

Aurora University  
School of Social Work

**MSW POLICY HANDBOOK**

**Aurora Campus  
&  
George Williams Campus**

**2008 - 2009**

School of Social Work  
College of Professional Studies

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## CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

### **Accreditation and Certification**

The Masters of Social Work (MSW) program of Aurora University is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The MSW program at both the Aurora, Illinois, campus and George Williams Campus in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, is fully accredited. Aurora University is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

### **Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action**

Every aspect of the program's organization and implementation is conducted without discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, age, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, or political or sexual orientation. Furthermore, the program seeks to make continuous efforts to assure the enrichment of the educational experience it offers by reflecting racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity and equity to women throughout the curriculum and in all aspects of the program.

### **Type 73 School Certification**

All social workers wishing to be employed in public school settings must be certified by the Illinois State Board of Education. In order to be eligible for certification, social workers and social work students must fulfill the requirements of Aurora University's Certification Unit, which is authorized by the Illinois State Board of Education. Students who complete the requirements of the School Social Work curriculum are eligible to apply for Type 73 Certification in School Social Work.

## CHAPTER 2: MSW PROGRAM

### **School Mission**

The mission of the School of Social Work is to prepare competent and committed human service practitioners who will promote the development and enhancement of resilient communities, social groups, families, and individuals.

The School seeks to improve quality of life and community well-being and to promote social justice with emphasis on oppressed and vulnerable populations through excellent teaching, scholarship and research, and community service.

### **MSW Program Goals**

The goals of the MSW program are:

- Provide curricula and teaching practices at the forefront of the new and changing

knowledge base of social work and related disciplines.

- Provide curricula that build on a liberal arts perspective to promote breadth of knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills.
- Promoting continual professional development of students, faculty, and practitioners.
- Preparing social workers to engage in prevention activities that promote well-being.
- Preparing social workers to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Preparing social workers to evaluate the processes and effectiveness of practice.
- Preparing social workers to practice without discrimination, with respect, and with knowledge and skills related to clients' age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Preparing social workers to alleviate poverty, oppression, and other forms of social injustice.
- Preparing social workers to recognize the global context of social work practice.
- Preparing social workers to formulate and influence social policies and social work services in diverse political contexts.

## **Program Outcomes**

Social work education equips graduates to perform the broad range of tasks that constitute professional social work today. The MSW program prepares students to enter advanced social work practice. Individual student and program evaluation is based on the following outcomes:

### **Professional Foundation Objectives**

In the foundation curriculum, students will learn the following knowledge, values, and skills, which are fundamental to all social workers. Graduates demonstrate the ability to:

1. Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice;
2. Understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards and principles, and practice accordingly;
3. Practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills related to clients' age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure,

gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation;

4. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice;
5. Understand and interpret the history of the social work profession and its contemporary structures and issues;
6. Apply the knowledge and skills of a generalist social work perspective to practice with systems of all sizes;
7. Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals and between individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities;
8. Analyze, formulate, and influence social policies;
9. Evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions;
10. Use communication skills differentially across client populations, colleagues, and communities;
11. Use supervision and consultation appropriate to social work practice;
12. Function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems and seek necessary organizational change.

### **Professional Concentration Objectives**

The following objectives reflect the level of preparation that MSW students will have upon completion of the advanced curriculum, building on the foundation course work. Graduates demonstrate the following abilities:

### **Clinical Social Work Concentration**

1. Students are able to apply advanced clinical social work knowledge and skills from the clinical concentration to work with diverse populations, emphasizing their inherent strengths and coping resilience.
2. Students are able to demonstrate their ability to advance the quality of their work and their commitment to the larger social work profession.
3. Students are able to articulate the program's conception of advanced clinical practice, including theories, practice skills, policy and research principles.

4. Students are effective in providing clinical social work services to a variety of client populations.
5. Students are able to demonstrate an advanced understanding of research designs and methods through practical application.

