

**Faculty of Social Work
University of Regina**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES REGARDING
STUDENT PROFESSIONAL SUITABILITY**

Introduction

The nature of the study and practice of social work places individuals in a place of trust in relation to those they serve and in a close relationship with fellow students, colleagues and staff in the university setting. The Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) at the University of Regina are proud of its graduates who are serving individuals, families, and communities but understands that not all persons are suitable to undertake this profession for reasons beyond their academic abilities.

The granting of a degree by this institution constitutes acknowledgment that students are deemed qualified and suitable as social work practitioners upon graduation, and that they will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. Unprofessional conduct by students may have direct repercussions on the University and therefore, such behaviour will be addressed in a serious manner by the University.

Rationale

As graduate students and future social workers, students must subscribe to a set of social work values and ethics, which include respect for the inherent dignity and worth of the person, the pursuit of social justice, service to humanity as well as integrity, confidentiality and competence in professional practice.

The most suitable person for social work is someone who believes in the values and goals of the profession and the trust placed in it, who understands the harm and hurt of discrimination and oppression, is caring and sensitive, and is an advocate for social improvement and against exploitation.

The Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE), the Faculty of Social Work's accrediting body, states that all accredited Faculties of Social Work are to have "a policy requiring that the performance of professional responsibilities of social work students be in accordance with the relevant social work codes of ethics"¹ and further requires that "[t]he academic unit has a policy regarding the professional suitability of the student for the profession of social work. Students are made aware that serious or repeated violations of the Code of Ethics put them at risk of exclusion from the program on the basis of professional unsuitability."²

The Faculty of Social Work recognizes its responsibility to students, to support their appropriate efforts to gain knowledge and the right of students to due process. To this end, the Faculty of Social Work adopts the following policy and procedures in the

¹ CASWE Accreditation Standards, retrieved from: <http://caswe-acfts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/COAStandardsMay2012.pdf> See, Student Development at SB/M 2.4.4.

² CASWE Accreditation Standards, Student Development at SB/M 2.4.5.

interests of protecting the rights, safety and well-being of all parties through the establishment of a system which shall be made known to students at the outset of their program. It will enable the Faculty to protect the best interests of all through a mechanism by which students showing unsatisfactory performance of professional responsibilities, apart from their academic performance, may be required to disengage themselves from the Faculty or the University or to undertake supplemental or remedial developmental tasks.

The Basic Guidelines

The Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) may require a student to discontinue from their program for reasons of unsatisfactory performance of professional responsibilities (Evaluation of Academic Performance, U. or R. Undergraduate Calendar and the Program Requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research). The Faculty of Social Work reserves the right and responsibility to assess students both on academic and non-academic grounds and take appropriate actions in accordance with the following legislation, policies and guidelines:

- The University of Regina Regulations Governing Discipline for Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct
- The Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2005)
- Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW) Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan (2012) and any other Standards developed by SASW;
- Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Program Requirements.

The Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) respect the rights of students, and in instituting and administering this policy will do so in accordance with human rights legislation.

The **University of Regina Regulations Governing Discipline for Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct** contain sections governing both academic performance and student misconduct (academic and other). It states that such misconduct is subject to disciplinary action.³

The **Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2005)** is a central document that sets standards, regulates the behaviour of practitioners and aspiring practitioners.⁴

The Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) Accreditation Standards (2012) recommends that the CASW Code of Ethics be the basis and standard for suitability regulation.⁵ Further, section 3.9.2 of the CASWE Educational Policy Statements states “Schools shall also have published policies and procedures providing for the termination of those social work students found to be engaging in behaviour contrary to the relevant social work Code of Ethics, and who are therefore judged to be unsuitable for the profession of social work.”⁶

³ University of Regina Undergraduate Calendar and Course Catalog: Attendance, Evaluation, Discipline and Appeals

⁴ Canadian Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005). Retrieved from <http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/what-social-work/casw-code-ethics>

⁵ CASWE Accreditation Standards see note 1

⁶ CASWE Educational Policy Statements (2009)

SASW Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan (2012) operationalizes the CASW Code of Ethics and serves as a guide for assessing the professional conduct of social workers in the Province of Saskatchewan.⁷

