

MSW Program Dismissal Policy and Procedures

Policy: Social work is a self-regulating profession, based on knowledge and guided by professional values and ethics exemplified in the current NASW Code of Ethics. Students enrolled in the Master of Social Work Program must demonstrate professional fitness for both study and a career in the profession. A student may be placed on probation and/or be dismissed from the program when, in the collective judgment of the faculty, the student's behavior or academic problems conflict with the basic standards of professional social work practice or those standards set by the University.

- 1. Student's Academic Responsibilities.** Students have academic responsibilities for their performance in both the classroom and field practicum. A student's conduct should conform at all times to the values and standards of the social work profession as set forth in the NASW Code of Ethics. Students are expected to be able to establish and maintain positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with faculty, fellow students, and others. This entails, among other things, the ability to deal effectively with conflict and to be assertive in non-hurtful and respectful ways. Due to the professional and human service function of the social work profession, these behaviors are part of the School's academic requirements and standards. The code of conduct set out in the NASW Code of Ethics is used by the profession as a guide for sound professional judgment and conduct and is used by the School of Social Work to assess student behavior that is deemed unethical or unprofessional for MSW students. Students who fail to meet acceptable academic performance as set forth in the Graduate Catalogue will be withdrawn from the program. A graduate student whose grade point average (GPA) falls below 3.0 is placed on academic probation. Any graduate student who earns a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 for two consecutive semesters is withdrawn from the MSW Program and academically disqualified for any further graduate level work. Additionally, MSW students cannot count grades below C to meet any requirement of the MSW. If a student receives a final grade of D in a required MSW course, s/he may attempt to improve the grade by repeating the course only one time. If that attempt is unsuccessful, the student is withdrawn from the MSW program and academically disqualified from any further graduate level work. The course must be repeated at the next offering or the student waives the right to repeat the course. If a student receives a final grade of F in any required MSW course, the student may be withdrawn from the graduate program and academically disqualified from any further graduate level work.
- 2. Student's Conduct Responsibilities.** Students who fail to observe the University Code of Conduct may be reprimanded, disciplined, or terminated from the Program. The Student's Bill of Rights as set forth in the Boise State University Student Handbook identifies those standards of conduct which govern a student's participation in the academic community. The School of Social Work adheres to the policies and procedures of the University's code of conduct. Students charged with a grievance under this code of conduct are subject to University judicial procedures described in the University Student and Administrative Handbooks, and are entitled through those policies and procedures to due process.

Examples of non-professional conduct which may be grounds for dismissal:

- Resistant Attitude to Learning -- Students who are overly or persistently defensive and/or have difficulty integrating new concepts, or responding constructively to criticism, may be asked to discontinue the program.
 - Personality Unsuitable to Social Work -- Every profession is dependent on its practitioners possessing appropriate character attributes. Social work particularly requires the ability to empathize, project warmth, and develop trusting relationships with a wide variety of diverse types of people. The inability to enable others to form close trusting relationships with the social worker and to manage the intense emotional expressions which come from people in need may mean that a different career should be sought.
 - Emotional Immaturity or Instability -- While immaturity or instability may not keep someone from performing well in some fields, it may in fact, mean that students are not yet ready to be entrusted with a license to work directly with vulnerable persons. Additionally, the lack of emotional stability or the presence of a mental illness may stand in the way of building relationships, and dealing with confidential material or otherwise jeopardizing client welfare. Therefore, students who display a chronic pattern of emotional immaturity or mental instability may be barred from the program.
 - Unprofessional Behavior -- Breaches of the Code of Ethics or seemingly small infractions such as regularly leaving confidential files unlocked may be deemed to be serious enough to terminate from the program. The misuse of clients by involving them in staff conflicts and gossiping about the agency or clients are examples of behaviors which are inconsistent with professional social norms. Failure to comply with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics will result in dismissal from the program. Any sexual interaction between a student and a client or other serious breach of ethical conduct will result in expulsion from the MSW Program.
 - Failure to Disclose or False Reporting -- The failure to disclose pertinent data or giving false information in applying to the Social Work Program or at any step in the application for specific field placements is grounds for termination from field work and from the MSW program. Anyone who has been convicted of a felony must disclose this information to the Practicum Director. (A felony involving a crime against person(s) may be grounds for exclusion from field work...) In placing students it is important to know if they have been served by the agency they are applying to or if they have had any involvement with staff. Our policy is to avoid placing students at agencies where they have received services in the past. Additionally, we would most likely avoid asking them to provide services with any client group where they still may have some vulnerability or aversion for whatever reason. For example, we would not ask a sexually abused woman to provide services to perpetrators.
3. **Dissemination.** Registration at the University implies a student's acceptance of and willingness to abide by the published academic regulations and all other rules found in any official university publication or announcement. Those policies and procedures that govern a student's academic and conduct responsibilities (BSU Student Handbook, BSU Graduate Catalog, MSW Field Work Manual, NASW Code of Ethics, and Program Dismissal Policy) are disseminated to and discussed with all incoming MSW students at new student orientation. Additionally, the standards for professional conduct identified in the NASW Code of Ethics are discussed extensively in the practice sequence courses such as SW 503 and SW 504.

4. ***Early Intervention/remediation.*** A student's progress is monitored by teaching faculty throughout the semester. As a student moves into academic difficulty, the teaching faculty member may consult with the MSW Program Coordinator on possible early intervention or remediation for the student. The Program Coordinator may meet with the student and/or the faculty member to discuss the difficulty and explore options to assist the student. Options that may be suggested to the student may include putting into place such supports as writing center referrals, tutors, and referrals to the University Counseling Center. Student progress in field practicum settings is monitored by the school liaison faculty member. As problems arise, the faculty liaison consults with the Practicum Director and field supervisor regarding corrective or remedial actions. The Practicum Director informs the MSW Program Coordinator of a student's problems and any corrective actions implemented.
5. ***Probation/dismissal.*** The imposition of probation or dismissal is a very serious matter and cannot be recommended or imposed in the absence of substantiated reasons. Any request for the initiation of probation or dismissal against a student requires a formal written allegation of misconduct. The use of early interventions or remediation actions prior to the initiation of probation or dismissal is supported by the School. Faculty and students are encouraged to use the MSW Program Coordinator as a neutral mediator to resolve complaints or concerns. A student cannot graduate from the program while on probationary status.

Probation/dismissal procedure:

- a. A complaint or concern regarding a student's misconduct may be filed by a faculty member or a fellow student. The individual bringing the complaint has 20 working days from the occurrence of the alleged misconduct to put the complaint in writing, with any supporting documentation attached, and submit it to the MSW Committee (via the Chair).
- b. The MSW Committee will, within 15 working days, notify the student of the complaint and schedule a meeting to review the allegations. The committee may receive written or oral testimony from interested parties. The student may appear before the Committee to speak on his/her own behalf, ask others to address the Committee on his/her behalf, and/or submit written materials for the Committee's consideration. The Committee will determine the type and quantity of information it will consider.

The MSW Committee has the responsibility to consider the facts and to decide if limitations on the student's enrollment in the program are warranted. If it decides that limitations are warranted, it may recommend to the Director of the School (i) the imposition of a probationary status and set conditions prerequisite to the removal of that status, (ii) the temporary suspension or permanent dismissal of the student from the program, or (iii) the setting of other conditions and limitations related to the student's enrollment which is deemed appropriate. The Committee forwards a written summary of its findings and recommendations to the Director and the student within 5 working days of the meeting.