### **Leadership and Community Practice Concentration**

1. Students are able to apply advanced leadership and community practice social work knowledge and skills to work with diverse populations, emphasizing their inherent strengths and coping resilience.
2. Students are able to demonstrate their ability to advance the quality of their work and their commitment to the larger social work profession.
3. Students are able to articulate the program's conception of advanced leadership and community practice, including theories, practice skills, policy and research principles.
4. Students are effective in providing leadership and community practice services to groups, agencies, organizations, and/or communities.
5. Students are able to demonstrate an advanced understanding of research designs and methods through practical application.

## **MSW PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **Prerequisites**

\*\* Basic Social Statistics course  
SWK 6500 Social Work Perspectives & Practice on Psychopathology (Advanced Standing Only)

### **FOUNDATION CURRICULUM – 30 Semester Hours (sh)**

#### **A. Social Welfare Policy (3.0 sh)**

SWK 6140 Social Welfare Policy & Institutions

#### **B. Human Behavior in the Social Environment (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6150 HBSE I: Infancy to Adolescence  
SWK 6160 HBSE II: Adult Lifespan

#### **C. Social Work Practice Theory & Methods (12.0 sh)**

SWK 6370 Social Work Practice I: Individuals & Families  
SWK 6381 Social Work Practice II: Group Work (1.5 sh)  
SWK 6382 Social Work Practice II: Community Practice (1.5 sh)  
SWK 6390 Social Work Practice with Diverse & Vulnerable Populations  
SWK 6500 Social Work Perspectives & Practice on Psychopathology

#### **D. Research (3.0 sh)**

SWK 6250 Research I: Social Work Research Methods

#### **E. Field Instruction (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6730 Field Instruction I: Beginning Internship  
SWK 6740 Field Instruction II: Beginning Internship

### **CONCENTRATION CURRICULUM – 30 sh**

#### **A. Social Welfare Policy (3.0 sh)**

SWK 6533 Advanced Social Policy

#### **B. Research (3.0 sh)**

SWK 6283 Practice & Program Evaluation

#### **C. Field Instruction (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6750 Field Instruction III: Advanced Internship  
SWK 6760 Field Instruction IV: Advanced Internship

## **CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK CONCENTRATION SEQUENCE:**

### **D. Social Work Practice Theory & Methods (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6511	Social Work Practice III: Clinical Theory & Methods
SWK 6521	Social Work Practice IV: Advanced Clinical Knowledge & Application

### **E. Electives (12.0 sh)**

12 semester hours; must be 5000-level or above; taken in either concentration

## **LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY PRACTICE CONCENTRATION SEQUENCE (30 sh):**

### **D. Social Work Practice Theory & Methods (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6512	Social Work Practice III: Leadership & Community Practice Theory & Methods
SWK 6522	Social Work Practice IV: Leadership & Community Practice Advanced Knowledge & Application

### **E. Electives (12.0 sh)**

12 semester hours; must be 5000-level or above; taken in either concentration

## **SEMESTER HOURS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60 S.H.**

### **SPECIALIZATION CURRICULUM**

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK CERTIFICATION**

### **A. Social Work Practice Theory & Methods (6.0 sh)**

SWK 6511	Social Work Practice III: Clinical Theory & Methods
SWK 6521	Social Work Practice IV: Advanced Clinical Knowledge & Application

### **B. Required Coursework (offered as electives) (9.0 sh)**

SWK 6410	School Social Work: Policy & Practice I
SWK 6420	School Social Work: Policy & Practice II
SWK 5610	Social Work Practice: Exceptional Child

### **C. Field Instruction (6.0 sh)\***

SWK 6750	Field Instruction III: Advanced Internship
SWK 6760	Field Instruction IV: Advanced Internship

\*Advanced internship must be completed in an approved public school setting with a minimum of 600 clock hours.

## GERONTOLOGY

### A. Social Work Practice Theory & Methods (6.0 sh)

SWK 6511	Social Work Practice III: Clinical Theory & Methods
SWK 6521	Social Work Practice IV: Advanced Clinical Knowledge & Application
<b>OR</b>	
SWK 6512	Social Work Practice III: Leadership & Community Practice Theory & Methods
SWK 6522	Social Work Practice IV: Leadership & Community Practice Advanced Knowledge & Application

### B. Required Coursework (offered as electives) (9.0 sh)

SWK 5100	Social Work Gerontology: Social Work & Older Adults
SWK 5110	Social Work Gerontology: Biology & Health of Aging
SWK6100	Social Work Gerontology: Assessment & Intervention with Older Adults
SWK6110	Gerontology: Families & Groups

## CHAPTER 3: CURRICULUM POLICIES

### A. Prerequisites

#### Undergraduate degree

All graduate students will be required to have received an undergraduate degree from an accredited university or college.

#### Basic social statistics course

All graduate students are required to complete a statistics course prior to beginning the MSW program. Students who meet the following criteria may apply for a course waiver: 1) Completion of statistics course within 5 years of date of application to the MSW program; 2) Received a grade of "C" or better.

#### SWK 6500: Social Work Perspectives on Psychopathology

Students who are awarded "advanced standing" and attend the Aurora Campus are required to complete SWK 6500 before beginning fall semester. SWK 6500 must be completed at Aurora University; the course is offered in the summer prior to the start of fall semester. Students who are awarded "advanced standing" and attend the George Williams Campus are required to complete SWK 6500 during the fall semester.

#### MSW Program Orientation

All graduate students starting the MSW program are required to attend an opening

Orientation (typically 1-day) before fall semester begins. Orientations are held on the respective campuses at Aurora and Williams Bay for students on each campus.

**B. Sequencing**

The School of Social Work offers three structured plans for completing the MSW Degree: a two year, full-time option; a three year, part-time option; and, a four-year, part-time option. For students who are awarded advanced standing (hold a BSW degree from an accredited School of Social Work), both full-time and part-time degree completion plans are offered.

Students must make a choice of which plan they will pursue at the time of admission. Any changes must be discussed and approved by the Associate Director. If, for any reason, a student diverges from the degree plan, they must have the approval of the Associate Director.

NOTE: Many required courses are only offered once a year. For this reason, please be aware that divergence from the structured degree completion plan may result in scheduling complications that could delay timely graduation.

**C. Advanced Standing**

Students who have earned a BSW degree from a CSWE accredited institution and who have demonstrated outstanding scholarship (at least a “B” average) in course work, and excellence in the field may apply for advanced standing for up to 30 sh of the semester hours required for the MSW program at Aurora University. The maximum transferable credit from any CSWE accredited School of Social Work is 30 semester hours and may include both required course work and electives.

**D. Credit, Waiver, or Substitution of Course Work as Applied to Meeting MSW Degree Requirements**

The purpose of the process of granting transfer credits, waiver, or substitutions of course requirements is to ensure the integrity of the MSW student’s academic and field preparation for graduate practice as well as ensure that students do not repeat foundation-level curriculum. In all cases, the student must convincingly demonstrate mastery of knowledge of content and those competencies required for the course or courses under consideration. Requests for credit, waiver, or substitution must be made to the Associate Director of the School of Social Work for consideration and final approval must be granted by the Director of the School of Social Work.

**Definitions:**

Credit: The granting of course semester credit hours for academic credits completed elsewhere. Credit for social work courses can only be granted if taken in a program that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

Waiver: Granting completion of a requirement, to avoid duplication of content in which the student has demonstrated proficiency in previous course work. The student does not take the waived course, but is not granted academic credit.

Substitution: Permission to use one course to fulfill another course requirement.

### **Questions Related to Credit, Waiver, & Substitutions**

Q: *Is it possible to use previous course work as credit towards degree requirements?*

- A. MSW requirements may be met only by course work:
- 1) Taken at a CSWE accredited school of social work;
  - 2) In which the grade received was "B" or better;
  - 3) Completed within the last five years;
  - 4) If the catalog description or syllabus substantially resembles the course offered at Aurora University.

Q. *What course work may be applied toward fulfilling MSW requirements at Aurora University through waiver or substitution?*

- A. Courses which were taken:
- 1) At an accredited university or college;
  - 2) For credit;
  - 3) With a grade of "B" or better;
  - 4) Within the last five years;
  - 5) And which were not used to fulfill requirements for another completed degree.

