructive feedback
- Demonstrate ability to follow the conventions of writing in academic papers, exams, discussion boards, agency notes, and/or other written documents
- Demonstrate good organization in writing, following a logical sequence
- Formal papers are typed, double-spaced, and conform to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (latest edition) standards of writing.

Indicators of Concern

- Unable to express information clearly and concisely either verbally or in writing
- Unable to master the conventions of writing in academic papers, exams, discussion boards, agency notes, and/or other written documents
- Unable to communicate clearly with clients, supervisors, peers, and faculty
- Relate interpersonally in a manner that is disrespectful, manipulative, discriminatory, disruptive, and/or immature
- Failure to follow appropriate procedures and channels for conflict resolution

- Interviewing skills are not at the appropriate level for class standing (i.e. junior or senior)

6. Professional Values, Ethics, and Integrity

- Perform professional activities in conformity with the values and ethics of the profession
- Demonstrate judgment that models the values and ethics of the profession as presented in the NASW Code of Ethics
- Practice honesty with self, peers, and instructors
- Learn and apply the rules of citing other's work properly
- Do own work and take credit only for one's own work
- Do not submit, in whole or in part, the same work for credit in more than one course, except with prior approval of the instructor
- Avoid conflicts of interest that would interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment, which includes setting clear, appropriate, and culturally-sensitive boundaries

Indicators of Concern

- Violate any section of the NASW Code of Ethics
- Violate standards of the USI Student Code of Conduct
- Violate policies or procedures set forth in the MSW Student Handbook
- Lying, cheating, or plagiarizing
- Submit the same work for credit in more than one course without permission of the instructor
- Current involvement in illegal activities (e.g. conviction of a felony or specific criminal behavior, such as illegal possession of a firearm or other weapon, trafficking in and/or possession of drugs, etc.)
- Failure to pass drug screens requested by agencies while participating in field practicum
- Inability to pass criminal background checks and child abuse clearances
- Engage in activities that have conflicts of interest with the educational setting or field practicum placements

7. Self-awareness and Self-control

- Use self-disclosure appropriately in the classroom, field placement, or the profession
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in all relevant relationships and settings
- Demonstrate the ability to examine personal values and their fit with professional expectations. Able to develop and grow in reconciling differences when they occur.
- Able to engage in discussion and processing of uncomfortable topics
- Deal appropriately with issues that arouse emotions
- Demonstrate an awareness of one's personal limits
- Understand the effects of one's behavior on others

- Able to form positive working relationships with peers, faculty, supervisors, and clients
- Able to work toward resolving one's personal issues that may impair performance
- Demonstrate the ability to manage stressors through the use of appropriate methods of coping
- Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success in completing course requirements
- Strive toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede effectiveness with clients

Indicators of Concern

- Unable or unwilling to work through unresolved personal issues
- Unable or unwilling to control emotional reactions
- Demonstrate emotional problems that interfere with the ability to work effectively with clients, faculty, supervisors, and peers
- Make verbal or physical threats to peers, faculty, supervisors, or clients
- Demonstrate impaired judgment, decision-making, or problem solving skills
- Failure to seek appropriate professional help for physical, emotional, and/or cognitive problems that interfere with professional functioning
- Demonstrate a negative attitude or lack of enthusiasm toward the social work program, the social work profession, and/or the field placement, to such a degree that it impairs the ability to actively participate in the learning experience
- Unable to form effective relationships with clients, faculty, supervisors, or peers

8. Competence

- Demonstrate the ability to utilize information to make informed and relevant decisions
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and critically analyze bio-psycho-social components
- Demonstrate the ability to use critical thinking skills
- Able to meet the requirements for attaining the competencies found in the CSWE Educational Policy Statement

Indicators of Concern

- Failure to actively participate in the attainment of expected social work practice competencies
- Unable to meet class or field requirements due to failure to balance personal and school responsibilities (i.e. employment vs. school)
- Inability to work within the framework of supervision – may include classroom instructor, field agency faculty or supervisor
- Impairment as described in the NASW Code of Ethics, which may include impairment due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties that interfere with or impair

professional judgment and performance or jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility

9. Diversity and Social Justice

- Remain open to people, ideas, and creeds that are not familiar
- Demonstrate the capacity and willingness to work with diverse client populations
- Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ageism, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and prejudice, including unwarranted negative criticism of others and demeaning comments that refer to a person's individual attributes
- Demonstrate understanding of how values and culture interact
- Participate in educational activities that promote sensitivity to, knowledge about, and appreciation of cultural diversity
- Demonstrate commitment to social justice for all populations
- Demonstrate understanding of how institutional and personal oppression may impede social justice for individuals, groups and communities
- Learn about and advocate for methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice

Indicators of Concern

- Unwillingness to work with or gain a greater understanding of diverse populations
- Demonstration of stereotyping, judgmental attitudes, or prejudice
- Failure to accept and develop an understanding of values and practices in different cultures
- Does not understand the impact of oppression on individuals, groups or communities

Student Performance Review and Termination Process

Students are continuously evaluated in the classroom, the university setting, and field placements to determine their suitability for the social work profession. Students are expected to maintain the standards set forth in the USI Bulletin, the MSW Student Handbook, the NASW Code of Ethics, and course syllabi. If a student fails to meet required competencies and standards, a student performance review may be instituted.

