

Policy on the Retention and Remediation of Students

Objective

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the areas of competence and professional behavior expected of each student and the procedures for identifying and addressing problematic behaviors, incompetence, and/or ethical violations that occur during the course of their graduate education.

Definitions

Impairment is defined as an interference in professional functioning that is reflected in one or more of the following ways:

- Inability or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into one's repertoire of professional behavior;
- Inability to acquire professional skills and reach an accepted level of competency; or
- Inability to control personal stress, psychological dysfunction, or emotional reactions that may affect professional functioning.

Incompetence is defined as a lack of ability, which may include either professional or interpersonal skill, or academic deficiency. When students continue to provide psychological services beyond their current level of competence, this is an ethical violation.

Ethical Misconduct is when the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct produced by the American Psychological Association (APA), the AAMFT Code of Ethics produced by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, the Principles of Professional Ethics produced by the National Association of School Psychologists, or the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice produced by the American Counseling Association are not followed. These codes are intended to provide both the general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by students in their professional activities. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom students work. It is the individual responsibility of each student to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. Students respect and protect human and civil rights, and do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices. It is assumed that unethical behavior and impairment are overlapping concepts that all unethical behaviors are reflective of impairment, whereas problematic behaviors may involve other aspects of professional behavior that may or may not result in unethical behavior.

Problematic Behaviors refer to a student's behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics that may require remediation, but are perceived as not excessive or unexpected for professionals in training. Performance anxiety, discomfort with client's diverse life-styles and ethnic backgrounds, and lack of appreciation of agency norms are examples of problematic behaviors that are usually remedied and not likely to progress into impairment status [Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson (1991). Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 22, 291-296].

Identification and Verification of Problems Requiring Remediation or Dismissal

Impairment, incompetence, ethical violations, or problematic behaviors can be identified in a variety of ways.

Informal Identification of Problems

Any faculty member, supervisor, or student may raise an issue at any time. Practicum supervisors should initially discuss their concerns with the Practicum Coordinator, who will gather additional information and raise the issue at the next scheduled Program faculty meeting. Students who have a concern about a fellow student should first discuss the issue with their own advisor, who will then raise the issue with the other Program faculty. Advisors and faculty members will protect the confidentiality of the student reporting the potential problem, but they may request that the student meet with them to provide additional information. The Program faculty will briefly discuss the potential problem during the meeting in which it is raised, and if necessary the advisor of the student concerned will gather additional data and will report to the Program faculty within one week. If the concern appears valid, a formal review will take place as described below.

Review Procedures for Possible Problems

When a possible impairment or problematic behavior has been identified, the faculty of the Program meet with the student to review the evaluation, and to determine whether a problem actually exists. In addition to the original report of the problem, information will be gathered from formal written and/or verbal evaluations of the student and from informal sources, including observations of students outside the training environment or reports from other interested parties.

Areas to be reviewed and discussed include the nature, severity, and consequences of the reported impairment or problem behavior. The following questions will be posed at this stage (adapted from Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson, 1991):

- What are the actual behaviors that are of concern, and how are those behaviors related to the goals of the Program?
- How and in what settings have these behaviors been manifested?
- What were the negative consequences for the training agency or others (e.g., clients, other students) of the problematic behaviors?
- Who observed the behaviors in question?
- Who or what was affected by the behavior (clients, agency, atmosphere, training program, etc.)?
- What was the frequency of this behavior?
- Has the student been made aware of this behavior before the meeting, and if so, how did he or she respond?
- Has the feedback regarding the behavior been documented in any way?
- How serious is this behavior on the continuum of ethical and professional behavior?
- What are the student's ideas about how the problem may be remediated?

While each case is different and requires individual assessment, the following factors may indicate that the problem is more serious and may represent a more serious impairment rather than a problematic behavior that is easier to remediate:

- The student does not acknowledge, understand or address the problematic behavior when it is identified.
- The problematic behavior is not merely a reflection of a skill deficit that can be rectified by training.
- The quality of service delivered by the person suffers.
- The problematic behavior is not restricted to one area of professional functioning.
- The behavior has the potential for ethical or legal ramifications if not addressed.
- A disproportionate amount of attention by training personnel is required.
- Behavior that does change as a function of feedback.
- Behavior negatively affects the public image of the agency or the university or the training site.

After the initial meeting with the student, the faculty will meet to determine whether impairment or problematic behavior exists. If the faculty determines that there is a problem, they will develop a written plan for remediation or a recommendation for dismissal and will schedule a meeting to discuss this plan with the student within three weeks of their initial meeting with the student. Students are encouraged to submit their own ideas for remediation to the faculty, through their advisors. The faculty will consider the student's recommendations in developing their own recommendations. The student's advisor, using the Student Performance Remediation Plan form that immediately follows this document, will document the plan.

After the faculty members have presented their recommendations to the student and answered his or her questions, the student must sign the Performance Review Cover Sheet (a copy follows this document) indicating that

the recommendations have been presented and explained. The student will be given the opportunity to accept the recommendations, to provide a written rebuttal, and/or to appeal. If the student chooses to provide a rebuttal, the Program faculty will meet again to consider any new evidence presented by the student, and will provide written documentation of their decision within three weeks of the date the rebuttal was received. If the student wishes to appeal the faculty's decision, he or she may follow the appeal procedures outlined in the Seton Hall University Student Handbook.

Regardless of the outcome of the feedback meeting, the student's advisor or mentor will schedule a follow-up meeting to evaluate the student's adjustment to the review process, and recommend potential sources of guidance and assistance when necessary.

Remediation Procedures

The remediation process will follow the written plan, which must include scheduled review dates and target dates for each issue identified. Examples of actions that may be included in the remediation plan are an increase in didactic instruction, a decrease in course load, a decrease in or temporary suspension of clinical responsibilities, increased supervision and/or faculty advisement, leave of absence, and individual psychotherapy. Progress must be reviewed at least once every semester for the fall and spring semesters, at least two weeks before registration. Additional reviews may be scheduled as necessary. After each review, a copy of the current Remediation Plan including student comments and faculty signatures must be filed in the student's permanent file. If faculty view progress against targets as insufficient, they may recommend either a change in the remediation plan or dismissal. The student will have an opportunity for rebuttal or appeal, as described above.

Student Performance Review Cover Sheet

Date of Initial Meeting with Student: _____

Faculty Members Present (Must include the Program Director and Student's Advisor or Mentor):

Summary of Problem (include specific behaviors, setting, and who first identified the problem):

Date of Faculty Review Meeting _____

Faculty Recommendation:

No action required

Remediation required (attach copy of plan)

Dismissal recommended (must be reviewed and approved by Department Chair and Dean)

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:

Student's Advisor or Mentor _____

Date _____

Program Director _____ Date _____

Date of Student Feedback Meeting _____

Student Comments:

Signature of Student: _____ Date: _____
(Does not indicate agreement)

Student Performance Remediation Plan

(check one) Initial Plan Review Follow-up Final Review

Student: _____ Date: _____

Identified Areas of Concern:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Remediation Plan and Schedule:

Area

Specific Behavioral Objectives and Target Dates	Method of Remediation	Met? Y/N
A		
B		
C		
D		

Progress Since Last Review (if applicable): ___ Sufficient ___ Insufficient

Comments and Recommendations:

Date of Next Review(if applicable):

Student Reactions:

Signatures:

Student Signature:

Advisor/Mentor:

Program Director: