

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA - KEARNEY
Department of Social Work

**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR
ADMISSION, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION**

Because of the responsible positions of authority that social workers hold, and the potential to do harm in those positions, academic requirements in a social work program are by necessity comprehensive. In addition to student scholastic requirements for completion of courses at certain grade levels, social work students are expected to behave in a manner that is consistent with the values, ethics, and conduct requirements of the profession of social work in their three primary roles in the program: as learners, as students in a professional program, and as future professional helpers. Comprehensive academic performance standards in the social work program include cognitive, skill, scholastic, behavioral, and professional components and are primary indicators of professional readiness for practice in the field of social work. The Department of Social Work at the University of Nebraska at Kearney declares its commitment to equal educational opportunities that respect the diversity of all people. The Department shall not discriminate against anyone based on upon age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

The Academic Performance Standards for the UNK Social Work Program fall into 7 categories: Scholastic, Professional Values and Ethics, Self-Awareness, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Responsibility and Professional Readiness, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Abilities, and Communication Skills.

The Social Work Program's academic performance standards and examples of essential behavior for each standard were developed to ensure clarity on expectations for student behavior and achievement and to ensure that students from our program are well-suited for the professional demands, roles, and responsibilities of professional social workers.

Students who are unable to achieve or to demonstrate the essential behavior identified in this document will come before the UNK Social Work Admission's Committee, in accordance with the program policies and procedures that govern how issues of student continuation in and termination from the program are handled.

Scholastic Standard: Includes overall GPA and course grades.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Must achieve/ maintain an overall GPA of 2.50.
- Must earn a B or better in SOWK 170.
- Must earn a C or better in all required SOWK courses. May repeat required SOWK courses with a C- or below one time only. May repeat no more than two required SOWK courses. Must successfully complete SOWK 480, 481 and 482, the Field Practicum Sequence, the first time it is taken.

Professional Values and Ethics Standard: Students demonstrate adherence to ethical, legal, and professional directives and expectations.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Judgment and conduct are consistent with the values and ethics of the profession as advanced in the NASW *Code of Ethics*, as well as with established laws, policies, and professional standards of care.

- Demonstrates potential for adherence to ethical expectations and obligations in working with diverse client populations, validating the dignity and worth of all people.
- Demonstrates professional and academic integrity in meeting the objectives of the social work program and in fulfilling all program requirements. Students should remain aware of and abide by UNK's Student Code of Conduct
- Demonstrates respect for the rights of others and upholds the ethical standards of client privacy and confidentiality at all times.

Self-Awareness Standard: Students demonstrate professional readiness through a commitment to the process of self-reflection and self-critique, assuming full responsibility for professional growth and for protecting clients, peers, supervisors, faculty, and other relevant parties from the adverse effects of performance problems and unprofessional behavior.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Demonstrates awareness of self and its impacts on interpersonal and professional relationships.
- Demonstrates a willingness to examine and assess the relationship between his/her personal values/socialization and their fit with expected professional behavior, as well as to grow toward professionalism by responsibly reconciling differences, as required by the *NASW Code of Ethics*.
- Demonstrates the capacity to assess strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice throughout the program of study.
- Acknowledges, seeks help to resolve, and ultimately resolves personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties that interfere with judgment, academic performance, and/or interactions with clients, peers, supervisors, faculty, and other relevant parties.
- Advocates for himself/herself in an appropriate and responsible manner.
- Shows a willingness to receive and accept feedback and/or supervision in a positive manner and to use the feedback to enhance his/her professional development.
- Demonstrates the ability to deal with life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms.
- Identifies appropriate professional learning goals and takes an active role in the learning process.
- Prepares for and effectively utilizes supervision and other forms of professional advisement and mentorship.
- Demonstrates a realistic and accurate self-awareness of his/her own strengths, limitations, values, and performance.

Interpersonal Relationship Skills Standard: Interactions with peers, clients, faculty, staff, advisors, supervisors, agency personnel, and field instructors reflect integrity, honesty, and cooperation, as well as a clear understanding of professional role and appropriate boundaries.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Relates interpersonally in a manner that is respectful, non-manipulative, non-disruptive, nondiscriminatory, and characterized by maturity.
- Demonstrates interpersonal skills that would indicate an ability to form and to sustain effective helping relationships.
- Uses proper channels for conflict resolution.
- Maintains appropriate boundaries in all relevant relationships and arenas.
- Demonstrates appropriate use of self in the professional role.

Responsibility and Professional Readiness Standard: Appropriate levels of responsibility and professional readiness are demonstrated over the course of the program of study.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Demonstrates responsible and self-directed behavior in adherence to the plan of study and the proper sequencing of courses for program completion.
- Shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by observing advisement deadlines, keeping appointments or canceling appointments if unable to keep them, attending class regularly and on time, and observing assignment due dates.
- Demonstrates ability to adhere to agency protocols and policies, dress codes, and documentation requirements.
- Demonstrates behaviors on campus, in the classroom, in the field placement, in the community, and with peers that are in compliance with program policies, institutional policies, and professional ethical standards.
- Refrains from illegal drug use and demonstrates behavior that is consistent with UNK's Student Code of Conduct
- Passes drug screens, as may be required by the program or field practicum.
- Absence of a history involving conviction of a violent crime or other felony.
- Communicates in advance to all affected parties whenever there is an interruption of planned attendance or task completion, tardiness, or late submission of assignments and identifies appropriate alternatives when a change in plans is necessary.
- Demonstrates ability to function within the structure of organizations and service delivery systems, as a member of a team and of an agency.
- Demonstrates application of effective time management strategies in completing all professional and academic responsibilities and activities.
- Responds in a timely and appropriate manner to communication from faculty, supervisors, field instruction personnel, and clients.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Abilities Standard: Individual reasoning reflects a comprehensive analysis that distinguishes fact from inference; conclusions are grounded in relevant data, information, and evidence.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Demonstrates the ability to identify ways in which biological, psychological, developmental, spiritual, socioeconomic, and environmental factors may affect an individual, family, or groups of various sizes.
- Demonstrates ability to gather and assess relevant information; to interpret information correctly; to come to well-reasoned conclusions and/or solutions; to think open-mindedly about alternative viewpoints, recognizing their underlying assumptions, implications, and practical consequences.
- Demonstrates the ability to identify and incorporate classroom learning in assessments and interventions with clients.
- Demonstrates ability to engage in reflective thinking to overcome personal beliefs rooted in prejudices, sweeping generalizations, stereotypes, and oversimplifications.

Communication Skills Standard: All verbal, nonverbal, and written communication exchanges are in accordance with professional standards.

Essential Student Behavior:

- Speaks with dignity, respect, and cultural sensitivity to peers, clients, faculty, staff, advisors, supervisors, agency personnel, and field instructors.
- Shows skill in building rapport and engaging clients, applying principles of sound communication.
- Demonstrates good empathic and attending skills in client interactions.
- Demonstrates mastery of the English language in oral and written form.
- Prepares written products that reflect mastery of the conventions of the written word in clarity, accuracy, completeness, as well as that evidence correct grammar and syntax, proper diction, accurate reasoning, and APA formatting.
- Follows agency guidelines for recordkeeping.