Q. What documentation is needed to apply for such a waiver?

- A. The following:
- 1) A course transcript must be on file with the Registrar;
  - 2) One copy of "Request of Waiver or Substitution Form" must be completed;
  - 3) A catalog description or preferably syllabus for the course in question must be provided.

Q. *Are exceptions to these policies made?*

- A. Yes. During the admissions process or by review of the Associate Director and Director, substitutions of required course work may be made, or waiver considered, for compelling academic reasons. If in doubt, the student should ask about courses that seem repetitive prior to registration. Students should not repeat course content.

Q. *Can academic credit be given for work or life experience?*

- A. No. By the standards of the Council of Social Work Accreditation, social work course credit may not be given for life experiences or previous work experience.

- Q. *When should requests for waiver, etc., be made?*
- A. Course waiver and substitution forms must be submitted to the Associate Director of the School of Social Work at least one month prior to the beginning of the next semester. If the issue relates to graduation, the request must be submitted by March 1st. This absolute minimum makes orderly consideration possible. Should a student submit a request after this period, he/she should anticipate that the request will be handled in a routine manner, and he/she will be responsible for all MSW program requirements until notified otherwise by the Associate Director or Director.
- Q. *What is the process by which a student applies for credit, waiver, or substitution of MSW course work?*
- A. The student gathers documentation, and transcripts, and completes Part I of the copy of "Request for Waiver" form in consultation with the Associate Director of the School of Social Work. The Associate Director completes Part II of the form, and then submits the form to the Director of the School of Social Work. The Director then considers the request, often including other faculty members who could usefully consult on the request, and if indicated, with the student as well. The Director of the School of Social Work makes a decision and the student is notified by letter. A copy of the form and letter is placed in the student's file.
- Q. *Where do students get a "Request for Waiver" form?*
- A. Copies are available at the School of Social Work from the Associate Director of the School of Social Work or department secretary.

## E. **Program Time Limits**

A statute of limitations of five (5) years applies for:

- Re-application to the program
- Transfer of credit
- Program completion\*

Students must complete the MSW program on or before a date of five (5) years from the date of matriculation, or petition for an extension to the Associate Director. The Director then considers the petition, often including other faculty members who could usefully consult on the request, and if indicated, with the student as well. The Director makes the final decision on granting an extension.

\* **NOTE:** Students entering the program with advanced standing status must complete the program in a four (4) year time limit.

## **F. Leave of Absence**

If a student wishes to take a leave of absence of more than one semester, excluding summer, a request for leave of absence must be made. A "Leave of Absence" form must be completed with the Associate Director of the School of Social Work and it is then forwarded to the Registrar's Office. Maximum terms for leave of absence are two (2) semesters or one academic (1) years.

Without fulfilling these conditions, a student who is not enrolled each semester of the academic year is considered to have terminated the program, and must re-apply for admission to continue in the program. For more specific regulations please consult with the Registrar's Office, 630-844-5462.

## **G. Field Instruction**

Field instruction provides students with an opportunity to practice and integrate social work theory in the field under the guidance and instruction of an experienced social work field instructor.

Students completing the foundation curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> year for full-time students; 2<sup>nd</sup> year for part-time students) may select a field placement from affiliated agencies in consultation with the Field Director. A list of affiliated agencies is available at the School. Students are required to complete a minimum of 15 clock hours of field instruction per week during fall and spring semesters, for a total of 450 clock hours for the academic year. Students must complete a minimum of 225 hours in fall semester and 225 hours in spring semester.

Students completing the concentration curriculum (2<sup>nd</sup> year for full-time students; 3<sup>rd</sup> year for part-time students; and students with advanced standing) select a field placement from affiliated agencies in consultation with the Field Director. Students are required to complete a minimum of 20 clock hours of field instruction per week during fall and spring semesters for a total of 600 clock hours for the academic year. Students must complete a minimum of 300 hours in fall semester and 300 hours in spring semester.

