Academic Policies and Standards
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University of Nebraska at Omaha
GRACE ABBOTT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

The mission of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Grace Abbott School of Social Work is to educate students to become highly qualified social workers who serve people of all ages and influence the systems that affect them, to advance knowledge through teaching and research, and to engage with diverse communities to promote socially just societies.

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Preface

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Grace Abbott School of Social Work Academic Policies and Standards (APS) is updated and released each academic year. This document is made available online (via the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work website) and delineates information necessary for the successful pursuit of the undergraduate and graduate social work degrees offered at UNO. All social work students will be expected to read the Academic Policies and Standards, and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics.

Students will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that they have read, are aware of the contents, and will abide by them. The signed form will be kept in each student’s file.

The curriculum requirements and policies outlined in this document apply to all current and prospective social work students admitted after the Fall 2011 semester. The Academic Policies and Standards is subject to revision. Changes and updates will be attached as an addendum, with a full revision issued each year. This guide supplements the UNO Graduate Catalog. All students should use the UNO undergraduate and graduate catalogs as a reference for relevant information.

Grace Abbott School of Social Work faculty, advisors and staff are ready, able, and willing to assist students with the APS.
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**Glossary**
Standards for Social Work Education

The Grace Abbott School of Social Work has different expectations of students than non-professional programs because of the nature of professional social work practice. The standards are linked to students’ abilities to become effective social work professionals and are provided so that students and faculty can be clear about expectations and procedures to address academic performance concerns. The ultimate goal of the standards is to help students have a successful experience at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

Becoming a professional is a gradual process and not all criteria are expected to be met immediately. Persons who teach, advise, and supervise students, along with the Chair of the Program Committee, Undergraduate and Graduate Program Coordinators, Practicum Coordinator, and the Director will assess student academic performance and apply their professional judgment to determine if standards are being met during a student’s educational career. Professional judgment is the capacity to assess a situation by applying the values and knowledge of the social work profession, combined with a professional’s own experience and practice wisdom. It also represents the application of knowledge, values, and skills to make decisions in the helping process.

Criteria for Evaluating Academic Performance

In order to meet its responsibilities to provide quality professional education and to ensure that its graduates are able to function in a broad variety of professional situations, the Grace Abbott School of Social Work defines academic performance as inclusive of the following three general areas: 1) Ability to Acquire Professional Skills; 2) Mental and Emotional Abilities; and 3) Professional Performance Skills. Meeting the criteria for scholastic achievement is necessary but not sufficient to ensure continued enrollment in either the BSSW or MSW program. Both professional behavior and scholastic performance comprise academic standards.

Basic Abilities Necessary to Acquire Professional Skills

A. Communication Skills. Demonstrates sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings.

1. Written: Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling, and applies appropriate writing style, including American Psychological Association (APA) referencing, appropriate source citation, and documentation. Demonstrates sufficient skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and to adequately complete all written assignments and professional documentation (e.g., in practicum), as specified by faculty.

2. Oral: Communicates effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates sufficient skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to adequately complete all assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty.
B. Interpersonal Skills. Demonstrates the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals and to fulfill the ethical obligations of the profession. These include the ability to demonstrate compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, and demonstration of dignity and respect for and consideration of others. Takes appropriate responsibility for own actions and considers the impact of these actions on others.

C. Cognitive Skills. Exhibits sufficient knowledge of social work and clarity of thinking to process information and apply it to appropriate situations in classroom and field. Demonstrates grounding in relevant social, behavioral, and biological science knowledge and research, including knowledge and skills in relationship building, data gathering, assessment, goal planning, intervention, and evaluation of practice. Exhibits ability to conceptualize, integrate, and apply knowledge to professional practice.

D. Physical Skills. Exhibits sufficient motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and practicum placement, with or without accommodations. (See section on Accommodations for Disabilities for clarification.)

Emotional and Mental Abilities Necessary for Performance in the Program and Professional Practice

A. Stress Management. Demonstrates ability to recognize and deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms. Handles stress effectively by using supportive appropriate self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others.

B. Emotional and Mental Capacities. Uses sound judgment. Seeks and effectively uses help for medical or emotional problems that interfere with scholastic and professional performance. Engages in therapy or seeks out support and help if personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, medication, or mental health difficulties do any of the following:
- Compromise scholastic and professional performance, or
- Interfere with professional judgment or behavior, or
- Jeopardize the best interests of those to whom the social work student has a professional responsibility (as outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics).

Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice

A. Professional Commitment. Exhibits a strong commitment to the goals of social work and to the ethical standards of the profession as specified in the NASW Code of Ethics. Demonstrates commitment to the essential values of social work that include respect for self-determination, the dignity and worth of every individual, and his/her right to a just share of society’s resources (social and economic justice).

B. Professional Behavior. Exhibits behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, University policies, professional ethical standards, and societal laws in the classroom, field, and community. Appearance, dress, and general demeanor reflect a professional manner that is appropriate to the context. Shows potential for responsible and accountable
behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending and participating in class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, initiating or maintaining communication (e.g., with faculty, staff, academic advisor, community professionals, practicum supervisors), and accepting supervision and criticism in a positive manner.

Works effectively with others regardless of level of authority. Advocates for him/herself in an appropriate and responsible manner and uses proper channels for conflict resolution. Shows a willingness to receive and accept feedback and supervision in a positive manner, as well as use such feedback to enhance professional judgment.

C. Self-Awareness. Exhibits knowledge of how one’s values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and past experiences affect thinking, behavior, and relationships. Accurately assesses one’s own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Shows awareness of self and how one is perceived by others. Reflects on one’s own limitations as they relate to professional capacities. Maintains appropriate boundaries with clients, classmates, faculty members, and other professionals. Is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes with effective work with clients, classmates, and other professionals. Participates effectively in classroom and field assignments designed to promote self-awareness.

