

## **g) Social Work-Specific Behaviour Policy**

### **Algoma University Social Work-Specific Behaviour Policy**

#### **Preamble**

In professional programs such as the HBSW, academic standards pertain to both professional and scholastic performance. The Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) requires that all Schools of Social Work have policies that meet the following CASWE Accreditation Standards:

- The school has a policy requiring that the performance of professional responsibilities of social work students be in accordance with the relevant social work codes of ethics.
- The school indicates how its policies and procedures provide for the termination of programs of those social work students found to be engaging in behaviour in violation of the relevant social work codes of ethics and who are therefore judged to be unsuitable for the profession of social work.
- The school demonstrates how these procedures are consistent with the relevant human rights legislation, with the mission of CASWE, and with the mission of the school concerned

Algoma University's *Social Work-Specific Behaviour Policy* intends to balance the HBSW Program's commitment to support and assist students, with the need to prepare students for social work practice in which they will have responsibility for, and can directly affect, vulnerable or marginalized individuals, families, and communities. The Policy provides guidelines that will help the Department to identify behaviours that suggest that a student may require assistance in order to meet standards of professional social work practice.

The purpose of Algoma University's *Social Work-Specific Behaviour Policy* is twofold:

1. to increase faculty and students awareness of the qualities considered to be suitable for a professional social worker
2. to guide faculty in evaluating student suitability for social work practice.

Students in the BSW program are expected to demonstrate attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) Standards of Practice, the Algoma University student code of conduct and relevant university bylaws or policies.

The suitability criteria<sup>1</sup> listed below are observable behaviours and qualities that are expected to be demonstrated during classroom participation; in written assignments and presentations; field placements and in other contexts on campus and in the community in which professional behaviour and qualities are expected. These behaviours and qualities derive from the CASW Code of Ethics.

The policy requires faculty to use their professional judgement in fostering acceptable standards of professional behaviour and assessing students' professional suitability. The policy also requires that students be mindful of and abide by such standards.

#### **Suitability Criteria**

- 1. Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons**
  - 1.1 Hears and considers viewpoints different from one's own
  - 1.2 Demonstrates awareness of, and ability to, assess and modify one's impact on others
  - 1.3 Understands the importance of promoting self-determination
  - 1.4 Encourages sharing of differing opinions
  - 1.5 Treats people with respect, honesty, courtesy, fairness and good faith
  - 1.6 Responds with attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, that accord dignity and worth
- 2. Pursuit of Social Justice**
  - 2.1 Willingness to advocate for social development and against oppression
  - 2.2 Shows initiative in efforts that advance social and economic justice on behalf of vulnerable populations
  - 2.3 Appreciates and understands micro and macro systems
  - 2.4 Articulates concerns of client groups within micro and macro contexts
  - 2.5 Understands social planning, social policy and legislative development as sources and processes of change and potential oppression

<sup>1</sup> based on suitability criteria for the Profession Policy Undergraduate Program, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN).

### **3. Service to Humanity**

- 3.1 Places needs of others before self-interest
- 3.2 Understands the harm of discrimination and oppression
- 3.3 Understands, appreciates and employs the principles of anti-oppressive practice
- 3.4 Uses power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society and clients
- 3.5 Understands knowledge and skills that assist in the management and resolution of conflicts

### **4. Integrity in Professional Practice**

- 4.1 Practice decisions are consistently guided by research and practice theory and knowledge
- 4.2 Regularly identifies gaps and limitations in knowledge and skill
- 4.3 Seeks feedback on performance, tries new approaches, accepts challenges, takes risks re: self-awareness and use of professional self
- 4.4 Demonstrates capacity for personal change
- 4.5 Takes responsibility for own decisions
- 4.6 Establishes appropriate boundaries in relationships
- 4.7 Demonstrates and promotes the qualities of honesty, reliability, impartiality and diligence
- 4.8 Ability to identify one's own contribution to problems and oppression and willingness to take action to correct these contributions

