

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work  
STUDENT STANDARDS POLICY  
Adopted May 5, 2000, revised 3/1/2002, 2/6/2004, 3/5/2004,  
Approved 5/2/2008

The Graduate College of Social Work (GCSW) faculty is responsible for determining whether students demonstrate the required level of achievement---classroom, field, professional, and ethical behaviors--appropriate to interact with colleagues, faculty, field instructors, administrators, staff, and clients. The College is committed to the treatment of students with fairness and equity throughout the program. This policy is applied to students' enrollment in the MSW or PhD program at any point in time, from admission to program entry, program entry to candidacy, and candidacy to graduation. Each admitted student is required to read and complete the Student Standards Policy Contract for the student's file.

## **1.0 STUDENT STANDARDS**

In order to meet its responsibilities to provide quality professional social work education and to ensure that its graduates are able to function in a broad array of professional activities, GCSW faculty evaluates the academic performance of students in six general areas: professional readiness, professional commitment, scholastic performance, attendance and punctuality, professional behavior, and ethical conduct.

**1.01 Professional Readiness:** Generally accepted standards of personal integrity, health and emotional stability, self care, communication skills, interpersonal skills and self-awareness

1. Personal Integrity: Is open to learning and is honest with oneself and colleagues.
2. Health, Emotional Stability & Self Care: Uses thoughtful judgment in professional situations. Seeks and effectively practices self care, uses help, and responsibly addresses one's own health and emotional problems that may interfere with scholastic and professional performance.
3. Communication Skills: Communicates responsibly and sensitively and with respect toward colleagues, faculty, field instructors, administrators, staff, and clients.
4. Interpersonal Skills: Expresses ideas and feelings which can be heard and understood by others. Demonstrates willingness and an ability to listen to others.
5. Self Awareness: Exhibits knowledge of how one's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships. Accurately assesses one's own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice on an ongoing basis. Shows a beginning level of self-awareness and of how one is perceived by others. Reflects on one's own

limitations as they relate to professional capacities. Is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes in working with clients and other professionals.

**1.02 Professional Commitment:** Commitment to the essential values of social work and the pursuit of promoting social, economic and political justice.

**1.03 Scholastic Performance:**

1. Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. The following are the categories of Academic Dishonesty as stated in UH "Academic Honesty Policy" ([http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/Academic\\_Honesty/uhhonpol\\_article3.html#3-02-ac-dishonesty-prohibited](http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/Academic_Honesty/uhhonpol_article3.html#3-02-ac-dishonesty-prohibited)):

"Academic dishonesty" means employing a method or technique or engaging in conduct in an academic endeavor that the student knows or should know is not permitted by the university or a course instructor to fulfill academic requirements. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Stealing, as theft of tests or grade books, from faculty offices or elsewhere; this includes the removal of items posted for use by the students;
- b. Using "crib notes," as unauthorized use of notes or the like to aid in answering questions during an examination;
- c. Securing another to take a test in the student's place; both the student taking the test for another and the student registered in the course are at fault;
- d. Representing as one's own work the work of another without acknowledging the source (plagiarism). This would include submitting substantially identical laboratory reports or other materials in fulfillment of an assignment by two or more individuals, whether or not these used common data or other information, unless this has been specifically permitted by the instructor;
- e. Changing answers or grades on a test that has been returned to a student in an attempt to claim instructor error;
- f. Giving or receiving unauthorized aid during an examination, such as trading examinations, whispering answers, and passing notes, and using electronic devices to transmit or receive information;
- g. Openly cheating in an examination, as copying from another's paper;
- h. Using another's laboratory results as one's own, whether with or without the permission of the owner;
- i. Falsifying results in laboratory experiments;
- j. Mutilating or stealing library materials; misshelving materials with the intent to reduce accessibility to other students;

