

Florida Atlantic University
Phyllis and Harvey Sandler School of Social Work
Professional Expectations of Student Behavior

INTRODUCTION:

The Phyllis and Harvey Sandler School of Social Work at Florida Atlantic University is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in the social work program. The School of Social Work also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession of social work. As members of the social work profession, social work students are expected to follow the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (available at <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics>). Acting in an ethical manner includes interactions with other students, professors, field instructors, and clients, whether in person, in writing, or through technology. Given this context, it is an academic requirement for all students in the social work program to exhibit the following ethical and professional standards of behavior.

I. Ethical and Professional Standards.

(a) Accountability:

- a. Attend class, arrive on time, and return from break in a timely manner.
- b. *Participate in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to peers.*
- c. *Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided.*
- d. *Come to class prepared, with readings and other homework completed.*

(b) Respect:

- a. Treat all your peers, your instructors, and all those you come in contact with, with dignity and respect at all times.
- b. *Listen while others are speaking.*
- c. *Give feedback to peers in a constructive manner.*
- d. *Approach conflict with peers or instructors in a cooperative manner.*
- e. *Use positive and non-judgmental language.*

(c) Confidentiality:

- a. Treat any personal information that you hear about a peer or an instructor as strictly confidential.
 - i. *Maintain any information shared in class, dyads, or smaller groups within that unit.*
 - ii. *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 for counseling.)*
 - iii. *Never use the names of clients or disclose other identifying information in the classroom.*

(d) Competence:

- a. Apply yourself to all your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by your instructors.
- b. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
 - i. *Come to class with books, handouts, syllabus, and pens.*
 - ii. *Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success completing course requirements.*
 - iii. *Take responsibility for the quality of completed tests and assignments.*
 - iv. *Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients.*

(e) Integrity:

- a. Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors.
- b. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.

(f) Academic:

- a. Commit yourself to learning the rules of citing other's work properly.
- b. *Do your own work and take credit only for your own work.*
- c. *Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed.*
- d. *Accept and benefit from constructive feedback.*

(g) Diversity:

- a. Strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds that you are not familiar with.
- b. Embrace diversity.
- c. *Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, or stereotyping.*
- d. *Exhibit a willingness to serve diverse groups of persons.*
- e. *Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.*

(h) Communication:

- a. Strive to improve both verbal and written communication skills as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records.
 - i. *Demonstrate assertive communication with peers and instructors.*
 - ii. *Practice positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills with peers and instructor: (body language, empathy, listening).*

(i) Social Justice:

- a. Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all populations at risk.
 - i. *Demonstrate an understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups.*
 - ii. *Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.*

Master of Social Work

Student Success Conference Policy, Overview, & Procedures

II. Policies.

In addition to the University Regulations and Policies in place to address academic and behavioral concerns, a Student Success Conference Policy has been established within the Sandler School of Social Work to ensure that students meet the academic and professional standards required above. A Student Success Conference may be called due to a student's potential violation of the *Professional Expectations of Student Behavior* and/or academic performance. A Student Success Conference may also be called by a student or faculty member when the student's personal, professional, or academic circumstances require guidance or assistance.

The Student Success Conference ("conference") provides a formal procedure to deal constructively with the problem(s) with the goal of supporting the student's success. However, the conference is not a hearing or legal proceeding. Instead, it is an opportunity for faculty and student to collaborate on a plan for academic success. The process allows the student and the faculty to address any concerns, specific to the student's failure to adhere to professional and/or academic standards described in the *Professional Expectations of Student Behavior*.

