Title change to "Student Remediation Policy" effective 4-17-06

Student Remediation Policy

Masters Program in Counseling
Department of Counseling Psychology
And Guidance Services

Rationale and Procedures

This document has been developed to delineate the procedures used by the Masters training program to (a) evaluate student performance, (b) respond to problematic or inadequate student performance, and (c) ensure that due process is accorded all parties during the evaluative and review process.

The document is divided into seven sections:

I) Introductory Remarks, II) Definition of Academic Problematic Behavior; III) Due Process—General Guidelines, IV) General Guidelines for Student and Training Program Responsibilities; V) Student Evaluation, Review, and Due Process Procedures, VI) Grievance Procedures, and VII) Remediation Considerations.

I. Introductory Remarks

The faculty of the counseling Masters Degree training program in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services has the responsibility to assess the progress of each student. The primary purpose of this assessment is to facilitate academic, professional, and personal growth as well as provide feedback in a timely manner. This document is not intended to address issues of student impairment that fall under the purview of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In cases in which an ADA impairment is identified or suspected the affected student would be directed to the Office of Disabled Student Development to document the impairment and the appropriate accommodations.

II. Definition of Academic/Professional Problematic Behavior

For purposes of this document, problematic behavior is defined broadly as an interference in academic/professional functioning that is reflected in one or more of the following ways:

A. An inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate academic/professional standards into one's repertoire of academic/professional behavior.

B. An inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate academic/professional skills in order to reach an acceptable level of competency.

C. An inability and/or unwillingness to adaptively manage personal stress, psychological dysfunction, and/or excessive emotional reactions that interfere with academic/professional functioning.

Evaluative criteria that link this definition of problematic behavior to particular academic/professional behaviors are incorporated in the specific evaluation for academic/professional courses and through student's clinical supervision. Evaluations are completed at several intervals (e.g. ongoing supervision) during each student's Masters training.

While it is a professional judgment as to when a student's behavior rises to the level of potential remediation rather than just being problematic (i.e. behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics which, while of concern and requiring remediation, are not perceived to be unexpected or excessive for professionals-in-training), problems typically become require remediation when they include one or more of the following characteristics:

A. The student does not acknowledge, understand, or address the problem when it is identified.
B. The problem is not merely a reflection of a skill deficit that can be rectified by academic or didactic training.
C. The quality of services delivered by the student is sufficiently negatively affected.
D. The problem is not restricted to one area of academic/professional functioning.
E. A disproportionate amount of attention by faculty/training personnel is required to address the student's problems.
F. The student's behavior does not change as a function of feedback, remedial efforts, and/or time.
G. The problematic behavior has ethical or legal ramifications for the department.
H. The student's behavior when representing the department negatively affects the public view of the department.

Adapted from:

Lamb, D., Presser, N., Pfost, K., Baum, M., Jackson, V., & Jarvis, P. (1987). Confronting professional impairment during the internship: Identification, due process, and remediation. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 18, 587-603.

III. Due Process: General Guidelines

Due process ensures that decisions made about student's progress in the program are not arbitrary or personally based and requires that programs identify specific evaluative procedures that are applied to all students and has appropriate appeal procedures available to the student so he/she may challenge the program's action. General due process guidelines include:

A. Presenting students, in writing, with the program's expectations related to academic/professional functioning;
B. Stipulating the procedures for evaluation, including when and how evaluations will be conducted. Such evaluations should occur at prescribed intervals and are constituted by course grades, the content exam, and individual evaluations from practicums and internships;
C. Articulating the various procedures and actions involved in making decisions regarding problematic behavior;
D. Communicating, early and often, with students about any suspected difficulties;
E. Instituting a remediation plan for identified inadequacies, including a time frame for expected remediation and consequences of not rectifying the inadequacies within that time;
F. Providing a written procedure to the student that describes how the student may appeal the program's action.
G. Ensuring that students have sufficient time to respond to any action taken by the program;
H. Using input from multiple professional sources when making decisions or recommendations regarding the student's performance; and
I. Documenting, in writing to all relevant parties involved, the action taken by the program and its rationale for such action.

IV. Guidelines for Student and Training Program Responsibilities

The masters training offered by the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services offers essential academic and practical experiences that foster the goal of developing a "well-rounded" professional counselor. As a result, there are several general expectations and responsibilities of all students regarding their academic/professional performance in attaining program goals as well as their individual personal goals. Likewise, there are general responsibilities that the program assumes in assisting the student to attain an acceptable level of academic/professional competency. These expectations and responsibilities are identified below:

A. Training Program's Expectations and Responsibility of Students

The expectation of the students are divided into three major areas: 1) knowledge of and conformity to relevant academic/professional standards, (2) acquisition of appropriate academic/professional skills, and (3) appropriate management of personal concerns and issues as they relate to academic/professional functioning.

B. General Responsibilities of the Training Program

The faculty of the training program is committed to providing an environment to assist students in integrating personal values and attitudes, functioning as individuals, and meeting their academic/professional goals. The faculty will provide students with information regarding academic/professional standards and guidelines as well as information regarding relevant legal regulations that govern the practice of counseling. In addition, departmental standards are provided to students in the program handbook.