A performance review is intended to provide students and faculty the opportunity to openly identify and discuss performance problems. The request for a performance review may be brought to the attention of the Social Work Department Student Affairs Committee by any member of the Social Work Department's full-time or part-time faculty, a field instructor, or a group of instructors in a course or courses in which the student is enrolled. Any item or group of items identified as "indicators for concern" under the Student Performance Standards and Criteria may result in a request for a Performance Review.

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Procedures for Student Performance Review

At the beginning of each academic year, a Student Affairs Committee and committee chairperson will be appointed by the Chair of the Social Work Department. The Committee shall be composed of three faculty members. If a committee member requests a review of a student, the Department Chair will appoint an alternate. The MSW Program Director will serve as an ad hoc member in an advisory non-voting capacity.

The Student Affairs Committee is a department level mechanism for early detection of student problems in academic or professional performance. The Committee will: 1) complete an annual review of the “Student Performance Standards and Criteria”; 2) make recommendations to the faculty for updates or changes to the review process; 3) receive and review requests for student performance reviews.

When a student's performance has been evaluated as deficient, the following review steps should be taken:

1. When a faculty member has an issue with a student’s academic or professional performance, s/he should first talk with the student directly;
2. If the issue persists, the MSW Program Director will be notified. The Director will meet with the student and the faculty member and attempt to resolve the issue, and;
3. If the issue persists or if further discussion of the issue is warranted, the faculty member and/or MSW Program Director will notify the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee for a performance review. The student and faculty member(s) will meet with the Committee.

After meeting with the student and faculty, the Committee determines what, if any, course of action could bring the student's performance into compliance with department and professional standards.

In situations where such action is feasible and desirable, a contract will be created. The contract sets forth problems to be addressed, actions to be taken, a time period for completion of designated actions, and re-evaluation of the student’s performance. Consequences for non-performance will be included in the contract also. The Committee will work together with the student, MSW Program Director, 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 student will be referred to the Chair of the Social Work Department.

Range of Possible Outcomes

1. Probation—The student is placed on administrative probation and is allowed to continue in the MSW program for a time-limited period to allow for completion of the contract developed;
2. Suspension—The student is temporarily removed from the program and required to complete a contract as developed by the student and the Chair, and;
3. Termination—The student is dismissed from the program.

The student has the right to appeal the Chair's decision by following the University Grievance Procedure outlined in the USI Bulletin.

Criteria for Potential Dismissal/Termination

There are criteria that warrant automatic dismissal:

1. Failure to meet the minimum GPA requirement of at least a "C+" in each Social Work course;
2. Failure to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA, and;
3. Failure to provide accurate information required for Indiana P.L. 11-1994, local or national criminal history checks; or lying about past behavior or false and/or misleading information on an application.

The MSW Program Director will review the academic standing of each student at the end of each semester. If a student is dismissed from the program for any of the reasons identified above, the Program Director will send by certified mail a written statement to the student indicating that she/he has been discontinued from the program and explain the due process procedures. Copies of the letter will be forwarded to the student's advisor and student file. The advisor will meet with the student should she/he wish to discuss options and the reinstatement procedure. If the advisor is the MSW Program Director, the Department Chair shall appoint a faculty member to serve as the student advisor.

Request for Reinstatement Procedures

If a student is automatically dismissed, the student may petition the MSW Program Director for continuance. The petition should be presented in writing and should address two major points. First, there should be an identification of extenuating factors, if any, which contributed to the poor performance. Second, there should be a discussion of the steps which would be taken 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. The Program Director will advise the student and advisor of the decision verbally and in writing. The Program Director will also advise the student of her/his right to petition for reconsideration by an Appeals Committee.

If the student is not reinstated by the MSW Program Director, the student may appeal the decision to the Social Work Department Chair.

Confidentiality

All procedures related to a performance review and/or the appeal process must be carried out in a manner which assures protection of the student's right to privacy regarding information about her/his academic records, performance, and conduct. The student has the right to review all written information which is presented to the committee. Members of the committee and other persons who appear at the hearing are expected to maintain confidentiality with regard to all aspects of the hearing. Actions of the committee are to remain confidential and are to be shared only with those persons involved with the student in an educational capacity.