D. Ethical Obligations. Behavior and classroom performance demonstrate adherence to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional practice, noted in the NASW Code of Ethics. This includes, but is not limited to, behavior at practicum and employment sites, at professional meetings and conferences, and conduct in public and through social media (i.e. Facebook, My Space, blogs). Ethical behaviors include:

- Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Adherence to the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct (see Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs at www.unomaha.edu).
- No history of charges and/or convictions of an offense that is contrary to professional practice.
- Systematic evaluation of clients and their situations in an unbiased, factual way. Suspension of personal biases during interactions with others.
- Comprehension of another individual’s way of life and values. Empathic communication and support of the client as a basis for productive professional relationships.
- Appreciation for the value of diversity. Effective and nonjudgmental relation to and work with others who are different from oneself. Appropriate service to all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person’s age, class, race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or value system. No imposition of personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on others.
- Demonstration of respect for the rights of others. Commitment to clients’ rights to freedom of choice and self-determination.
- Maintenance of confidentiality as it relates to human service, classroom activities, and practicum.
- Demonstration of honesty and integrity by being truthful about background,
experiences, and qualifications; doing one’s own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.

- Demonstration of clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries. Does not sexually harass others; make verbal or physical threats; become involved in sexual relationships with clients, supervisors, or faculty; abuse others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways; or participate in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.

Evidence of meeting academic performance criteria in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Course grades.
- Feedback or reference letters from faculty members, work supervisors, service learning supervisors, or supervisors of volunteer human service activity.
- Feedback from practicum instructors and faculty liaison.
- Observation of classroom, service-learning, volunteer, or field behaviors.
- Performance in oral and written assignments, examinations, social work skills labs, distance learning courses, Blackboard postings, or other coursework.
- Student personal statements or self-assessments.
- Interviews with faculty or other professionals.
- Taped interview situations (audio or video).
- Feedback from students, staff, university employees, helping professionals, or community.
- Feedback from faculty in other social work program that the student may have attended.
- Signed confidentiality statements, scholastic honesty statements, contract to adhere to NASW Code of Ethics or the Standards, other contracts between the School and the student (for example, contracts to resolve Incompletes, special studies contracts, etc.).
- Follow through with required school processes (e.g., advising, practicum fair attendance, practicum orientation, practicum advising, practicum learning contracts and evaluation measures, comprehensive exam orientation).

**Policies and Procedures for Review of Performance**

Three levels of review can occur at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work in reviewing a student’s performance. A student can receive multiple Level 1 Reviews, but only one Level 2 Review, and only one Level 3 Review. Generally, a student will receive reviews in this order: Level 1, 2, 3; however the review may proceed directly to a Level 3 in consultation with the Program Committee Chair and Director where extreme egregious safety issues arise. Reviews may be called as a result of Student Progress Review recommendations, instructor or staff concern expressed, or course grades received.

Information disclosed during student meetings with faculty, program coordinators or committee chairs, or school administrators (including academic advisor, faculty practicum liaison, etc.) will not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about professional performance. Faculty and/or Program Coordinators will share pertinent information with each other for the professional purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns. They will follow university procedures related to student academic performance issues.
Student Progress Reviews

The Program Committee Chair facilitates Student Progress Reviews each Fall and Spring semester. At these confidential Student Progress Reviews, faculty members identify students’ potential troubling patterns and issues, and make recommendations. Recommendations may include a Level 1, 2, or 3 Review, or a student meeting with the academic advisor.

Level 1 Student Review

Any faculty member (full-time, part-time, or adjunct) or staff who identifies a concern about a student’s performance shall attempt to discuss and resolve the concern with the student. If a problem arises in practicum, the practicum instructor will discuss concerns directly with the student and with the faculty liaison. It is the responsibility of the practicum coordinator to apprise the BSSW or MSW coordinator of the concerns.

Typically, a Level 1 Review will take place with the academic advisor. This assumes that anyone who has a concern about a student’s performance has already attempted to resolve the concern with the student. The academic advisor will verify that the concern has already been addressed by the faculty. In many instances, meetings between faculty and students resolve the concerns and do not lead to further reviews, pursuant to this section.

Level 2 Student Review

A Level 2 Review is designed to assist a student in dealing with identified concerns that have an impact on his/her academic performance; when the student is not meeting or following program or university standards, policies, and procedures; or when concerns have not been resolved at Level 1. A Level 2 Review includes a face-to-face meeting, resulting in a written plan that can include conditions up to, but not including, dismissal from the program.

Panel members:  Panel Chair:  appropriate Program Coordinator (BSSW or MSW)
                    Student
                    Student’s Advocate
                    Faculty/staff member with a concern

Panel members if the concern arises out of practicum:
            Panel Chair:  appropriate Program Coordinator (BSSW or MSW)
            Student
            Student’s Advocate
            Faculty Liaison
            Practicum Coordinator or Practicum Associate Director
            (Written documentation will be obtained from the Educational Supervisor in lieu of his/her attendance at the review.)
Procedures before the meeting:
In consultation with the Program Coordinator, the Program Committee Chair will appoint the panel members, set the date, time, and place for a face-to-face meeting, and collect relevant information in preparation for the meeting. A short meeting will be conducted where the Program Committee Chair will review roles and procedures. If any members of the panel could potentially play multiple roles on the panel, the Program Committee Chair will make alternate appointments. The student may either utilize the school’s academic advisor or, within 3 business days, select a member of the faculty or staff to serve as his/her advocate during the review process.

With the assistance of the Program Coordinator, the Program Committee Chair will notify the student in writing (email and postal mail) and by phone of the Review. The student will be given at least seven business days’ notice for the meeting, and will be asked to confirm his/her attendance within three days after receiving notice of the meeting.

