

# **BACHELOR of SOCIAL WORK ACADEMIC MANUAL**

BSW ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

June 2021

## **Preface**

This manual represents a compilation of the policies and procedures related to the BSW Program. We encourage you to read through it for a thorough understanding of the program's guidelines. When you have questions, let us know. We wish you great success as you pursue the BSW program. We welcome you and look forward to greeting you as a BSW colleague at the end of your educational journey.

The Bachelor of Social Work program within the School of Social Work was fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 2018 and will be accredited until 2026. It is a program with a history of concern for social justice and a strong generalist perspective. Accreditation means that our program is fully recognized by its peer schools and the Council on Social Work Education. The program's history means that you are entering a program that believes people can learn, grow, and change. It recognizes that people bring strengths and assets to their lives, and they bring challenges as well. Some of those challenges may come from systemic injustice and environmental factors; social work education must be directed both at assisting individuals with their personal challenges and removing the systemic factors within their environment that negatively affect their lives.

## **Introduction Mission Statement**

The School of Social Work at Rhode Island College prepares students for social work practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities throughout Rhode Island and southern New England. We work to eliminate social injustice and economic inequality in an effort to realize a just and equitable society. We seek to create, analyze and evaluate knowledge and to instill in students a deep understanding of the people and communities they work with and the structural influences affecting their daily lives.

## **Vision Statement**

The School of Social Work at Rhode Island College is widely recognized for:

- Student-centered learning environments
- Diverse and inclusive pedagogy
- Excellence in social work education
- Advocacy with and for oppressed and vulnerable populations
- Critical thinking and purposeful action to address social problems
- Contributions to knowledge and skill development

## **Goals of the BSW program**

Program graduates will:

- Engage in social work practice that is informed by best practices and empathetic engagement
- Apply knowledge of human rights, and social, economic, and environmental justice
- Use policy practice skills to achieve human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice
- Apply social work values and ethics in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics to guide professional practice
- Understand the impact of oppression and human diversity in a pluralistic society

### **Generalist Foundation Curriculum**

The bachelor's program at the School of Social Work at Rhode Island College prepares students for generalist social work practice. The generalist approach recognizes the connection between private troubles and public issues, between the individual's well-being and the environmental conditions of their lives, between personal and social change. The generalist approach stresses that intervention should target the system or systems that have caused or contributed to the problems. Social workers must be prepared to intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, institutions, and communities. The social worker must be prepared to use a variety of theories, skills, and methods for client engagement, assessment, and intervention. The curriculum of the BSW program introduces students to an understanding of basic knowledge, values and skills common to macro (societal, community, organizational) and micro (individual, family, small group) levels of practice.

Thus, the mission of the School of Social Work and the perspective of generalist practice are similar. Both focus on working with individuals, families, groups, and communities while changing the environments and social structures that may be exacerbating or creating their problems. Social work practice identifies the source(s) of the difficulty or need, develops professional helping relationships directed towards change, and builds upon the strengths and resources of those in need to intervene in ways consistent with social work values and ethics.

Generalist foundation content includes social work values and ethics, diversity and oppression, social and economic justice, theories of human behavior, social work practice, research, social policy, and field education.

### **Curriculum Structure of the BSW Program**

The social work major contains required courses that build on the liberal arts base of understanding people and society. To meet the objectives of the program, the curriculum includes content in social policy and social services, human behavior, diversity and oppression, social research, and social work practice methodology.

- The social services and social policy courses familiarize students with the history of social welfare and social work, creation, meaning and impacts of social policy, major social issues confronting society, and the role of the social worker in creating and changing social policy.

- The diversity and oppression sequence provides students with an understanding of structural inequality—racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, class oppression, ableism, and xenophobia—and its relation to systemic and environmental factors that may enhance or impede functioning and human development.
- The research courses introduce students to the role and value of research in social work, the development and building of evidence to inform social work practice, the ability to evaluate practice, and the initial skills to do research in social work arenas.
- The social work practice sequence establishes competencies in the problem-solving approach of generalist practice. It stimulates awareness of self as a professional social worker and teaches skills, theories and models for working with individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Field education offers an intensive social work practice experience in which students have the opportunity for supervised direct service to client systems.