- k. A student's failing to report to the instructor or department chair an incident which the student believes to be a violation of the academic honesty policy;
  - l. Misrepresenting academic records or achievements as they pertain to course prerequisites or core requisites for the purpose of enrolling or remaining in a course for which one is not eligible;
  - m. Possessing wireless electronic devices capable of transmitting and/or receiving wireless signals in an exam room unless expressly permitted by the instructor. Students seen with such devices will be charged with academic dishonesty; and
  - n. Any other conduct which a reasonable person in the same or similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest or improper in an academic setting.
2. Students are expected to understand the WebCt Policy applied to all courses: “This WebCt site is the intellectual property of the course instructor and/or the University of Houston. Its contents include all class notes, power point slides, summary notes from secondary sources, quiz materials, etc. Other materials retrieved electronically and included on this web site are used solely for educational purposes and remain the property of the original source, including government entity and other publication copyright. The course materials at this WebCt site are for the exclusive use of students registering for this course section. The contents are not to be duplicated, sold or otherwise distributed without the expressed written consent of the course instructor.”
  3. While in the program, students are required to maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and satisfactory performance in non-letter graded courses.
  4. A student whose GPA falls below 3.0 (B) will be placed on academic probation.
    - a. This student will be allowed to continue his/her enrollment only with the written recommendation of the faculty adviser and approval from the Dean and/or the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Permission to continue will be granted only if there is reasonable likelihood that the GPA will improve in the subsequent semester.
    - b. Removal from academic probation is granted when the GPA is raised to B (3.0) or above.
  5. Any course in which a grade of less than C- is received must be repeated.
  6. Automatic Dismissal: Whether or not in repeated courses, students will be dismissed from the program in any of the following situations:
    - a. For MSW students:
      - i) receive a grade of C+ or lower or Unsatisfactory (U) in 12 semester credit hours of graduate credit, or

- ii) 2 U's in field practicum courses;
  - b. For PhD students:
    - i) receive a grade of C+ or lower in 6 semester credit hours of doctoral courses; or
    - ii) failed any part of the final comprehensive examinations after two attempts or according to the exam criteria/policy provided at admissions; or
    - iii) did not successfully defend or pass the dissertation within 10 years of first enrolment in the doctoral program according to the regulations and requirements of the University of Houston Graduate and Professional Studies (see Regulation #11 at website: [http://www.uh.edu/grad\\_catalog/garr/university\\_regulations.html](http://www.uh.edu/grad_catalog/garr/university_regulations.html)).
- 7. Graduation requires a cumulative GPA of 3.0 upon completion of all courses.
- 8. A student's satisfactory performance in the MSW Foundation Curriculum is evaluated by faculty with the following criteria:
  - a. Every foundation assignment must be completed; each graded assignment must be completed with a minimum grade of 80/100.
  - b. Numerical scores of 80/100 and above are defined as Satisfactory in the Foundation Curriculum.
  - c. Grades of satisfactory in all foundation components are required in order to be admitted to candidacy.
  - d. Grades of Incomplete (I) are to be given only when a student is passing a component but, for reasons beyond their control, have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor and the academic advisor immediately of the reason(s) for not completing requirements. The grade of I must be changed by fulfilling stated requirements by the deadline set by the instructor. Failure to do so within a short time may result in the student needing to request a leave of absence. Any grade of I that remains for one year from the date awarded will, in conformance with UH policy be changed automatically to a grade of Unsatisfactory.
- 9. MSW students are required to maintain satisfactory performance in all field practicum courses.
  - a. A student who receives an unsatisfactory (U) in any semester of field will be placed on academic probation.
  - b. This student will be allowed to repeat field practicum only with the written recommendation of the academic adviser and approval from the Dean and/or the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

- c. Students who received more than one unsatisfactory (U) in field will be dismissed from the MSW program.
- d. A student may be removed from the field agency at any time by the field instructor and/or the field agency for *documented* unprofessional conduct or for *documented* demonstrable lack of progress in achieving field practicum learning objectives. A written statement attesting to this action will be prepared by the field instructor in consultation with the faculty field liaison for inclusion in the student's file.

#### **1.04 Attendance and Punctuality:**

It is the expectation of the GCSW that all classes in courses leading to the granting of a graduate degree will be attended and that students will be punctual. This expectation is a reflection of the student's responsibility to the social work profession and to the clients whom social workers will serve.

1. MSW students are required to attend the first week of the foundation semester.
2. If a MSW student is absent from field placement one time without notifying his/her field instructor, that field instructor will discuss this unacceptable behavior with the student and create an action plan for the student. The action plan will be forwarded to the faculty field liaison, the Director of Field Education and the academic advisor. The action plan will specify that if absence from field without notification occurs a second time, the student's field placement will be terminated and a grade of Unsatisfactory will be awarded.
3. All students (MSW/PhD) must adhere to all attendance/make up policies stated in course syllabi.