Meeting procedures:
The meeting will be facilitated by the Panel Chair. Generally, all members of the panel remain present for the entire meeting. However, the Panel Chair has the discretion to ask any panel member or the student to step out of the meeting at any time. During the meeting, the panel will develop a written plan to address the concerns. The written plan will include documentation of the concerns identified, student strengths, and the actions to be taken and by when. A student cannot be dismissed from the program out of a Level 2 Review. Possible actions include:
a. Continue the student in the program with no conditions. In these situations, the concern has been addressed and no further action by the student or program is required.
b. Establish formal, specific conditions which may include any combination of the following: placing the student on academic probation, referring the student to counseling, frequent meetings with the student’s academic advisor, a reduced course load, delayed entry to practicum, repeating a course, or other conditions as determined by the panel members.
c. Require the student take a leave of absence with certain conditions to be met before student is allowed to return. This leave of absence will have a time limit, after which time the student would need to re-apply to the program with evidence of remediation in order to continue.

The plan is signed by all panel members and the student. If the student refuses to sign the plan, action may proceed to a Level 3 Student Review.

Procedures after the meeting.
A copy of the written plan is provided to the student, the Program Coordinator, the Program Committee Chair, and placed in the student’s file. The Program Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the accomplishment of the written plan. The Program Committee Chair will notify the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome, if appropriate and needed.
If the student does not confirm attendance or does not attend the meeting, either the Program Committee Chair will call a Level 3 Review or the natural consequences will be allowed to occur (see academic policies for the appropriate program)—this decision is made by the Panel Chair and will be communicated to the Program Committee Chair. A student who does not confirm attendance and/or attend the meeting, waives the opportunity for any future Level 2 Reviews.

If a Level 2 meeting does not result in consensus, the concern shall be returned to the Program Committee Chair, who will assess the nature of the concerns with appropriate faculty, consult with the Director, and the Office of Graduate Studies, if a graduate student. The Program Committee Chair will decide if it is necessary to call a Level 3 Review.

**Level 3 Student Review**

A Level 3 Review is called when a problematic pattern is identified with a student or when the issues are serious enough to require formal consultation with other faculty and the student. Generally, a Level 3 Review is conducted when concerns have not been resolved in prior reviews. The Level 3 Review is the last decision-making step in the review process at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

Panel members:

Panel Chair: Program Committee Chair  
Student  
Student’s Advocate  
Two faculty members who teach in the appropriate program (BSSW or MSW) or the Practicum Coordinator or Associate Practicum Coordinator. If an MSW student, the two faculty members must be graduate faculty. Faculty members may or may not have direct knowledge of and experience with the student.

Panel members if the concern arises out of practicum:

Panel Chair: Program Committee Chair  
Student  
Student’s Advocate  
Faculty Liaison  
Practicum Coordinator or Associate Practicum Coordinator  
(Written documentation will be obtained from the Educational Supervisor in lieu of his/her attendance at the review.)  
One faculty member who teaches in the appropriate program (BSSW or MSW). If an MSW student, the faculty member must be graduate faculty. The faculty members may or may not have direct knowledge of and experience with the student.

Others Present: Faculty/staff member presenting concern(s)

Procedures before the meeting:

In consultation with the Program Coordinator, the Program Committee Chair will appoint the panel members, set the date, time, and place for a face-to-face meeting, and collect
relevant information in preparation for the meeting. If any members of the panel could potentially play multiple roles on the panel, the Program Committee Chair, in consultation with the Program Coordinator, will make alternate appointments. The student and student advocate may meet to prepare the student for the review; however, it is the responsibility of the student to present his or her own case.

A Level 3 Review must be scheduled within 10 working days of its appointment. The student will be notified by a phone call from either the Program Committee Chair or the student’s advocate, by email, and by a written letter mailed to the student’s address on file at the School. The student will be given at least 14 days’ notice for the meeting, and will be asked to confirm his/her attendance at least three days prior to the meeting. In the interest of time, the student may waive this 14 day waiting period and request an earlier review meeting.

Meeting procedures:

The Panel Chair will digitally record the meeting. Any additional record of the meeting will be made at the expense of the requesting party with the approval of the Panel Chair.

The meeting will be facilitated by the Panel Chair and will generally be conducted in this fashion:

1. The Panel Chair will make introductions, clarify roles and process, and present the agenda for the meeting.
2. The faculty/staff member with the concern will present his/her concerns and recommendations. The Panel Chair and members, excluding the student and student advocate, may ask questions for clarification. The faculty/staff member with the concern is then excused from the room.
3. The student will then be invited to respond to the concerns and to make his/her own recommendations. With prior notification, the student may present evidence, in writing or through live witnesses, which the Panel Chair deems relevant to the proceedings. Formal rules of evidence shall not be applicable. The student may be accompanied by counsel at his or her own expense. The accompanying counsel may provide advice to the student, but may not address the committee without permission of the Panel Chair. The student’s advocate may offer any further comments or recommendations, at the discretion of the Panel Chair. The panel will then remain and all others will be excused.
4. The Panel Chair and two faculty members (or Practicum representative and one faculty member) will then deliberate and come to a decision on next steps. This portion of the meeting will not be digitally recorded. Possible outcomes include:
   a. Continue the student in the program with no conditions. In this situation, the concern has been addressed and no further action by the student or program is required.
   b. Establish formal, specific conditions in order for the student to remain in the program. Conditions may include any combination of the following: placing the student on academic probation, referring the student to counseling, frequent meetings with the academic advisor, a reduced course load, delayed entry to practicum, repeating a course, or other conditions as determined by the Panel Chair and two faculty members.
   c. Require the student take a leave of absence with certain conditions to be met
before the student is allowed to return. If the conditions are not met within the time limit, the student will need to reapply to the program in order to continue. The Program Committee Chair will inform the Admissions Committee of the student’s status.

d. If a graduate student, recommend to the Office of Graduate Studies that the student be dismissed from the MSW program. If an undergraduate student, recommend to the Director of the Grace Abbott School of Social Work that the student be dismissed from the BSSW program.

e. Depending on the nature of the problem, the University’s Judicial Officer may be consulted. If a referral is made to the Judicial Officer, the student will be notified in writing about the nature of the concern and that the referral is taking place. Situations which may result in referral to the University Judicial Officer include scholastic dishonesty, hazing, racial or sexual harassment, possession or use of firearms or other weapons on University property, damage or destruction of University property, and conduct that endangers the health or safety of any University student, employee, or campus visitor.

