



## Procedures for Academic Performance and Professional Behavior Concerns

This document outlines the process in the School of Social Work and Criminal Justice (SSWCJ) to address areas of concern around academic performance and professional behavior.

### RATIONALE

All students must demonstrate capacity to meet academic requirements and professional behavior while progressing toward their degree, which includes courses, classroom environment, practicum/field experiences, and in the community and social media spaces. In the social work programs, faculty have the responsibility for determining whether students have developed the required level of mastery to enter the profession.

Students are responsible for knowing and complying with all regulations, policies, and procedures required by the University of Washington Tacoma, the University of Washington Graduate School, the SSWCJ, Academic Professional Standards, and social work professional codes of ethics. Information can be found on the university website, in student program handbooks, and internship, practicum, or field handbooks. In no case will a regulation be waived, or an exception granted because of lack of awareness of the policy or due to the assertion that staff, faculty, or their faculty advisor did not inform the student.

### PROCESS TO ADDRESS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND/OR PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

There are two potential processes for addressing academic performance and/or professional behavior concerns, informally or formally. Descriptions of the processes are outlined as follows:

- **Informal** – Faculty and/or faculty advisor notify the student in-person and/or writing that they would like to meet to discuss the concern (s).
- **Formal** – Faculty, faculty advisors, and staff are encouraged to handle minor concerns informally prior to initiating a formal process. Faculty, faculty advisors, and staff with serious concerns are to inform the student and the faculty advisor (if the referent is faculty or staff) in writing of their concern/s and consult with the Program Chair, the Director of Field Education, Practicum Director, and/or other relevant faculty or staff. Serious concerns include but are not limited to behavior or performance that violates ethical, legal, and/or professional standards; interferes with others' opportunities to learn; reflects a lack of judgment; would likely preclude a successful field/practicum placement; and/or is not progressing toward adhering to the expectations of the program or profession. The referring faculty, faculty advisor, or staff is to consult with the student's instructors to identify any other concerns and provide information to the Program Chair. The Program Chair may consult with other administrative faculty or staff to determine the best course of action. The consultation will result in one of the following:
  1. No action
  2. A recommendation to address the concern informally
  3. An initiation of a Plan of Assistance process
  4. An initiation of a Performance Review with the potential for being dropped from the program



### PLAN OF ASSISTANCE PROCESS

A plan of assistance requires that the faculty, faculty advisor, or staff raising the concern(s), the student, and other relevant faculty meet to discuss the concern(s) and develop a plan to address the concerns. If registered with the Disability Resources for Students (DRS) the student may bring their DRS representative. The plan is a formal document submitted by the faculty raising the concern(s) (or another faculty member if applicable). The written document contains the following:

1. A description of the concerns about academic performance and/or professional behavior.
2. Goal/Outcome of the plan.
3. Action to be taken by the student to reach the goal.
4. Action to be taken by others to assist the student.
5. Faculty responsible for monitoring the plan and assessing the outcomes.
6. Timeline, including dates for evaluating outcomes, and making decisions about next steps.
7. Signature of all involved in the initial meeting. If the document is not completed during a face-to-face meeting, the Plan of Assistance will be emailed to the student. The student will need to acknowledge their agreement to the Plan via email, which will be attached to the formal plan.
8. A date for final review meeting.
9. Outcome of the plan, including signatures of all involved in the final review meeting.

When the Plan of Assistance relates to performance in the practicum/field placement and the plan extends into the following term, the field faculty will assign a grade of an Incomplete. The completed Plan of Assistance will be forwarded to the Program Chair for a signature and placed in the student's file.

The potential outcomes of a Plan of Assistance are:

1. If the student has successfully addressed the concern/s no further action will be taken.
2. If the student has not successfully addressed the concern/s or a similar concern arises in the future, the faculty, faculty advisor, or staff will consult with the Program Chair to determine next steps. Potential outcomes may result in an additional Plan of Assistance or a Performance Review.



**PLAN OF ASSISTANCE FORM**

Student name:

Faculty raising the concern/s:

Date written concerns and request for a meeting sent to student:

Plan of Assistance meeting date:

Attended by:

Description of the Concerns: (Attach documentation as relevant):

Plan:



## PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

A Performance Review will be requested when concerns are serious enough that they raise questions about the student's suitability for the program, profession, or field. The faculty, faculty advisor, staff, or Program Chair raising the concerns will make a referral to the SSWCJ Professional Standards Committee (PSC) Chair to initiate a Performance Review. That referral will include the following:

1. A description of the concerns, identifying strengths and challenges, attempts to address the concern, and the reasons for requesting the Performance Review.
2. A copy of the request will be placed in the student's file.
3. Upon receiving the request for a Performance Review, the SSWCJ Professional Standards Committee Chair will initiate a Performance Review, unless there is a conflict of interest.
4. If there is a conflict of interest, the Dean will appoint another faculty member to assume the Chair's duties for the duration of the Performance Review process.
5. If the referring faculty serves on the Professional Standards Committee, the Dean will appoint another faculty member to serve on the committee.