The BSW program prepares students for entry level social work practice. It also provides students with the foundation for graduate education. The social work curriculum consists of the following academic requirements:

### **Foundation Courses**

Students are required to take the following courses offered by other departments as foundation for the professional context areas:

#### **Course # and Title**

PS 202 American Government

Psych 215 Social Psychology

Psych 230 Developmental Psychology

Any 200-level Sociology, Gender and Women Studies, or Africana Studies course

### **Courses for the Social Work Major**

Students are required to take the following courses:

#### **Social Welfare Policy and Services**

##### **Course # and Title**

SW 200 Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare

SW 301 Social Policy Analysis

#### **Diversity and Oppression**

**Course # and Title**

SW 306 Biological Perspectives for Social Workers (2 credits)

SW 324 Diversity and Oppression I

SW 325 Diversity and Oppression II

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**Social Work Research****Course # and Title**

SW 302 Research I

SW 303 Research II

**Social Work Practice****Course # and Title**

SW 326 Generalist Practice

SW 327 Groups and Communities

SW 426 Models and Methods

**Field and Seminar****Course # and Title****Option 1**

SW 437 Field Work I (16 hours per week, fall)

SW 437 Field Work II (16 hours per week, spring)

SW 463 Field Seminar (fall)

SW 464 Senior Seminar (spring)

**Option 2**

SW 445 (12 hours x 10 weeks, summer)

SW 446 Field Work I (12 hours per week)

SW 447 Field Work II (12 hours per week)

SW 463 Field Seminar

SW 464 Senior Seminar

Obtaining a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree at Rhode Island College requires successful completion of 120 credit hours of academic study.

### **Social Work Practice**

The practice courses (SW 326, 327, and 426) are based on the generalist perspective and are intended to facilitate a student's progression from basic knowledge, values and skills to the ability to apply a sophisticated understanding to actual field work. In the junior year, students complete generalist social work practice (SW 326), which introduces them to strengths-based, ethical social work engagement, interviewing and assessment skills in a variety of fields of practice. While in this course, students also submit an application to the major. Their application includes a letter of reference discussing their readiness to move into practice settings and a personal statement, addressing their interest in social work, their experiences relevant to becoming a social worker, and their experiences with diversity and oppression.

Prior to or concurrently with enrollment in the generalist course, students take the Diversity and Oppression courses (SW 324 and SW 325) that help them develop knowledge for assessment and intervention planning. These courses stress understanding individuals, families, organizations and communities, with a special emphasis on racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty. In the second semester of the junior year, students complete The Helping Process (SW 327), which introduces them to group and community practice.

By the end of the junior year, students will also have completed courses in social policy (SW 301) and social research methods (SW 302 and 303). These courses provide additional socialization to social work practice. The policy course assists students to understand, analyze, and affect social policies that may impact their clients' lives. The research courses introduce the importance of research and evaluation in social work. Students complete an advanced social work practice course in the first semester of the senior year, which focuses on varying models and methods of social work practice (SW 426). Additionally, they also engaged in their field experience and field seminar in both semesters of senior year (SW 436/463 and SW437/464).

### **The BSW Field Experience**

The required field work experience (Option 1: Social Work 436 and 437 *OR* Option II: Social Work 445, 446, and 447) consists of a 16-hour per week placement for **14** weeks in the fall and spring semesters of the senior year with Option 1 or a 12 hour per week placement in the summer between the junior and senior years, followed by 12-hour per week placement in both the fall and spring of the senior year. Students choosing Option II elect summer field so they can stretch their required 448 hours over a longer period than Option 1 provides. Students need to obtain consent from their field placement site/field instructor to be present in the placement for 12 hours per week, receive the required one-hour of MSW supervision in the summer, and enroll in summer

field after successfully completing their junior year. Students continue with 12-hour per week field in the fall and spring of the senior year.

Students earn one credit for every four hours of placement for a total of four credits each semester in the senior year (option 1), or three credits in the summer field, and three credits in both the fall and spring of the seniors year (option 2). Students can earn additional credit for each four-hour-per-week increment of placement time (i.e., a placement of 20 hours per week work = five credits).

Students interested in adding additional time and credit to their field placement experience must consult with and gain approval from their field instructor/agency and their faculty liaison/advisor. As a minimum requirement, students are expected to spend 448 hours in their placement agencies during three semesters or three semesters and a summer. The field work experience is sequenced so that all other required courses in social work, including two introductory social work practice courses (SW 326 and SW 327) are taken as prerequisites. Thus, students have a strong base of knowledge that they can test in practice during the field placement.

### **Field Work Seminar: Fall**

The weekly seminar accompanies the field experience in the senior year. It is a problem-solving forum in which students share experiences encountered in the field, discuss issues related to practice and service-delivery, and obtain assistance with the process of integrating field and classroom learning.