The plan is signed by all panel members and the student and will become part of the student’s file. The proceedings and deliberations of the Panel Chair and two faculty members shall be confidential except to the extent (1) necessary to implement the findings of the committee, (2) necessary to any appeal, (3) the student has waived confidentiality by discussing the matter with parties outside the committee meeting, and (4) should the student seek resolution of the concern in a forum external to the University.

Procedures after the meeting.

The Panel Chair will document the meeting and recommendations in a formal letter to include documentation of the concerns identified, student strengths, and the actions to be taken and by when. Specific recommendations will be mailed to the student in a letter within 10 business days of the meeting. A copy of the letter will be provided to the Panel members, the Program Committee Chair (if not the Panel Chair), the Practicum Director (if appropriate), and placed in the student’s file. The Program Committee Chair will notify the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome.

The Program Committee Chair is responsible for monitoring the accomplishment of the written plan. The GASSW will keep the audio file intact for six years, per the University of Nebraska Board of Regents Student Records Policy. After six years, the audio file will be deleted.

If the student does not confirm attendance, does not attend the Level 3 Review, and/or does not sign the plan, either the student will be dismissed from the program or the natural consequences will be allowed to occur (see academic policies for the appropriate program). A student who does not confirm attendance and/or attend the meeting, waives the opportunity for any future Level 3 Reviews.
Reinstitution-Reapplication Procedures

If a student is dismissed from the BSSW or MSW program, was a “student in good standing” prior to the situation preceding the dismissal, and the student had not received a Level 2 or 3 review at any point during his or her current program, the student may request a Reinstitution Hearing. To request a Reinstitution Hearing, a student will discuss the situation with the academic advisor or select a faculty or staff member to represent him or her as advocate, and then submit a written request to the Director within four weeks of receipt of the dismissal letter (from the UNO Office of Graduate Studies, if an MSW student).

In consultation with the Program Committee Chair and the student’s advocate, the Director will determine if the student’s request for a Reinstitution Hearing will be granted. If the request for a Reinstitution Hearing is granted, the Director will ask the Program Committee Chair to convene a Reinstitution Panel. The Reinstitution Panel will be comprised of a Chair (usually the BSSW or MSW Program Coordinator), the student’s advocate, the instructor with the concern, and two additional faculty members. The Program Committee Chair has up to 10 working days to gather the committee members and set a date for the Reinstitution Hearing. The student will be notified by a phone call from either the Program Committee Chair or the academic advisor, by email, and by a written letter mailed to the student’s address on file at the School. The student will be given at least 14 days’ notice for the meeting, and will be asked to confirm his/her attendance at least three days prior to the meeting.

The Reinstitution Panel will decide if the student’s request for reinstatement will be granted, using the following criteria:

1. Student’s problematic behavior, if any, has been adequately addressed.
2. Student had adequate GPA and academic performance previous to this situation.
3. If reinstated, the student is committed and willing to follow the School’s Academic Policies and Standards.
4. If reinstated, the student has adequate plans for improving academic performance.

The Panel Chair will digitally record the meeting. The meeting will be facilitated by the Panel Chair and will generally be conducted in this fashion:

1. The Panel Chair will make introductions, if necessary, and present the agenda for the meeting.
2. The instructor with the concern will present his/her concerns and recommendations. Panel members, excluding the student and the student’s advocate, may ask questions for clarification. The instructor with the concern is then excused from the room.
3. The student will then be invited to respond to the concerns and to make his/her own recommendations. The student may present evidence, in writing or through witnesses, which the Panel Chair deems relevant to the proceedings. Formal rules of evidence shall not be applicable. The student may be accompanied by legal counsel or another counsel at his or her own expense. The accompanying counsel may provide advice to the student, but may not directly address the committee without permission of the Panel Chair. The student’s advocate may also offer comments or recommendations. The student and student advocate will then leave the room and the digital recording is stopped.
4. The Panel Chair and two faculty members will then deliberate and come to a decision on whether to recommend reinstatement.
5. The student and student advocate will be invited back into the room and told the recommendation of the Reinstatement Panel.

If the Reinstatement Panel decides to recommend reinstatement to the student, the Panel will discuss with the student and the student’s advocate the conditions for the reinstatement. At a minimum, reinstatement conditions must include academic probation and re-taking of the course(s) in which a poor grade was received. The student must re-register for any course(s) repeated and must receive a satisfactory grade. (If the course is not available, the Reinstatement Panel can require another course.) Reinstatement assumes the student will follow the Academic Policies and Standards; further intervention will not be possible unless stated in the reinstatement conditions. The conditions set forth by the Reinstatement Panel are final and not open to discussion by either the student or the student advocate. The recommendation will be approved by the Director. For MSW students, the recommendation will be forwarded to UNO Graduate Studies for final approval.

A student who is denied a Reinstatement Hearing or is not reinstated may re-apply to the program after a two-year waiting period. When re-applying, the student will need to submit all materials and meet all deadlines as a new applicant. The student can expect to submit evidence that whatever impeded academic success earlier has been resolved (i.e. letter from LMHP, for-credit courses completed at a higher education level, extra letters of recommendations) and to receive an interview. The decision to accept a student who had been previously dismissed is made by the Admissions Committee in consultation with the Director and Program Committee Chair, and cannot be appealed.

The decision at the Reinstatement Hearing, including conditions, if reinstated, will be provided to the student in writing within 10 days of the Reinstatement Hearing. Decisions at the Reinstatement Hearing will be final and cannot be appealed within the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.
BSSW Academic Policies

Academic Standards

A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 is required by the BSSW program for admission. If a student receives a grade of C- or lower in one social work course, s/he will receive a Level 2 or 3 Review, depending on whether the student has had a previous Review. The conditions for continuance of the BSSW program will include the student repeating the course and receiving a grade of C or higher in this second effort.

