

Student Professional Behaviour Policy (MSW)

York University Master of Social Work (MSW) Student Professional

Behaviour Policy PREAMBLE

POLICY

A. Behaviour that may result in failure or withdrawal from the MSW program

The standards required of Social Work students are those set forth in the *Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (CASW)*¹, the *Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Standards of Practice*² and the School of Social Work's "MSW Practicum Manual". Conduct that breaches the York University *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* or any other relevant York University policy³ including but not limited to the Policy Concerning Academic Honesty, the Sexual Harassment Policy and the Policy Concerning Racism, may also be found to constitute unprofessional behaviour and allegations of such behaviour may be dealt with concurrently under this Policy and under the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

A student who fails to abide by such standards may, depending on the gravity of the breach, face consequences ranging from failure in a specific course to being withdrawn from the Program with no possibility of return. Such consequences are independent of any proceedings or consequences that may be imposed by the professional governing body of a student who is already a registered Social Worker at the time of such breach.

¹ http://www.casw-acts.ca/sites/default/files/attachements/CASW_Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf

² <http://www.ocswws.org/docs/codeofethicsstandardspractice.pdf>

³ For a complete list see <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/>

B. Jurisdiction

Allegations of a breach of professional behavioural or ethical standards by a student enrolled in the MSW degree program offered by the School of Social Work, York University, shall be dealt with by the School of Social Work, York University, in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

C. Circumstances leading to a Student Professional Behaviour Review

1. A Student Professional Behaviour Review is to be conducted when there is evidence indicating that a student may have engaged in any behaviour that is deemed unprofessional.
2. Non-Practicum Courses: in instances where a Course Director of a non-practicum social work course has concerns about student behaviour that have not been resolved through discussion with the student, they will consult with the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Director, the Course Director and the student will normally meet to discuss the concerns in the hopes of determining a resolution. If no resolution is achieved or if conditions agreed to by the student as part of the resolution were not fulfilled the matter shall be referred for a Student Professional Behaviour Review.
3. Practicum Courses: in the event that a Faculty Advisor, Field Instructor, or the Field Coordinator has concerns about the behaviour of a student enrolled in SOWK 5350 6.0 or SOWK 5310 6.0 (Practicum and Advanced Practicum), they will follow policies detailed in the School of Social Work's Practicum Manual. Where the matter concerns the possible outcome of denying the student an opportunity to complete the practicum requirement, the matter shall be referred for a Student Professional Behaviour Review.
4. When allegations of a breach of professional behaviour standards by a student enrolled

in the MSW program come from a venue other than a MSW course or practicum, the matter will be investigated by the Graduate Program Director or designate. Normally this investigation will include meeting with the student to discuss the allegation in the hopes of determining a resolution. If no resolution is achieved or if conditions agreed to by the student are not fulfilled, the matter shall be referred for a Student Professional Behaviour Review.

D. Student Professional Behaviour Review Procedure

1. Once informed of a potential breach of professional behaviour standards by a student in the MSW degree program, the designated Faculty causes the Office of the Registrar to post a block on the student's enrolment activity in the concerned course(s). The student may not drop or be deregistered from the course for any reason, nor withdraw from the University, nor may transcripts be released to the student, until the Professional Behaviour Review has been completed and a final decision is reached in any appeal from it.
2. The Graduate Program Director of the School or their designate asks the designated Faculty office to convene a review committee consisting of three persons: the Associate Dean of Students of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, or their designate; the Director of the School of Social Work; and one other full-time School of Social Work faculty member who is also appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and who has not been privy to the alleged behaviour or discussions concerning it.
3. The Graduate Program Director of the School or their designate and the Manager of Field Education for the School or their designate are responsible for presenting the evidence and testimony concerning the alleged unprofessional behaviour. They may call testimony from the Course Directors if the behaviour was observed by them or occurred in a course or courses, and/or from Field Instructors including placement agency staff where the behaviour occurred in a practicum setting, as well as from any other person(s) with relevant knowledge.
4. The student is notified in writing by email and by courier or priority commercial post of the intention to hold a Student Professional Behaviour Review. The notice contains proposed date(s) and time(s) that are a minimum of **twenty-one** calendar days following the date on which the notification is sent out to the student. It is the student's responsibility to provide the School with their current email, postal and telephone contact information. If, by reason of having failed to update their contact information with the University, the student either fails to receive the notice or receives it late, the Review hearing may be conducted without the student's participation.
5. The notification to the student includes a summary description of the alleged behaviour, an indication of the standard it breached, and an outline of the procedures to be followed.
6. The student's first obligation is to respond, within **seven** days of delivery of the above-described notification, to the proposed time and date for the hearing. If this is not done the Review hearing may take place without further consultation of the student as to time or date.
7. If the student wishes to file a written substantive response to the allegation, it must be delivered and confirmed as received within **fourteen** calendar days following delivery of the notification of the Review.
8. No less than seven calendar days prior to the Review hearing, all parties are required to inform the Review Committee of their intention to call witnesses and the names of these witnesses.
9. The student may bring a representative to the Review hearing to call evidence, question witnesses and make closing submissions. If the student chooses to do this, the representative's name and relationship to the student must be provided to the

Director in advance of the Review.

10. The Director or designate chairs the Review hearing. A School staff person may be designated to take notes of the timing and order of witnesses and any rulings made by the Review Committee during the proceeding.
11. The representatives of the School first present their concerns. If witnesses are present they are called to present their information concerning the alleged behaviour of the student. The student or the student's representative is then given an opportunity to put questions to the witnesses about the evidence presented and to present evidence in response. Finally, the representatives of the School have an opportunity to comment on any issues or information that has been presented by the student. The Review Committee is not bound by formal rules of evidence applicable in courts of law.
12. When all available relevant evidence and witnesses have been heard and both the faculty representatives and the student have had opportunity to sum up about the case, the Review Committee then enters into a closed session to determine whether a breach of professional standards or ethics occurred and, if so, what actions will be taken. The decision is made by a majority vote of the review committee.
13. A Student Professional Behaviour Review results in one of four possible outcomes:
 - i) A finding that no breach of professional standards or ethics has occurred. No records will be retained.
 - ii) A finding that a breach of professional standards or ethics has occurred but it is determined that no action other than remedial educative measures will be taken;
 - iii) A finding that a breach of professional standards or ethics has occurred that warrants the imposition of conditions on the student as a requirement for continuation in the program.
 - iv) A finding that a breach of professional or ethical standards has occurred that warrants either or both assigning a grade of F in the course and withdrawal of the student from the MSW degree program.
14. The decision of the Review Committee is communicated to the student in writing and is delivered by hand, by email or by mail, at the discretion of the Committee. The decision incorporates a summary of the timing and of the evidence presented and testimony heard before expressing the Review Committee's findings and conclusions. No minority or dissenting opinion is expressed. Except where the outcome is (i) above (no breach), a record of the decision is retained in the Office of the Director of the School of Social Work, regardless of the severity of the outcome, for a time consistent with the University's records retention guidelines. This record is for internal academic purposes only. A note shall be placed on the Student Information System to bar retroactive withdrawal from the course.

E. Appeals

Students may appeal a decision of a Student Professional Behaviour Review Committee to the FGS Appeals Committee on grounds permitted by FGS. Information on the FGS Appeals Committee procedures can be found at: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/regulations/petitions-appeals/>