The integration process involves re-conceptualizing and reinforcing generalist social work practice as part of students' actual experience in settings that provide specific services. Faculty who are responsible for administering and supervising the field experience are also responsible for teaching the seminar. A faculty member who works with a student in class is responsible for liaison/advisory work with the student's field instructor. This course is offered in the fall semester and must be taken concurrently with the first semester of senior year placement.

### **Senior Seminar in Social Work: Spring**

This seminar encourages students to continue their exploration of social work practice and their professional development. In this course, students are expected to integrate their field and academic learning into a comprehensive approach to professional practice and personal development. This course is offered only in the spring semester and must be taken concurrently with the second semester of placement. Students usually remain with the faculty liaison/advisor/instructor who facilitated their fall semester seminar; this assures continuity and integration.

## **Academic Policies and Procedures BSW Program Policies**

The BSW major is available to all degree candidates enrolled at Rhode Island College. All students wishing to pursue the social work major must indicate their interest to the BSW department by completing a departmental registration form. Students who express an interest in social work and/or register with the department as social work students must meet with a faculty academic advisor each semester.

Students must receive passing grades in cognate courses (Pol. Sci. 202, Psych. 215 & 230, and Soc. 200-level) and C or better in the social work courses they take to satisfy prerequisite requirements for the next course in each sequence.

### **Acceptance into the Major**

After at least one full semester in courses at the college, students can apply for admission to the major. Admission is determined on the basis of a GPA of at least 2.0 from courses in the college and 2.67 in social work courses. In addition to GPA, the department requires submission of a personal statement and a letter of reference. In addition, applicants are expected to show evidence of personal qualities considered essential to professional social work practice, such as responsiveness and sensitivity in relationships, values compatible with those of the social work profession, the ability to carry out the ethical obligations of a social worker, commitment to improving social conditions, and the ability to function collectively with others.

Admission to the major is a pre-requisite for enrollment in field placement and senior year courses.

### **Admission Requirement for the Accelerated BSW/MSW Admission**

Undergraduate students matriculated at Rhode Island College can apply for conditional admission to the Master's in Social Work program after completing at least 65 credits, and admitted to the BSW program. If conditionally admitted to the MSW program, students will be required to take two 400 level practice courses in their senior year. In addition, conditionally admitted students to the 5-year Masters program are required to earn at least a B in each social work course and maintain an overall GPA of 3.0.

### **Credit for Academic or Life Experience**

The BSW program does not permit academic credit for life experience or previous work experience in lieu of field practicum and/or social work courses.

### **Denial of Admission to the Major**

Students who are denied admission to the BSW program major and wish to appeal this decision must submit support materials with a letter of intent to appeal to the dean of the School of Social Work within five working days of their denial.

## **Retention in the Major**

After students have been admitted, they are subject to the following criteria in order to remain in the major:

- A student must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 at the College and 2.67 in social work courses
- A student must demonstrate professional behavior in classroom and field as defined below

## **Repeating a Course**

- Students who earn a grade of C- or below in a social work course, but who do not fail, are required to repeat that course.
- The course(s) to be repeated must be successfully completed by the end of the next semester in which the course is offered (except for summer school). The student will be allowed to take additional course work in the BSW major during that semester if he or she has the required prerequisites.

## **Dismissal from the Major**

- A student who receives a grade of F in a required social work course or C- or below in any two required social work courses, will be dismissed from the major.
- A student who receives a grade of U in SW 338, Introduction to Field Work, SW 436 or SW 437, Field Work I or II, will be dismissed from the major.
- The faculty of the BSW program reserves the right to dismiss from the program students who give evidence (as defined by the *College Handbook*, The BSW Field Manual, learning contracts, field evaluation, and/or the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*) of violations of professional behavior, an inability to secure and/or maintain a field placement and carry out field responsibilities at the baccalaureate level.
- Students who are required to retake a course in the major and do not receive a grade of C or better on the second try will be dismissed from the BSW major.
- No BSW major will be allowed to register for a field placement without the GPA identified above.

## **Re-Admission of Students Dismissed From the Major**

Dismissal from the major, while in the practice or field work sequence, represents a serious level of concern on the part of the BSW faculty about the student's suitability for

the social work profession. Once the dismissal is final, any student seeking re-admission must re-apply to the major, demonstrating remediation of the specific issues that led to their dismissal, in addition to the other admission requirements. Re-applications will be evaluated in the same manner as other applications, with a final decision by the faculty of the BSW program. Students re-applying to the major may request a meeting with the chair of the BSW program to clarify the issue(s) that led to their dismissal and must be remedied.