Potential field students begin the placement process by consulting with the Field Director and examining the many available resources within the School of Social Work. These resources include the student's faculty mentor; current students; the field agency files maintained by the School; field agency personnel representing their agencies at the annual Field Fair; and directories of social service agencies located in the School of Social Work.

Most students begin by exploring field agencies that service a particular population with which they have an interest in working. The School recommends that they explore field agencies that have already established an affiliation with the School of Social Work. Only in situations where a suitable affiliated field agency does not exist should the student consider one that is not currently affiliated.

Under certain limited conditions, students may use their place of employment as the base of their professional field instruction, for up to one year of field instruction, with prior approval. There must be clear written plans for new learning experiences, which must be approved by the Field Director and by the Agency Director or representatives. For complete information on the field site selection process and securing a field placement, please refer to the *Field Manual* (available online under the School of Social Work's website).

Once a student begins a field placement, they are obligated to continue field placement until completion. Changes must be discussed and approved by the Field Director. Students who terminate their field placement without prior approval may not be eligible for another placement.

**NOTE:** To begin a field placement, a student MUST BE registered for the appropriate field course and have received a copy of the letter of confirmation from the Field Director. For insurance purposes, student must be registered for field courses to be in field placements.

#### **H. Policy for School Social Work**

Prior to the beginning of the second year in the MSW program, all students interested in obtaining their Type 73 School Social Work Certification should:

- Be in good standing with the School of Social Work;
- Pass the ISBE Basic Skills Exam;  
<http://www.isbe.net/certification/html/testing.htm>.
- Complete SWK 5610 Social Work Practice: Exceptional Child;
- Secure a field placement in the public school setting. Since internships in the school setting are very competitive, it is recommended that students begin to look before the end of January of the academic year preceding the second year field placement;
- Complete and return the ISBE 73-74 and ISBE 73-42 by August of the academic year preceding the second year field placement. Advanced standing students must have submitted their final undergraduate transcript to AU in order for these forms to be completed.

Students who complete these procedures will be accepted into the School Social Work sequence and will follow the MSW Clinical Concentration curriculum. Students must enroll in the "school sequence" courses, SWK 6410 and 6420.

#### **I. Petitioning for Program Policy Changes**

Students can request that program policy or procedure issues (formulation or modification) related to academic and/or student affairs be addressed by presenting such request to the Director of the School of Social Work.

Once a policy change is requested, the faculty of the School consider the request. A recommendation regarding the proposed policy change or institution is made by the full faculty to the Director of the School. The Director makes the final decision on proposed policy changes. Decisions not to approve policy change requests can be appealed by submitting a written request to the Dean of the College of Professional Studies, who will send a written response stating his decision regarding the issue.

## **CHAPTER 4: ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

### **A. Academic Performance**

The MSW program maintains high academic standards as do all professional programs where the well being of future clients is of concern. In accordance with Aurora University regulations, the School of Social Work reserves the right to maintain academic standards for admission and retention in the social work program at both the BSW and MSW levels, above and beyond compliance with the general academic standards of the University.

#### **Criteria for Academic Performance**

In the graduate program, the MSW student must maintain a 3.00 cumulative grade point average. A student whose cumulative grade point average (CGPA) falls below 3.0 is placed on academic probation.

Students must raise the CGPA by the end of the following semester. If the CGPA is not raised to 3.0 at the end of the following semester, excluding summer, the CGPA is grounds for suspension or dismissal from the School of Social Work. Students with a CGPA below 3.00 at the end of their final semester will not be allowed to graduate.

Two consecutive semesters of below standard work resulting in a “no credit” grade in Field Instruction is cause for suspension or dismissal from the MSW program.

A student dismissed from the MSW program may not apply for readmission for one calendar year. If subsequently readmitted, the student must meet all degree requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Any other academic standards required of all graduate students in the University are binding on MSW students in the School of Social Work. Students may refer to the University catalog.

### **B. Course Grades and Academic Progress**

Students must receive a passing grade (“C” or better) in all required MSW coursework. If a failing grade is received in a course, the course/s must be repeated. Students who receive more than one failing grade in required coursework may be suspended or dismissed from the MSW program.