### **5. Confidentiality**

- 5.1 Respects the importance of trust and confidence placed in the professional relationship by clients and the public
- 5.2 Respects privacy and holds in confidence all material obtained in professional activities
- 5.3 Treats people in a manner that respects their right to privacy and freedom from harassment/abuse
- 5.4 Understands limits to confidentiality and clearly communicates these to others in compliance with legal requirements and organizational policies/procedures

### **6. Competent Application of Knowledge and Skills for Professional Practice**

- 6.1 Identifies and discloses to relevant others any issues that can affect competence (eg. to professor, someone in practicum setting, student services coordinator)
- 6.2 Initiates/develops/maintains relationships that are purposeful, disciplined, self-aware and relevant to practice endeavors
- 6.3 Communicates professionally and adequately both orally and in writing (within the context of diversity)
- 6.4 Ability to evaluate outcomes of actions
- 6.5 Uses knowledge to guide efforts
- 6.6 Punctual, dependable and responsible in all tasks and efforts
- 6.7 Ability to make appropriate and focused responses
- 6.8 Ability for self-direction and responsibility for one's own learning
- 6.9 Ability to apply critical thinking skills within the context of social work

### **Behaviour that May Result in a Review<sup>2</sup>**

Student reviews may occur under any of the following circumstances:

(1) commits any breach of the CASW Code of Ethics, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Standards of Practice, and/or any Algoma University Policy that relates to student behavior, such as the Algoma University Student Code of Conduct or the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty that would engage the behavioural and ethical standards of the profession;

(2) engages in any behaviour that causes individuals within the HBSW Program to have a serious or persistent concern about the effect of the student's behaviour on the learning environment. Reasons for the serious or persistent concern may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- speech or behaviour that contravenes the Ontario Human Rights Code (e.g. discrimination or harassment because of race, ancestry, place of origin, citizenship, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability). This includes gender harassment, sexist or hetero-sexist innuendo, climate and attitudes;
- any threat or attempt to physically harm oneself or another person;
- intimidation or threats to harm another person in non-physical ways.
- aggressive language and other forms of verbal abuse

The following sections outline policies and procedures to address concerns regarding students' behaviours that are inconsistent with the CASW Code of Ethics, the OCSWSSW Standards of Practice, or relevant university bylaws or policies. They provide students with a clear set of behavioural expectations. It is important that students review and become familiar with the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Practice, and University documents dealing with academic and non-academic behaviours, including:

- Student Code of Conduct, Academic

<sup>2</sup> Based on University of Windsor, School of Social Work's Student Professional Behaviour Policy

- Student Code of Conduct, Non-Academic
- Disciplinary Regulation on Academic Dishonesty
- Use of Information Technology Services Policy
- Special Needs Policy
- Human Rights Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Academic Regulations

All University bylaws and policies are available at the Senate website: <http://www.algomau.ca/policies>.

When the alleged behaviour is either harassment or discrimination as defined in Algoma University's Human Rights Policy, the Human Rights Procedures will take precedence over the process described in the social work behaviour policy. Disciplinary action for human rights violations are determined by the Algoma University President.

In addition to sanctions placed by the Social Work Behaviour Policy, students may also be subject to additional review and sanctions from the Algoma University Student Code of Conduct Policy.

### **Confidentiality and Sharing of Information**

The HBSW Program recognizes that the safety, confidentiality and self-determination of students or others who have been subjected to unprofessional conduct under this Policy is an important priority. In developing a response to a problem, the Program must balance confidentiality against its duty to protect existing and future students or persons who might otherwise be placed in jeopardy by a student who is acting in an unprofessional manner under this Policy.

Information disclosed during student meetings with instructors, practicum coordinator, or the Director of the HBSW program or her/his designate ("the Director") will not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about a student's capability of assuming the professional responsibilities of social work practice. Course Instructors, Faculty Field Liaisons, and/or the director will share pertinent information with each other in a respectful and professional manner for the purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns. The HBSW Program reserves the right to share information with the University or third parties as required by law.