### Initiation of Performance Review

Upon receiving a request for a Performance Review the PSC Chair will send a letter to the student that will include:

1. A summary of the reasons for the Performance Review, including a copy of the formal request and
2. Description of the meeting process.

### Preparation and Planning for Performance Review Meeting

Copies of documents submitted by other participants at least 5 academic calendar days in advance of the scheduled meeting. The student may submit supporting documentation to the Professional Standards Committee Chair at least 2 academic calendar days in advance of the scheduled meeting. The documents will be shared with committee members.

If a student is registered with the Disability Resources for Students (DRS), they may bring a DRS representative to the meeting. If the student wishes, they may also invite an additional person to speak on their behalf at a specified time during the review meeting.

The SSWCJ PSC Chair will convene the committee, if at all possible, within 15 academic calendar days from the date the concern was received. The PSC Chair may invite additional people as relevant to this performance review to attend. The student will be notified of all attendees.



### Performance Review Meeting

The PSC Chair will convene the meeting and go through the following process.

1. The faculty, faculty advisor, staff, or Program Chair bringing the concern(s) will summarize the concerns, which may include the referral document, written communications, notes, and any other relevant information.
2. The student will be given the opportunity to respond to the concern(s). The student may provide additional information that they believe supports their argument.
3. If the student has an identified support person, they may bring them in to speak on the student's behalf. Once the support person has spoken on the student's behalf, they will be asked to exit the meeting.
4. The committee members will ask questions of all parties and may request additional information, including but not limited to the student's academic file and field/practicum documents.
5. At the conclusion of the presentations and follow-up questions, the student will be asked if they want to share any additional information pertinent to the committee's decision.
6. The student and the faculty, faculty advisor, staff, or Program Chair raising the concerns will be excused. The committee will meet in private for deliberation. The committee should seek to reach consensus, but when not possible, a majority is sufficient. The committee will make one of four decisions. The committee may find that:
  - There are no sufficient grounds for any action and recommend no action.
  - There are sufficient grounds for the concern(s), but the concern(s) have been addressed and recommend no action.
  - There are sufficient grounds for the concern(s), but the student will be allowed to continue in the program and the committee will develop a Plan of Assistance, as noted above.
  - There are sufficient grounds for the concern(s), the nature of which are so serious that the committee recommends that the student be dropped from the program.
7. After the committee discussion, the student will be called back to the meeting and informed of the outcome. Within ten academic days, the PSC Chair will send a letter to the student summarizing the decision and decision rationale. The Dean, Program Chair, Office of Graduate Studies (for graduate students), student's advisor, student file, and other relevant parties who are deemed to have a reason to know will be copied on the formal written decision notification.
8. If a decision to drop the student from the program is reached, the student is required to withdraw from all courses and if applicable, their field/practicum placement. If the student initiates an appeal based on **process only**, they may remain in their course and field/practicum until an appeal decision is rendered. However, if the committee determines their behavior is likely to be disruptive or threatening they must drop all courses, including field/practicum. In addition, if a student initiates an appeal but was dropped from a field/practicum placement, the student is not allowed to continue in that internship.



9. If a student is dropped from their program, the Professional Standards Committee Chair will inform the review referent, Program Chair, Dean, and others who have an educational reason to know of the committee's decision.

#### Appeal of Performance Review Process

If the student feels the School of Social Work and Criminal Justice policies were not followed, they may appeal the process. The student may request a review of the Performance Review process by the Dean within 5 academic calendar days of being informed of the committee's decision. The request must be in writing grounds for the appeal and specify the **parts of the process** that are being appealed. It is important to provide very clear documentation to support the grounds for appeal as it relates to **process only**.

The Dean will convene a meeting of the PSC Chair and Program Chair within 10 academic calendar days of receiving the request. The Dean will make one of three decisions:

- The Performance Review process had no flaws and the PSC decision stands.
- The Performance Review process had minor flaws, but they did not impact the fairness of the process.
- The Performance Review process was not conducted fairly, and the decision should be reconsidered.

The Dean will inform the student in writing of the outcome of the PSC Chair and Program Chair meeting within 5 academic calendar days.