**C. Independent Study or Courses by Special Arrangement**

Students may request to complete an independent study course on a selected topic not addressed in a regularly offered elective course. Requests must be made to the Associate Director. In unique circumstances, students may request to complete a “Course By Special Arrangement” (CBSA). This is typically done if a student needs to complete a course during a semester in which the course is not offered. There must be extenuating circumstances for why the CBSA is requested. Requests must be made to the Associate Director. Approval for Independent Study courses or CBSA courses is made by the Director. Students may take no more than one Independent Study course and CBSA.

**D. Academic Advising/Course Registration**

The Associate Director of the School of Social Work provides academic advising to all MSW students. The Associate Director helps students plan their course of study within the School of Social Work, including class registration for fall, spring, and summer semesters. The Associate Director also provides students with academic information and helps them understand university procedures.

A student must register for classes with the Associate Director of the School of Social Work. It is the student’s responsibility to be certain that all course prerequisites and degree requirements are met. Attention to proper program planning through early and ongoing consultation with the Associate Director is essential.

Students should consult the program structure charts for guidance on course scheduling. Students are reminded that to deviate from the structured program plan may result in a delay in completing the program since courses are usually offered only in the academic terms outlined on the program structure charts. Program structure charts are available from the Associate Director.

**E. Writing Standard**

Professional social workers are often judged by others based upon the quality of their written work. A poorly written professional report suggests mistakes in the substance of the social worker’s recommendations. The devaluing of a social worker’s work on behalf of a client can result in poor service to the client. Written assignments, unless otherwise stipulated by the instructor, are expected to be typed and edited and to follow the American Psychological Association (APA) writing style, which is used for all professional social work writing.

**F. Class Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Those students unable to attend a scheduled class session are responsible for notifying the instructor in advance by

phone or by note explaining the need for absence. Twenty percent (20%) or more of the scheduled class session is considered excessive absence. Excessive absences may result in reduction of grade for the course.

## **G. Personal/Professional Performance Standards**

### **Behavior in Classroom**

Students in a professional program should conduct themselves as professionals in relation to the class session and assignments. Students are assessed not only for meeting basic performance criteria on assignments described in course syllabi, but also on their ability to relate to others and their personal and professional behavior.

### **Professional Conduct**

Students in a professional program should conduct themselves as professionals in relation to the class session and assignments. It is not acceptable to be late for classes except in unusual circumstances. Respect for the opinions of others is expected. Opinions expressed should be supported by data or carefully reasoned argument. Asking questions per se, or offering opinions that do not reflect the readings assigned for the class do not constitute “prepared participation.” Any use of consciousness altering substances before, during, or between class sessions obviously impairs learning, and is unacceptable. Frequent lateness or professional unbecoming class conduct are likely to result in a lowered grade.

## **H. Grade Appeals**

The course grade is the indicator of student academic performance. There is a university-wide procedure for appealing a grade, but it is solely on the basis of alleged “capricious grading” and not on a disagreement over an instructor’s assessment of the quality of a student’s work.

There is a time limit that applies to the appeal procedure. Please refer to the University Policy on “Procedures for Use in Appealing Allegedly Capricious Term Grades of Students” in the Student A-Book located at:  
<http://www.aurora.edu/abook/index.htm>.

## **CHAPTER 5: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

### **Professional/Ethical Behavior**

Professional social work education requires high standards of academic, personal, and professional conduct. The educational program at both the undergraduate (BSW) and graduate levels (MSW) requires the development of ethics and values as well as knowledge and skills. Students are expected to exhibit values and behaviors that are

compatible with the NASW Code of Ethics which regulates not only professional conduct in relation to clients, but also in relation to colleagues.

Recognizing that there are professional competencies and conduct not measurable by academic achievement alone, the School of Social Work reserves the right to make decisions regarding admission and retention based on high standards of personal and professional conduct demonstrated both in and out of the classroom. Students in the MSW program are evaluated, and may be suspended or dismissed from the program, on the basis of standards of personal and professional behavior, adherence to ethical standards, and on the basis on certain civil and criminal records.