#### **1.05 Professional Behavior:**

1. Exhibits behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, and professional ethical standards, in classroom, field, and community, recognizing the strengths that exist in all students and cultures.
2. Shows appearance and demeanor that are appropriate to the roles and settings encountered during the educational experiences.
3. Shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work ethics, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, observing deadlines, completing tasks on time, and keeping appointments or making alternate arrangements.
4. Works effectively with others, regardless of level of authority or academic

- position.
5. Advocates for him/herself in a constructive manner and first uses established channels for conflict resolution.
  6. Shows a willingness to acknowledge constructive feedback or supervision, as well as uses such feedback to enhance professional development.
  7. Takes responsibility in following through with referrals to campus resources to enhance the probability of academic success, professional development and self care.

## **1.06 Ethical Conduct:**

1. Adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics and the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners Code of Conduct.
2. Appreciates the value of diversity. Works with and relates to others who are different from oneself, regardless of the student's own personal, religious, and/or cultural values. Provides service to all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or value system.
3. Comprehends other individuals' way of life and differing values. Uses empathic communication and support of the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.
4. Shows respect for the rights of others. Commits to the clients' and human rights to freedom of choice and self-determination.
5. Maintains the professional standard of confidentiality as it relates to: human service, classroom and research activities, and field placement.
6. Demonstrates consistent honesty and integrity by being truthful about one's own background, experiences, and qualifications.
7. Demonstrates clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. Refrains from sexually harassing others, making verbal or physical threats, being involved in sexual relationships with clients, abusing others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways, or participating in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.
8. Evaluates clients and their situations in a systematic, factual way. Refrains from imposing personal biases during interactions with others.

## **2.0 CANDIDACY PROCESS**

### **2.01 Definition of MSW Candidacy**

Candidacy is a mandated process, based on the Student Standards Policy, by which an M.S.W. student is formally admitted into the Advanced Curriculum. Students must demonstrate completion of the Foundation Curriculum and show progress in their acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, judgment, and behaviors to assume the responsibilities of a competent social worker.

## **2.02 Eligibility for the MSW Candidacy Application**

1. Successful completion of the Foundation Curriculum (15 SCH) at the end of the Fall semester including satisfactory completion of Field Practicum I
2. Meeting all student standards regarding professional readiness, professional commitment, scholastic performance, attendance and punctuality, professional behavior, and/or ethical conduct.

## **2.03 MSW Candidacy Review Process**

1. At the end of the Fall semester, each student's candidacy status will be reviewed by the Candidacy Review Committee, formed by two GCSW full-time faculty and the Director of Students Services/Academic Advisor. Review criteria are based on the eligibility requirements listed in the Student Standards Policy.
2. Applicants who do not meet all eligibility requirements may be asked to have an action plan in place prior to or at the time of the Candidacy Review Committee Meeting. (See Appendix A.)
3. The Director of Student Services/Academic Advisor informs each candidate of the faculty's decision regarding candidacy. (see Appendix B)
4. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements and do not have an action plan in place before the end of the Candidacy Review Meeting must withdraw from the MSW program. These students may file a petition through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. (See Appendix C).
5. Three lists - students who meet the eligibility requirements, students who have an outstanding Action Plan, and students who have filed a petition - will be presented by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Faculty Association Meeting scheduled at the end of the foundation semester.
6. Upon satisfactory review of the student's candidacy and/or pending action plans, the Dean's office will award the student with a Candidacy Certificate at the beginning of the following semester (Summer not included).

## **2.04 PhD Students' Advancement to candidacy**

A doctoral student is advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree (A.B.D. status) by successful completion of coursework, the comprehensive examination, and approval of the dissertation proposal by the Dissertation Committee. To advance a student to candidacy, the Dissertation Chairperson must submit the Ph.D. Program Form D: Dissertation Proposal Defense/Application for Candidacy to the Director of the Doctoral Program.