Participants at the Student Success Conference may include the student, relevant and current faculty and staff members, a representative from the field education department, and if the student desires, an advisor of their choice to serve only in an observational capacity. An advisor is defined as another Florida Atlantic University student, Florida Atlantic University faculty or staff member, or a Florida Atlantic University SAS consultant. If the student invites an advisor that is not social work faculty or staff, or a SAS consultant the student must complete a FERPA form located at <http://www.fau.edu/registrar/records/StudentFerpa.php>

The recommendations provided by the committee include an assessment of the student's level and quality of participation during the conference. Students are encouraged to come to the meeting prepared to discuss the alleged failure to demonstrate professional behavior and/or academic performance, as well as potential solutions to remedy the concerns. Unprofessional behavior during the conference or failure to complete the committee's recommendations can lead to dismissal from the Sandler School of Social Work. The School may terminate a student's participation in the program if the faculty determines that a student's behavior has constituted a significant violation or pattern of violations of the NASW Code of Ethics or Florida Atlantic University School of Social Work's Student Manual. These violations may include but are not limited to:

- (a)** Failure to meet or maintain the University and Social Work program academic grade point requirements.
- (b)** Academic cheating, lying, or plagiarism.
- (c)** Behavior judged to be in violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.

- (d) Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity, or emotional stability requisite for professional practice.
- (e) Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward colleagues, faculty, or staff (at the School or in the field placement).
- (f) Consistent failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional relationships (for example, unable to demonstrate a non-judgmental attitude or unable to allow client self-determination).
- (g) Evidence of criminal activity occurring during the course of study.

III. Overview.

The conference is convened and chaired by the program coordinator after the student or a faculty member makes a request. The program coordinator or program assistant notifies the student and other participants of the meeting's proposed date and time via email. If a student fails to respond to the notification within five business days, the conference shall proceed without the student's confirmation or the student being present. Failure to attend the conference may result in the student's automatic dismissal from the School of Social Work.

Once all participants have heard the specific concerns and potential resolutions, the program coordinator and faculty in attendance shall make formal written recommendations to the student and the Director that may include steps for improvement, remediation, or dismissal. Such recommendations will consist of the timeline for improvement or remediation, as necessary, as well as how (and by whom) successful remediation will be evaluated. A student's failure to follow these recommendations can result in dismissal.

IV. Procedure.

1. The conference facilitator begins by asking participants to introduce themselves and explain their experiences and observations of the student.
2. The facilitator informs the participants that the conference's goal is to create a plan by which the student may progress and eventually graduate from the BSW program.
3. The facilitator explains to the student that each faculty member will provide their observations/experiences without interruption.
4. After the faculty has spoken, the student will be allowed to speak and consider the feedback's validity and make recommendations regarding an action plan to support their academic success.
5. The student is excused, and faculty continue to contribute to this discussion and support the coordinator in developing a proposed recommendation for the student's success.
6. Within 5-7 business days, a meeting minute's report, in addition to a recommendation letter (*i.e.*, the committee's recommendations, suggestions, and findings) is emailed to the student.
7. Students who desire to ***appeal the recommendations***, which may include dismissal, must submit their appeal via email to the Director (not the program coordinator) no later than five business days. If the student fails to submit an

- appeal related to dismissal within the allotted time frame, the student will be dismissed from the program, and receive a formal dismissal letter from the Director. The dismissal letter is effective immediately, and there will be no further communication between the student and the School of Social Work.
8. If the student appeals, the Director will schedule a meeting with the student and only discuss the Success Committee's recommendations. Students should note that the Director is independent of the Success Committee. Therefore, it is not considered another Success conference, but an opportunity for the student to state what changes they have made or are willing to make regarding the Success Committee's recommendations.
 9. After meeting with the student, the Director will provide the student with a decision of the appeal within five business days. The Director's decision will be *final* and cannot be appealed to the School of Social Work.
 10. If dismissal from the School of Social Work is recommended, the student will have an opportunity to appeal the dismissal via the Provost's memo linked herein entitled: [Academic Dismissal of Students from a Graduate Degree Program](#).

Please contact the MSW program coordinator with questions regarding the content in this document. This document can also be found at:
<http://sw-cj.fau.edu/ssw/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/SSW-Prof-Expectations-of-Student-Behavior.pdf>