Because social work education involves a significant amount of internship experience, and preparation for helping vulnerable populations, student evaluation will honor not only the rights of students, but also the rights and well-being of clients and others to whom students relate in a professional role.

#### **A. Criteria for Professional/Ethical Behavior**

##### **Ethical Behavior**

The student enrolled in the School of Social Work is required to know the contents of, and is bound by, the University policies and regulations dealing with conduct presented in the University Student Handbook at:

(<http://www.aurora.edu/abook/index.htm>)

Students are required to know the contents of, and are bound by, The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Social Work students are also bound by the School of Social Work's specific provisions below:

##### **Misrepresentation of Self**

Fraud and misrepresentation including, but not limited to false or misleading statements on the application, admissions interview, student and financial aid applications, falsifying degrees or professional credentials. Such behavior shall constitute grounds for dismissal.

##### **Alleged Law Violations**

For any student charged with fraud, malpractice, a felony, or misdemeanor, the University may refuse or revoke registration in field instruction activities and classes without prejudice until an official determination has been made.

##### **Conviction for a Felony or Misdemeanor**

Any student who has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor for conduct that may provide a threat to the well-being of clients shall not be admitted to field instruction and classes and activities until there is clear evidence of rehabilitation.

For this purpose, serving a sentence alone does not necessarily constitute evidence of rehabilitation. The faculty of the School of Social Work will be the sole judge of rehabilitation. Following such conviction, the student shall be informed in writing of the criteria that the University will use in determining evidence of rehabilitation.

### **Inappropriate Behavior that Would Interfere with Performing Professional Duties**

Any student who engages in inappropriate behavior that would interfere with performing professional duties and could potentially threaten the well-being of clients, including violent behavior, behavioral indications of substance abuse, or having indicators of physical or psychiatric disorders shall not be admitted to field instruction. Any behavior which may have been influenced by a student's mental state (regardless of the ultimate evaluation) or use of drugs or alcoholic beverages will not in any way limit the responsibility of the student for the consequences of his/her actions.

### **B. Student Confidentiality**

The School of Social Work maintains an academic file on each MSW student. This file contains admissions materials; academic records; formal communication between Director, Associate Director, faculty mentor, and the student; as well as field evaluations.

The program honors and complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 20 USC Sec. 1232g which requires academic institutions to provide access to academic records to the student, and prohibits the release of any information to another party unless a signed authorization has been obtained.

### **C. Confidentiality of Admissions Materials**

Once the School of Social Work has the completed admissions file for a student, no materials within the file will be provided to the student or other parties. Included with this material is the student's Statement of Purpose; official transcripts; and letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation (or copies) will not be released to students even with a signed permission from the person who completed the recommendation.

### **D. Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action**

A complaint of program non-compliance with the Non-Discrimination and/or Affirmative Action policy should be directed to the Director of the School of Social Work. See Chapter 1 of this handbook for the Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action policy.

#### **E. Field Review Policy**

A field agency review may be held in the event of concerns regarding the experiences of students in field work. The purpose of the meeting will be exploratory and fact finding. Such a review may be requested by either the student, field instructor, or the field liaison.

Among the issues that may be considered in a review are concerns regarding supervisory problems, adequacy of the learning experience, and ethical practice. Involved students will be asked to be present at the review. The review shall be scheduled by the Field Director and attended by the Director as well as appropriate faculty members who teach courses in BSW or MSW programs. Should it be determined that actions are indicated, a written plan will be produced and communicated to the agency within two weeks time.

#### **F. Faculty Mentor's Role**

Upon entering the MSW program, students are assigned a faculty mentor. The role of the mentor is to guide the student in their professional development while in the MSW program, consistent with the program's goals and objectives.

#### **G. Student Review Policy**

On rare occasions, when a serious concern about academic, personal, or professional performance related to any of the program's standards and/or policies has been identified by a faculty member or field supervisor, at any point in the program, and it is deemed a concern warranting immediate attention, the faculty member reports to the Associate Director of the School of Social Work. The Associate Director personally informs the student that a concern has been identified, seeks information from relevant parties (faculty, Field Director, etc.), thoughtfully appraises the student's situation and assesses in consultation with the Director whether the situation warrants a Student Review. The Director may also request that a Student Review be scheduled.