### **3.0 GCSW ACTION PLAN (for MSW and PhD Students)**

- 3.01** When a faculty member has a **serious concern** regarding a MSW/PhD student's professional readiness, professional commitment, scholastic performance, attendance and punctuality, professional behavior, and/or ethical conduct, he/she must inform the Academic Advisor. Jointly, the academic advisor and the faculty member initiate an Action Plan (Appendix A). The Academic Advisor for a MSW student is the Director of Student Services; for a PhD student, it is the Director of the Doctoral Program who is responsible for student issues.
- 3.02** An Action Plan is not required if the concern is deemed amenable to an in-person discussion with the student, the academic advisor, and the faculty member expressing the concern.
- 3.03** Faculty should inform the academic advisor when there is a concern that needs monitoring, but does not require an Action Plan.
- 3.04** If the Action Plan is initiated by a faculty member or academic advisor, a mandated meeting must occur in the presence of the student to discuss and document the plan.
- 3.05** A field instructor may identify a serious concern regarding a student in field placement. In that case, the field instructor must immediately notify the faculty liaison. The field instructor, the faculty liaison and the student will create an appropriate action plan. The faculty liaison will submit a copy of the action plan to both the academic advisor and the director of Field Education.
- 3.06** Should the student fail to meet the specified outcomes identified and agreed to in the Action Plan, the faculty member and the academic advisor will make a recommendation to the Dean to dismiss the student. The Dean will notify the student, the faculty member, and the academic advisor of his/her decision in writing.
- 3.07** Student-Initiated Appeal  
The student may appeal the written Action Plan through the Student Grievance Policy as outlined in the GCSW Handbook.

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work

**STUDENT STANDARDS POLICY CONTRACT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received and read the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work Student Standards Policy, and agree to be bound by the provisions therein. I understand that my enrollment in the MSW or PhD program is contingent upon my signing and submitting this contract.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name (PRINT OR TYPE) \_\_\_\_\_

Student I.D. Number \_\_\_\_\_

Street or Mailing Address:

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City State Zip Code

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Each student must deliver this signed Contract to the GCSW Deans' Office no later than the 12<sup>th</sup> class day of the student's first semester enrollment. Failure to do so may result in a \$50 late fee.**

Initial Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Filing Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix A

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work

**ACTION PLAN**

When a faculty member has a serious concern regarding a MSW or PhD student's professional readiness, professional commitment, scholastic performance, attendance and punctuality, professional behavior, and/or ethical conduct, he/she should inform the Academic Advisor before initiating the GCSW Action Plan. A mandated meeting must occur in the presence of the student to discuss and document the plan. All parties must sign the Action Plan.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student I.D.#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Identified Concern:**

*Date*                      *Concern*

**Plan of Actions, Expected Outcomes and Target Dates:**

Expected Date for Plan Completion \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty signature & date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature & date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Student Services/Director of Doctoral Program signature & date

\_\_\_\_\_  
The above student has successfully completed the Action Plan.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty signature & date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature & date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Student Services/Director of Doctoral Program signature & date

*Please return this form to the Academic Advisor's office*

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work  
Advancement to MSW Candidacy  
Memorandum

TO \_\_\_\_\_  
FROM \_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Student Services/Academic Advisor  
RE Decision Regarding Advancement to MSW Candidacy  
DATE

The faculty met and reviewed your candidacy status as required by the college's Student Standards Policy (see Graduate College of Social Work Handbook). The faculty took the following action regarding your candidacy:

- The faculty approved your candidacy application and you are advanced to candidacy status pending successful completion (see 1.03) of the foundation semester.
- The faculty deferred a decision pending successful completion of an action plan. Please make an appointment with me within one week to discuss your action plan and the following action(s) (marked with an X).
  - You can only take courses approved by your academic advisor.
  - You cannot take any advanced courses until candidacy is approved.
- The faculty denied your candidacy application at this point and you cannot take any courses until you successfully complete the Foundation requirements within a year.
- The faculty denied your candidacy application; your enrollment in the Graduate College of Social Work will be terminated.

If you have any questions about your candidacy, please contact me at 713-743-\_\_\_\_\_.

cc Student File

University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work

PETITION for Candidacy Review

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Commentary:** (State your reasons to support your candidacy review)

Check here if additional documentation is attached.

Check here if an Action Plan has been filed with the student's academic advisor.

(Dean's Office Only)

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_