### **The Review Process**

- A review depends upon the seriousness of the allegation of a breach under this Policy. The following procedure will act as a guideline should a breach of any of the relevant policies, bylaws, Code of Ethics, or Standards of Practice occur. Depending on the nature of the infraction, the HBSW Program reserves the right to proceed with a review at any stage that is deemed to be appropriate.
- At any stage of the review process, there should be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as well as verification that these concerns have been discussed with the student and attempts have been made to ameliorate the concerns, where appropriate. Students should be notified of the decision in writing within ten calendar days of the review.
- Records of any incidents that are subject to the review process will be placed in the student file.

### **Stage One Review**

**Classroom Instructor and Student.** When a classroom instructor has concerns about a student's professional behaviour that instructor should:

- (a) discuss those concerns directly with the student and seek to work with the student to resolve the concern;
- (b) document dates and content of all meetings with the student; and, if warranted,
- (c) notify the Director that the review process is being undertaken.

**Practicum instructor and student.** When a practicum instructor has concerns about a student's professional behaviour that instructor should follow the procedures in **Classroom instructor and Student** above, as well as discuss the concerns with the Field Practicum Coordinator following the procedure outlined in the Honours Bachelor of Social Work (HBSW) Field Practicum Manual.

In many instances, meetings between the parties resolve the concerns and do not lead to further reviews. The Director shall record in writing the discussions at the meetings and the resolution of the matter at this time. If after two weeks the concerns are not resolved at this stage, the parties may proceed to the next stage.

### **Stage Two Review**

**Classroom instructor and Student.** When a Stage Two review is deemed to be necessary:

- (a) The instructor or the student may notify the Director that the next stage of review is being requested.
- (b) The instructor and the Director will meet with the student to discuss the concerns. The student may elect to bring someone to the meeting. If the student plans to attend the meeting with someone, he/she must notify the Director, in advance, of the identity and relationship of that person (to the student).

**Practicum Instructor and student.** When a Stage Two review is deemed to be necessary:

- (a) the Field Practicum Coordinator will inform the Faculty Field Liaison and the Director that the next stage of review is being requested relating to the practicum concerns.
- (b) the Director will meet with the student, the practicum instructor, the Faculty Field Liaison, and the Field Practicum Coordinator to discuss the concerns. The student may elect to bring someone to the meeting. If the student plans to attend the meeting with someone, he/she must notify the Director, in advance, of the identity and relationship of that person (to the student).

Either the Director (in the case of concerns arising from the classroom) or the Coordinator of Field Education (in the case of concerns arising from the practicum) will determine the nature of the concerns and gather sufficient information to develop a written plan to address the concerns, if one is needed. No further action may be required, or the student may be asked, in writing, to modify his/her behaviour and/or seek appropriate help. This process is designed to assist students in dealing with identified concerns that have an impact on their performance in the Social Work program.

### **Stage Three Review**

Generally, a Stage Three review occurs when concerns have not been resolved within two weeks in the prior stages of review, the issues are serious enough and at the discretion of the Director require formal intervention, or the issues are serious enough that the student is being considered for withdrawal or discontinuance in the program or suspension or expulsion from the University.

Intervention at this stage will require the following:

- (a) formal disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct, for academic or non-academic misconduct;
- (b) withdrawal from study for medical reasons (Senate Committee on Academic Regulations and Petition)
- (c) a meeting of the Admissions, Continuance and Demission Committee to determine whether the student should be withdrawn from the program.

The procedures to be followed where one of these interventions is warranted can be found in the relevant bylaw or policy under which the matter is being processed.

### **Appeals**

Appeals are available to students who are aggrieved by a decision made at the Stage Three level of review. Appeals of those decisions are governed by the relevant bylaw or policy under which the matter was processed. Students seeking appeals should refer to processes outlined within relevant University bylaws or policies.