A student receiving a grade of C- or lower in two social work courses will be recommended to the Director of the Grace Abbott School of Social Work for dismissal from the BSSW program.

Students must achieve a grade of B (3.0) or higher in practicum courses (SOWK 4410 and 4420). If a student receives a grade in practicum that is lower than a B, s/he will receive a Level 2 or 3 Review, depending on whether the student has had a previous Review.

A student is considered by the university to be in academic difficulty if his/her cumulative GPA falls below 2.0. After acceptance into the BSSW program, a student whose cumulative grade point average is below 2.0 after having attempted 6 or more credit hours will be placed on university academic probation. Probation constitutes a period of formal warning that the student is doing unsatisfactory work. Probationary status must remain in effect so long as the student’s accumulated GPA remains below 2.0. No student will be allowed to enroll for any course on a pass/fail or credit/no credit basis while on probation. Probationary status must remain in effect so long as the student’s accumulated GPA remains below 2.0. The student is encouraged to use every opportunity during his or her time on probation to seek counsel and guidance from various university agencies which have been established to offer assistance in study and academic planning. For information on such services, the student should consult with the academic advisor or the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Withdrawal from a Course or from the University

When a student finds it necessary to drop a course, the student should meet with the academic advisor immediately and file an official withdrawal form. If a student drops out of class during the first 11 weeks of a semester, the student’s record will be marked W. Normally, a student may not drop or withdraw from a course with any grade other than an F after the 11th week of the semester. The course instructor should also be notified as early as possible, as a matter of courtesy. Students should follow the procedure on the university website for dropping classes.

Any student wishing to withdraw from the University should meet with the academic advisor. Withdrawal from the social work program requires the approval of the Director or the Undergraduate Coordinator of the Grace Abbott School of Social Work. A letter stating the intention to withdraw is required. Failure to follow this procedure may result in denial of readmission to the School.

Failure to formally withdraw from the University immediately may affect grades as well as financial considerations where refunds are appropriate. Refunds of fees will be based on the university catalog, undergraduate catalog, class schedule, and as posted in the Cashier’s Office.
Academic Grievances

An undergraduate student who has an academic grievance involving a grade dispute or practicum shall discuss the matter with the faculty member involved. In the event the instructor is unavailable for handling a grade complaint, the student will meet with the Director or the Dean to determine the most appropriate course of action agreeable to all parties. If the dispute is not resolved, and for all other academic grievances, the student may appeal the matter to the Director. If the dispute is not resolved, the student will follow the procedures outlined below.

The student will submit the grievance in writing to the Director within 10 working days of the decision that is the subject of the grievance. The academic advisor is available to assist the student in the grievance process. The grievance shall specifically state the reasons the student believes that the decision that is the subject of the grievance is incorrect.

The Director or his or her designee will ask the Program Committee to convene a panel of three faculty members and at least one student to consider the grievance. Every attempt will be made to appoint panel members who have no direct knowledge of or experience with the student.

The panel shall review the nature of the problem, alternatives for its remediation, and prior documentation and/or decisions about the student’s continuation in the program. After consideration of the student’s grievance, including a meeting with the student and/or a meeting with the involved faculty member if considered necessary by the panel, the panel will deliberate and make a decision concerning the grievance. The chair of the grievance panel shall keep appropriate documentation and notify the student of its decision in writing within 10 working days of consideration of the grievance.

The student may submit a written appeal of the grievance panel’s decision to the Office of the Dean of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS) within 20 working days of the exhaustion of the departmental procedures. The Committee on Academic Standards and Curriculum for the College of Public Affairs and Community Service is the official body for handling the appeal.

Copies of the CPACS procedures for Student Grades and Suspension Appeals are available from the chair of the Committee on Academic Standards and Curriculum for the College and the Office of the Dean. Pursuant to the student grievance procedures for undergraduate students provided in the undergraduate catalog, students enrolled in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work have the right to redress grievances related to academic matters. Students are assured freedom from reprisals for bringing a grievance. Students may contact the university ombudsman office for assistance. The ombudsman will provide advice on how to solve a problem, or provide referrals to persons or offices that have the expertise students may need. To contact an ombudsman, students should call the university operator at 402-554-2800. The service is confidential and free.

Attendance/Tardiness

Students are expected to be on time for class and to attend every class session. In order to aid students in the transition from student to professional, tardies and absences will not be tolerated.
Chronic tardiness and absences not only impede the student’s learning, but are also disruptive of the learning process and disrespectful to peers. Therefore, any incidents of absence, tardiness, or leaving early may impact the student’s grade, per the course syllabus.

Credit/No Credit Courses

Fifteen (15) hours may be taken on a credit/no credit basis. No more than 6 of these hours can be in the core requirements, and none of these can be in the required social work courses. There is a limit of two courses taken credit/no credit per semester. To take a course credit/no credit: (1) register for a course available for credit/no credit, and (2) turn in a completed credit/no credit form to the registrar during the first week of courses. A credit/no credit course can be changed to a regular graded course prior to the 11th week of the course.

Academic Advisement

All pre-social work students are required to meet with the Grace Abbott School of Social Work academic advisor each semester prior to registering for classes.

Once students are formally admitted to the BSSW program, students will see the academic advisor. Responsibilities of the academic advisor include clarifying questions regarding degree requirements; providing guidance in selection of courses; identifying and discussing areas that may be interfering with the student’s educational progress; and representing the student’s interests to the point of advocacy when necessary. Responsibilities of students include familiarizing themselves with degree requirements and the NASW Code of Ethics, actively participating in the advisement process, and scheduling advising appointments well in advance of registration each semester.

Time Limit for the BSSW Degree

Students are required to complete the BSSW degree in four years, beginning with admission to the BSSW program. In special situations, a student may request an exception to the time limit from the Director.
MSW Academic Policies

MSW Academic Standards

A student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher in all graduate work taken as part of the MSW program, including courses taken for a certificate. A student whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.0 or who receives a grade of C+ or below in nine credit hours will be considered in academic difficulty and will receive a Review.