V. Initial Procedures for Responding to Inadequate Performance by a Student

The review process may be initiated by any faculty member, including course instructor, assistantship supervisor, research supervisor, practicum/clinic supervisor, thesis chair, or any member who evaluates a student's performance as "inadequate for a student-in-training" in an area of academic/professional standards, academic/professional competency, or personal functioning. This evaluation of "inadequate for a student-in-training" will be communicated to the Graduate Studies Committee. If a student receives a rating of "inadequate for a student-in-training" in any of the major categories of evaluation, the following procedures will be initiated:

A. The Graduate Studies Committee will meet to discuss the rating and determine what action needs to be taken to address the issues reflected by the rating.
B. The student will be notified in writing that such a review is occurring and the Graduate Studies Committee will receive any information or statement from the student related to his/her response to the rating. The student may attend the meeting in his/her own defense.
C. In discussing the inadequate rating and the response, if available, the Graduate Studies Committee may adopt any one or more of the following resolutions:

    1. Take no further action.
    2. Issue an "acknowledgment notice" to the student which formally acknowledges:

        a. that the committee is aware of and concerned with the rating;
        b. that the rating has been brought to the attention of the student; and
        c. that the Graduate Studies Committee will work with the student to rectify the problem or skill deficits addressed by the rating.

    3. Put the student on "probation" which defines a relationship such that the Graduate Studies Committee actively and systematically monitors for a specified length of time the degree to which the student addresses, changes, and/or otherwise improves the behavior associated with the inadequate rating. The probation is a written statement to the student and includes:

        a. the actual behaviors associated with the inadequate rating;
        b. the specific recommendations for rectifying the problem;
        c. the time frame for the probation during which the problem is expected to be ameliorated; and
        d. the procedures designed to ascertain whether the problem has been appropriately rectified and the consequences for compliance/noncompliance.

    4. Recommend termination from the program.

D. The Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling will then meet with the student to review any specified conditions. The student may choose to accept the conditions or may choose to challenge the action.

VI. Situations in Which Grievance Procedures are Initiated

There are two situations in which grievance procedures can be initiated: (1) When the student challenges the action taken by the Graduate Studies Committee or (2) when the Graduate Studies Committee is not satisfied with the student's action in response to its action and there is a continuation of inadequate performance. If a student believes the grievance involves illegal discrimination, then the student should contact the Office of University Compliance and/or other relevant university offices (e.g. Office of Disabled Student Development, Ombudsperson's Office, Dean of Students).

A. If the student challenges the action taken by the committee as described previously, he/she must inform the Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling in writing of such a challenge within seven (7) business days of the committee's decision.

    1. The Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling will convene the Graduate Studies Committee. The student retains the right to hear all facts with the opportunity to dispute or explain his/her behavior.
    2. A review hearing will be conducted in which the challenge is heard and the evidence presented.
    3. The Graduate Studies Committee will submit a report to the student, the Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling, and the Department Head within five (5) business days of the hearing completion which will include recommendations for further action. Decisions of the committee will be made by majority vote.
    4. Further action will follow departmental and university grievance guidelines.

B. If the Graduate Studies Committee determines that there has not been sufficient improvement in the student's behavior to remove the inadequate rating under the conditions stipulated, the Graduate Studies Committee will communicate this in writing to the student. The Graduate Studies Committee may then recommend:

    1. Continuation of the probation for a specified time.
    2. Suspension whereby the student is not allowed to continue engaging in certain designated academic/professional activities until there is evidence that the behavior in question has improved.
    3. Termination from the program.

Within five (5) business days of the receipt of the committee's determination, the student may respond to the action by (1) accepting the action or (2) challenging the GSC's action.

A. If a challenge is made, the student must inform the Director of Masters Program in Counseling in writing of such a challenge within seven (7) business days of the Graduate Studies Committee's decision. The student must also include a statement concerning why he/she believes the Graduate Studies Committee's action is unwarranted. A lack of response by the student will be interpreted as complying with the Graduate Studies Committee's sanction.

1. If a challenge is made, the Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling will convene the Graduate Studies Committee. The student retains the right to hear all facts with the opportunity to dispute or explain his/her behavior.
2. A review hearing will be conducted in which the challenge is heard and the evidence presented.

    a. The Graduate Studies Committee will submit a report to the student, the Director of Masters Degree Program in Counseling and the Department Head within seven (7) business days of the hearing completion, which will include recommendations for further action. Decisions of the committee will be made by majority vote.
    b. Further action will follow departmental and university grievance guidelines.

VII. Remediation Considerations

It is important to have meaningful ways to address problematic behavior once it has been identified. Several possibilities and perhaps concurrent courses of action designed to remediate problematic behavior include but are not limited to:

A. Increasing academic/professional supervision, either with the same or other faculty members;
B. Changing the format, emphasis, and/or focus of academic/profession supervision;
C. Recommending and/or requiring personal therapy in a way that all parties involved have clarified the manner in which therapy contacts will be used in the student evaluation process;
D. Reducing the student's clinical or other workload and/or requiring specific academic coursework; and/or
E. Recommending, when appropriate, a leave of absence.

When a combination of the interventions mentioned in this policy do not, after a reasonable time period (as pre-determined by the student and Graduate Studies Committee), rectify the problematic behavior, or when the student seems unable or unwilling to alter his/her behavior, the training program may need to take more formal action, such as:

A. Giving the student limited endorsement, including the specification of those settings in which he/she could function adequately;
B. Recommending and assisting in implementing a career shift for the student; and/or
C. Terminating the student from the program.

All of the steps mentioned in this policy must be appropriately documented and implemented in ways that are consistent with due process procedures.

Reviewed by University Affirmative Action Office 1/97

Reviewed/approved by University Compliance 9/14/2007