The purpose of a Student Review is to either design a helping plan for continuance in the social work program or to make a determination regarding continuance in the program.

A Student Review is scheduled as needed, and is chaired by the Director of the School of Social Work or a designate. Faculty members who participate in the Student Review are those who are current instructors for the student as well as other faculty members deemed relevant to the Student Review process as determined by the Director.

The student will be notified in writing of the commencement of the student review, the nature of the student review, giving the date, time, and place, the facts and occurrences that have given rise to concern, the nature of the student review, the

student's right to attend and bring an advocate, the student's right to bring to the committee's attention relevant information concerning these facts, and occurrences that the student wishes the committee to consider.

In cases where the committee deems it appropriate, the committee may request the student to have his/her physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other provider of professional services meet with the committee to discuss the student's capabilities, and/or may request the student to permit an examination by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other provider of professional services selected by the School, whose report and/or opinion concerning the student's capabilities will be shared with the student. The student may submit additional information in response. If necessary, the Committee shall continue the conference at a later date for the purpose of obtaining additional relevant information.

Once the committee has completed its review, it will notify the student in writing by Certified Mail of its determination along with a summary of its reasons for such determination. The determination can take any of the following forms: (1) a written plan establishing the conditions and requirements that the student must meet to continue in the program; (2) a temporary suspension of the student from the program, and; (3) a determination to discontinue the student from the program.

If the student wishes to challenge the determination of the Student Review Committee, the student has a right to appeal to the Dean of the College of Professional Studies. The request for the appeal must be in writing, identifying the student's grievance(s).

#### **H. Program Termination**

Students who are not permitted to continue within the MSW program are informed of such by Certified Mail. If a student has already registered for the next term, they will be administratively dropped from their courses.

#### **I. Termination Appeals**

Students who have been terminated from the MSW program can appeal such a decision only on the basis of alleged "capriciousness." The term "capricious" is limited to one or more of the following:

- A decision to terminate a student on some basis other than academic or professional performance, or failure to obtain approval for leaves of absence from a program as stated in this Handbook;
- A decision to terminate a student on more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other students in the program;
- A substantial departure from the standards and procedures contained in the *MSW Policy Handbook*.

Appeals based upon capriciousness are made to the Dean of the College of Professional Studies. The request for appeal must be in writing, identifying the student's grievance(s). Failing a mutually satisfactory resolution at the level of the Dean, the student may appeal the determination to the Provost of the University. The student must appeal in writing, identifying the grievance(s). The Provost is the final level of appeal within the University. The written response of the Provost, delivered by Certified Mail, communicates the results of the appeal.

**J. Readmission to the MSW Program**

A graduate student who leaves or withdraws from the MSW program; is dropped from the program for poor scholarship or unprofessional behavior; or is terminated for lack of registration or application for a leave of absence, and later decides to complete the program, must apply for readmission to the program. Prior records will be re-evaluated and the student, if readmitted, will be held responsible for completing all current degree requirements.

**K. Handbook Terms of Issue**

Every attempt is made to permit students to graduate under the degree requirements in effect when they entered Aurora University and the School of Social Work provided that enrollment is continuous from time of matriculation until graduation. However, the School of Social Work reserves the right to modify academic requirements, curricula, and/or course offerings for all students at any time without prior notice and without incurring obligation of any kind. At the same time, the program attempts to enable students to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic affairs.

**L. Aurora University Academic & Professional Standards**

Please refer to the University Student Handbook for all University policies related to academic and professional standards, including (but not limited to):

- Academic and Social Expectations
- Statement of Academic Integrity
- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Statement of Discrimination and Sexual Harassment
- Learning Disabilities Policy
- Privacy Act of 1974 as Amended
- Policy for Grade Appeals
- Graduate Grading System

The University Student Handbook is located online at: <http://www.aurora.edu/abook/index.htm>