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Program Requirements state that Graduate Students will be required to discontinue for, among other reasons, “academic misconduct (plagiarism in courses or thesis, cheating, claiming undue credit for group work, misrepresentation or other unethical behaviour).”⁸

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Grounds for Action

Action may be taken any time a student is suspected of unsatisfactory performance of professional responsibilities. Such unsatisfactory performance of professional responsibilities by a student may take many forms including, but not limited to:

- a) having conducted him/herself in a way that contravenes any section of the CASW Code of Ethics (2005) for acceptable professional behaviour;
- b) having conducted him/herself in a way that contravenes the Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan (2012) or any other SASW practice standards;
- c) having concealed or distorted the truth in completing the Application for Admission to the Faculty of Social Work, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research or the University of Regina; and
- d) impaired judgment or functioning⁹ in any client contact pursuant to a requirement of a class or practicum.

Procedures

The Dean of the Faculty of Social Work and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) shall insure the following procedures are guided by the principles of natural justice.

If an instructor, faculty member, Field Education Coordinator, Field Liaison, Field Instructor, Professional Associate or student identifies a student demonstrating unsatisfactory performance of professional responsibilities in accord with the above guidelines, the following process shall be initiated:

⁷ Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan Regina, SASW (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.sasw.ca/policies/Standards-document.pdf>

⁸ Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Program Requirements: Delays to Completion. Retrieved from <http://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/grad-calendar/program-reqts.html>

⁹ The CASW Code of Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Practice 2005, s. 7.2.2 describes impairment as: “[emanating], for example, from personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse or mental health difficulties.”

- a) The complainant shall document in writing to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Work the incident(s) and behaviors which are assessed to be indicative of unsatisfactory professional development.
- b) If the complaint involves a social work Graduate Student, the matter will be referred by the Dean (or designate) of the Faculty of Social Work to the Dean (or designate) of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.
- c) The Dean¹⁰ will request a meeting with the complainant and the student at the earliest convenient time to clarify all acts of the matter and attempt a resolution.
- d) If, after this meeting the Dean deems it warranted, she or he will:
 - i) establish a review panel composed of a minimum of three persons - a Faculty of Social Work faculty member unconnected with the immediate facts of the case who will be the chair, a member in good standing of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers and a student acceptable to the Student Society. In the case of the Indigenous Social Work Program, two Elders, recommended by the Director of the School of Indigenous Social Work, will be also included in the review panel;
 - ii) notify the student by registered letter at least five working days prior to the date of the review panel hearing, providing a copy of all supporting documentation;
 - iii) advise the student of his/her right to challenge the selection of any panel member;
 - iv) advise the student he or she may be accompanied by an advocate.
- d) The review panel will meet in closed session with the student to discuss his/her professional development and make one of the recommendations indicated below. The student may be accompanied by an advocate who may advise the student and who may speak on her/his behalf. The proceedings shall be officially recorded.

The following recommendations may be made to the Dean:

- i) that the student be allowed to continue in the program without qualification;
- ii) that the student be allowed to continue on a conditional basis with conditions indicated in writing;
- iii) that the student be required to discontinue for a specified period of time until conditions, indicated in writing, have been met;

¹⁰ The Dean (or designate) referred to in the following section will be the Dean of the Faculty of Social Work if the student is an undergraduate social work student and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research if the student is a graduate social work student.

iv) that the student be required to discontinue for a specified period of time or indefinitely in accordance with the regulations of the University of Regina.¹¹

- e) After due deliberation the Dean will convey his/her decision in writing with reasons and advise the student of the right to appeal to the U. of R. Council Discipline Committee in accordance with procedures set out in the University Calendar and subject to further appeal to the Senate Appeals Committee under the University of Regina Act, Section 33.
- f) All members of the review panel are required to observe confidentiality regarding all matters pursuant to the review.

Action taken under this policy does not preclude action under the University's Discipline or Academic Regulations or Harassment Policies or other applicable policy/procedure.

Revised December 10, 2003
Revised FSC, May 12, 2004
Revised SWAS June 14, 2007
Revised SWAS April 16, 2014
Revising July 31, 2015

¹¹ Please see s. 33 of the *University of Regina Act*.