A student must receive a grade of B or higher in practicum courses (8160, 8170, 8400, 8410, and 8420). If a student receives a grade in practicum that is lower than a B, s/he will receive a Level 2 or 3 Review, depending on whether the student has had a previous Review.

If a student is on academic probation and receives a grade of B- or lower, the School will recommend the Office of Graduate Studies dismiss the student from the program. (Probation means that a grade of B or higher is required for all courses taken during the probation period.)

A student who receives a grade of C- or below in any graduate work taken as part of the MSW program, including courses taken for a certificate, will be automatically dismissed from the program by the Office of Graduate Studies. Therefore, the student must withdraw from all classes (see Reinstatement-Reapplication Procedures).

Student Responsibilities

Students must be aware of the Quality of Work Standards of the Graduate College, as well as additional criteria of satisfactory performance in their respective department/school programs. It is the students’ responsibility to know when their previous course work has failed to meet those standards. Students who are attending classes are still subject to dismissal if the School recommends that action based on its review of their previous performance.

Time to Degree Completion

Graduate students are required to complete the MSW degree in four years; students pursuing a dual degree, an additional certificate program, or a thesis are allowed six years. In special situations, a student may request an exception to the time limit from the Director.

Course Loads for Graduate Students

A part-time course load is 6 credit hours; a full-time course load is 9 to 12 credit hours. Graduate students are required to be enrolled in at least 6 credit hours for each of the Fall and Spring semesters (this may include courses taken to remedy an undergraduate deficiency).

Students may take less than 6 credit hours during their final semester of the program without special permission. The Director will recommend the Office of Graduate Studies dismiss any graduate student who enrolls in fewer than 6 credit hours for a Fall or Spring semester.

Any student who wishes to take less than 6 hours or more than 12 hours must first discuss this with their academic advisor. If the academic advisor approves, the student must submit a written
request to the Director prior to enrolling that semester, or prior to dropping a course which would drop them below 6 credit hours. If the Director approves the request, the Director will notify the student and Program Committee Chair, and place a copy of the approval in the student file. If the request is denied, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Program Committee Chair.

The same procedure is followed if a student wishes to take a leave of absence for a Fall or Spring semester. The Director will only grant a leave of absence for one semester; if a longer leave is required, the student can withdraw from the program and can re-apply at a later time (see the Reinstatement-Reapplication Process).

**Waiver of Foundation-Level and Deficiency Courses**

Course waivers do not involve transfer of credits or payment of tuition. Courses may be waived in the following ways:

a. **Completion of equivalent courses.** A student may apply for waiver of Foundation-level courses by demonstrating that he or she has already completed an equivalent course within an accredited BSSW or MSW program. After admission, it is the student’s responsibility to make such requests to the Program Committee Chair and submit supporting documentation. The Program Committee will make the final decision. Waivers may be revoked if performance is not satisfactory in courses for which the waived course is a prerequisite.

b. **Waiver by examination.** Qualified students may waive SOWK 8070 Human Behavior and the Social Environment I, SOWK 8080 Human Behavior and the Social Environment II, SOWK 8090 Social Welfare Policy, and/or the undergraduate Research Methods deficiency by taking a waiver exam(s). Once admitted, a student may request permission from the Director by June 1 to take a waiver exam(s). A student must clearly show qualification to take the exam(s) through the provision of information pertaining to similar courses completed, or equivalent work experience that has provided adequate preparation for such an examination. If granted, waiver examinations will be scheduled during the first week of August prior to the beginning of the Fall semester and are graded by faculty who teach in the content area(s). A student will receive the examination result(s) prior to the first week of Fall classes. Please note that in order to be eligible for the waiver exam for SOWK 8080, a student must first pass the waiver exam for SOWK 8070. If granted, this exam will be scheduled during the first week of October. Students will receive the results of this examination prior to the registration period for Spring semester. Each waiver examination may be attempted only once and the student must receive a score of 84% or higher in order to earn the waiver. Academic credit for life and/or previous work experience will not be given, in whole or in part, in lieu of the field practicum or of courses in the professional foundation areas.

c. **Deficiency courses.** Based on an applicant’s transcripts, the School Admissions Committee may deem an applicant/student needs to take one or more undergraduate deficiency courses. A 4-5 semester credit hour human biology course (with a lab) must be completed prior to taking SOWK 8070 (HBSE I). A three semester credit hour statistics course and a three semester credit hour research course must be completed prior to taking SOWK 8190 Research and Computer Applications. A waiver exam is available for the undergraduate research course (see “Waiver by examination” above).
Transfer of Credit

Students may apply for transfer of up to nine semester hours of graduate credit earned outside the Grace Abbott School of Social Work (grades must be B or higher) under the following guidelines:

1. Transfer of graduate credits from a course taken pass/fail must be recommended by the Program Committee, include a written evaluation by the instructor who taught the course, and be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies.

2. Course work which would be over four years old at the completion of the degree program (as defined by the student’s plan of study) cannot be used. (Or five years, for dual degree students.)

3. Foundation-level waivers are not included in these transfer credits.

4. Application of the credits to a prior degree does not disqualify a transfer credit, but these courses would have to be evaluated and approved by the Program Committee and the Office of Graduate Studies. Acceptance of such credits will depend upon how they fit within the MSW requirements and the student’s overall plan of study.

To apply for transfer of previous coursework, the student must submit a written request to the Program Committee Chair. Included in the written request must be an explanation of how the course(s) fits the plan of study, and necessary supporting material (for example, official transcripts, course syllabi, outlines, etc.). The student’s request must be approved by the Program Committee before or at the time of submitting the student’s plan of study. It is prudent to obtain prior approval for prospective outside courses to be sure that they will be accepted.

Outside Courses

Courses taken outside of the Grace Abbott School of Social Work may be approved on an individual basis in the context of a student’s career goals and plans of study. Acceptance is most common in the elective areas, and very rare in the practice area (except for courses from other CSWE-accredited MSW programs). Advanced practicum must always occur within the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work program. After consulting with the academic advisor and prior to enrolling in the course, the student must submit a written request to the Program Committee Chair for approval of the Program Committee. The Program Committee Chair will communicate the Program Committee’s decision to the student and to the Office of Graduate Studies, and place a copy of the approval in the student’s file.

Academic Advisement

All students will be assigned to the academic advisor. Students are expected to meet face-to-face with the academic advisor at least once each Fall and Spring semester. Students are not permitted to register for courses without having met with the academic advisor. To be active and responsible participants in the academic advisement process, students should keep a file containing all of their advisement and program planning materials, and bring this file with them to all advisement meetings. Students should be familiar with the program requirements and scheduling alternatives prior to meeting with the academic advisor. Advisement is a time for students to review their plans of study with the academic advisor, as well as all information in the student’s file.
Please note: the School and the University provide several helpful tools to assist in this process, including this Academic Policies and Standards document.

**Graduate Plan of Study**

Admission to the MSW program does not automatically admit the student to candidacy for the MSW degree. It is the student’s responsibility to complete a plan of study for the MSW degree as soon as possible. Deciding on the academic concentration to follow is essential for completing and submitting a student’s plan of study in a timely manner. Advanced standing students’ plans of study must be submitted no later than the end of November during their first semester of enrollment. Foundation-level students’ plans of study must be submitted by the end of January of their second semester of enrollment.

Plan of study forms are available at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work and should be completed by students in consultation with the academic advisor. The plan of study is filed with the academic advisor, who secures the necessary signatures. After all signatures are gathered, the School forwards the student’s plan of study to the Office of Graduate Studies. When the Office of Graduate Studies approves the plan of study, an approval notice is sent to the student and to the School. Once approved, modifications to the plan of study can be made with the approval of the academic advisor, the Program Committee Chair, the Director, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Comprehensive Examination (Comps)**

In compliance with Graduate Studies’ policies, all MSW candidates (including those doing a thesis) are required to pass a comprehensive examination ("comps"). The comprehensive examination is offered twice each academic year: during the Fall and Spring semesters. It is recommended that students take comps during the semester of graduation, but they may take it earlier provided no more than nine semester hours are left to complete after the semester in which the comprehensive examination is taken. Students planning to graduate in August must take the examination during the previous Spring semester (or in the previous Fall semester, if the student qualifies for the exam). Students are not advised to take comps if they have not yet begun their Advanced Practicum.

Students must have their plan of study approved prior to taking comps. Students must sign up to take comps at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

Students are notified of their written exam results approximately 10 days after taking the exam. Students who pass the written exam are notified by email. Students are provided their final score and written comments from graders. The MSW degree is not awarded until the student passes the exam.

A student may take the written comprehensive examination a maximum of three times. If a student does not pass the written examination(s), an opportunity is provided for the student to be tested orally. Failing the oral examination results in the failure of the comprehensive examination. Students who are required to retake the comprehensive exam must do so in the next semester in which the exam is offered and develop a plan with their academic advisors for successfully completing the comprehensive examination. Students in the Dual Degree Programs who must retake the MSW exam may continue to take courses for only one additional semester or
one summer session until the MSW exam is successfully completed. There is no appeal available for a student who fails the comprehensive exam three times.

Special Circumstances

1. Students with disabilities, e.g., visual problems, dyslexia, or any other condition which might require special consideration must have registered with the UNO Office of Disability Services by the beginning of the semester in which they plan to take the exam in order to receive accommodation. They must notify the MSW Coordinator of this need when they sign up to take the comprehensive exam so arrangements can be made at the UNO Testing Center. The exam will be taken on the same day as other students taking the exam.

   Students who are non-English native speakers may receive an additional two hours to take the exam as well as the use of a translation dictionary. In order to receive this accommodation, the student must have lived less than 10 years in a country where English is an official language. Students must submit their request to the MSW Coordinator by the deadline for signing up for the exam so arrangements can be made. The exam will be taken on the same day as other students taking the exam.

2. Students living out of region may be allowed to take the exam away from UNO. Students must submit their request to the MSW Coordinator the semester prior to taking the exam so arrangements can be made. The exam will be taken on the same day as other students taking the exam.

University Withdrawal of Students

Written notification of withdrawal from the MSW program must be submitted to the Director, who will notify the Program Committee Chair and place a copy of the withdrawal in the student file. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the denial of re-admission to the School. Any refund of fees will be based on the University Catalog, graduate catalog, class schedule, and as posted in the Cashier’s Office. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from courses via Mavlink. Failure to withdraw according to this procedure may cause forfeiture of refunds and inappropriate posting of grades.

Academic Grievances / Grade Appeals

A graduate student who has an academic grievance involving practicum or a grade dispute shall discuss the matter with the faculty member involved. If the dispute is not resolved, the student will follow the procedures outlined below. These procedures also apply to a grievance resulting from a Level 2 or 3 Review.

The student will submit the grievance in writing to the Director within a period up to six weeks following receipt of the grade from the Office of the Registrar or after receiving written notice of the decision that is the subject of the grievance. The academic advisor is available to assist in the grievance process. The grievance shall specifically state the reasons the student believes the decision that is the subject of the grievance was incorrect, prejudiced, or given capriciously.
The Program Committee Chair or Director will appoint an *ad hoc* grievance panel of three graduate faculty members and at least one student to consider the grievance. Every attempt will be made to appoint panel members who have no direct knowledge of or experience with the student. The panel shall review the nature of the grievance, alternatives for its remediation, prior documentation and/or decisions about the student’s continuation in the program. After consideration of the student’s grievance, including a meeting with the student and/or a meeting with the instructor, if considered necessary by the panel, the panel will report its findings to the Director and the Program Committee, and the Program Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies will make the final decision on the grievance. Such a decision may include upholding the student’s grievance, denying the student’s grievance, or making additional recommendations. It is the responsibility of the Program Committee Chair to keep appropriate documentation and inform the student in writing of its recommendation within 10 working days of consideration of the grievance.

In cases where a grade lower than a C will result in dismissal from the Grace Abbott School of Social Work, the Dean for Graduate Studies will notify the Program Committee Chair and student that the student will be automatically dismissed from the graduate program. The student will have a two-week grace period from the date of the dismissal notification to the date of request to the Registrar for disenrollment in all graduate coursework. This two-week period allows the student an opportunity to present his/her case informally to the course instructor and, if necessary, to the Program Committee Chair before being terminated from the program and disenrolled from courses. A student who has been dismissed from the graduate program and disenrolled from course work may file a formal appeal to the Dean for Graduate Studies, but is no longer a student in good standing and is prohibited from taking graduate courses until the formal appeal has been resolved.

If the matter is not resolved, the student may file an appeal in writing to the Dean for Graduate Studies who shall inform the student of the grade appeal procedures and shall forward the appeal to the student-faculty committee or council which is designated to hear graduate-level course grade appeals. The decision of the campus committee or council shall be final and is not subject to further appeal.

Pursuant to the student grievance procedures for graduate students in the Graduate Catalog, students enrolled in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work have the right to redress grievances related to academic matters. Students are assured freedom from reprisals for bringing a grievance. Students may contact the university ombudsman office for assistance. The ombudsman will provide advice on how to solve a problem, or provide referrals to persons or offices that have the expertise students may need. To contact an ombudsman, students should call the University operator at 402-554-2800. The service is confidential and free.

**Exceptions to Requirements**

The MSW program is designed to meet the requirements of sound professional practice as well as the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Accordingly, all students are expected to complete the prescribed requirements. Occasionally, an exception may be in the best interest of a student’s educational program and professional development. In
such situations, the following procedure will be used:

1. The student will discuss the proposed exception with the academic advisor.
2. If the student wishes to proceed, a written request shall be submitted to the Program Committee Chair, identifying the exception and documenting the justification for the exception.
3. The academic advisor and/or instructor will give their recommendation to the Program Committee Chair.
4. The Program Committee Chair will present the request to the Program Committee who will make a decision to approve or disapprove, subject to affirmation by the Office of Graduate Studies. A written response will be provided to the student, the academic advisor, and the Office of Graduate Studies, and placed in the student’s file.
5. A student who wishes to appeal a decision should consult with the Director and follow the Graduate College academic appeals procedures.

Non-Academic Grievances

Student-initiated grievances that are not academic in nature are addressed in other documents. Students should refer to the UNO Undergraduate Catalog and Graduate School Catalog found at [www.unomaha.edu](http://www.unomaha.edu) for more detailed discussion of specific grievance procedures.
**Glossary**

**Academic Advisor:** The academic advisor assists all students in designing and following their plan of study; serves as the student’s advocate.

**Advocate:** Students may select a Grace Abbott School of Social Work faculty or staff member to serve as their advocate during Level Review hearings. This may be the academic advisor or another member of the faculty or staff.

**College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS):** The College in which the Grace Abbott School of Social Work is located.

**CPACS Committee on Academic Standards and Curriculum:** A committee comprised of representatives from the schools and departments within the College of Public Affairs and Community Service. This committee is responsible for reviewing student grievances if the grievances are not resolved at lower levels.

**Dean of CPACS:** Administrator in charge of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service.

**Dean for Graduate Studies:** Administrator in charge of the Office of Graduate Studies; the Office of Graduate Studies oversees all graduate programs, including the MSW program.

**Director:** Administrator in charge of the Grace Abbott School of Social Work. Reports to the Dean of CPACS.

**Faculty Liaison:** Faculty or staff member who works with the Practicum office to monitor practicum placements.

**Faculty Member:** Full-time and part-time (adjunct) educators who work at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work, including instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, (full) professors, and professor emeriti.

**Graduate Faculty Member:** A faculty member within the Grace Abbott School of Social Work who has been designated by the University as someone allowed to teach in graduate courses, serve on final examining committees, and serve on supervisory committees as well as being allowed to vote on any matter presented to the University’s Graduate Council. They hold a terminal degree in social work, hold the rank of Senior Lecturer, Assistant Professor, or equivalent or higher rank, and are actively involved in scholarly/creative activity and/or graduate teaching as part of their regular duties.

**Graduate Program Coordinator:** Faculty member who manages the MSW program at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

**Ombudsman:** The ombudsman's job is to assist students when they have a grievance or a problem with offices or individuals at the University. Advice on how to solve a problem, referrals to persons or offices that have the expertise you may need and actions on your behalf by the Ombudsman are some of the duties of this office.
**Practicum Instructor:** An individual who meets the qualifications required to supervise BSSW and MSW students in practicum and who, most often, works at an agency that provides social work practicum placements (e.g., Educational Supervisor, Task Supervisor).

**Program Committee Chair:** Faculty member who chairs the Program Committee.

**Program Committee:** Group comprised of faculty members, community representatives, and students holding primary responsibility for all graduate and undergraduate program-related policies. This committee is responsible for the operation of student progress reviews; makes decisions about student requests for course and plan of study exceptions; and makes recommendations regarding admission appeals, grade appeals, and Level 2 and 3 reviews.

**Practicum Coordinator:** Faculty member who manages the Practicum office.

**Program Coordinator:** The Graduate Program Coordinator and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator jointly are referred to as Program Coordinators.

**Staff:** Individuals who serve the Grace Abbott School of Social Work and who are not faculty members, including Administrative Assistants and Associate Practicum Coordinator.

**Student:** Individual accepted into the BSSW or MSW programs within the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

**Student Progress Review:** The meeting that occurs once per semester where faculty members review the progress of every BSSW and MSW student in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

**Undergraduate Program Coordinator:** Faculty member who manages the BSSW program at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

**University Judicial Officer:** University employee responsible for investigating charges, determining facts, and making recommendations regarding disciplinary procedures regarding students accused of violating the UNO Student Code of Conduct.