A student should re-apply to the major in the semester before a field placement would be made (the application deadline is November). In the re-application, the student's essay must directly address the specific issue(s) that led to their dismissal. Letters from professionals with whom the student has worked to resolve issues that led to their dismissal will be accepted.

### **Report of Incomplete**

For undergraduate students, an Incomplete shall be given in place of a grade when the work for the semester has been passing but has not been completed because of illness or some other reason that, in the opinion of the instructor, justifies such a report.

A report of Incomplete shall be given in place of a grade when the work for the semester has been passing but has not been completed because of illness or some other reason that, in the opinion of the instructor, justifies such a report.

- The student must initiate the request prior to the last week of class, unless the instructor has specified an earlier deadline in the course syllabus, in which case, the instructor's earlier deadline date supersedes the last week of class.
- Normally the student must initiate a request for an *I* grade; however, in extreme circumstances, faculty members may assign this grade at their discretion, *i.e.*, without discussing it with the student.
- Incompletes are appropriate only if some or most of the work has already been completed and the student is able to complete the remaining requirements with a minimum of faculty supervision by the beginning of the next semester or by its end, depending on the course.
- The student and faculty member will reach an agreement regarding the work that the student should complete to obtain a final grade, including the following:
  - the contents of the work that needs to be completed;
  - the date that the work will be completed: (College policy requires that all Incompletes be completed by the end of the *next* semester)

- the grade that will be assigned if the work is not completed.
- Contracts for approved Incompletes must be completed and signed by the student, the instructor and the department chair, and placed in the student's folder prior to assigning a grade of *I*.

### **Grade Grievances**

Students who believe they have received a grade that does not represent their efforts or results and wish to obtain a change of grade must first contact the faculty member within 14 days of receiving notice of the grade, to discuss their rationale for requesting a change of grade. The student and faculty member should meet in person for this discussion.

If, after such a meeting, the matter of the grade is unresolved, the student should write a letter to the BSW program chair requesting re-consideration of the grade. The letter should contain relevant information about the student's rationale, understanding of the faculty member's response, and an indication of the change the student is requesting.

The Chair will schedule a meeting with the student within 14 days to provide an opportunity for discussion. At the Chair's discretion, the faculty member may be invited to the meeting. Following the meeting, the Chair will respond to the student in writing within seven days. The letter will state the Chair's decision. Students who are not satisfied with the decision of the chair may contact the Dean of the School of Social Work to appeal the decision of the Chair within seven days of receiving the Chair's decision.

### **Policy on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using the words of another as your own without quotation marks and/or use of another person's ideas without citation. Use of material from the web or online sources without citation is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and is grounds for dismissal from the BSW program.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity is the foundation of the academic community. Students who violate College rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure of, or removal from, a course; disciplinary probation; and/or dismissal from the College. Individual schools may have additional standards and policies related to academic honesty.

(a) Examples of Academic Dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

- Plagiarism: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. The following are examples of plagiarism:

- i.* Word-for-word plagiarism: This includes (a) the submission of another student's work as one's own; (b) the submission of work from any source whatever (print or electronic) without proper acknowledgement by footnote or reference within the text of the paper; (c) the submission of any part of another's work without proper use of quotation marks.

- ii.* Patchwork plagiarism: This consists of a piecing together of unacknowledged phrases and sentences quoted verbatim (or nearly verbatim) from a variety of sources. The mere reshuffling of other people's words does not constitute original work.

- iii.* Unacknowledged paraphrase: It is perfectly legitimate to set forth another author's facts or ideas in one's own words, but if one is genuinely indebted to the other author for these facts or ideas, the debt must be acknowledged by footnote or reference within the text of the paper (e.g., the above paragraphs are based largely on Sears, Harbrace *Guide to the Library and Research Paper*, p. 39).

Many facts, ideas, and expressions are considered to be in the public domain or general knowledge and need not be acknowledged (e.g., the fact that the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776; the idea that universal public education is essential to the survival of democratic institutions; such proverbial expressions as "A rolling stone gathers no moss," or "New York is a great place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there,") but as a general rule, when one is in doubt, it is best to acknowledge the source.

- Collusion: facilitating academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

- Deception: Providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise, e.g. giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work.

- Sabotage: Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others.

- Multiple Submissions: Submitting for credit, when a student has not been given permission to do so, any work that is the same or substantially the same as work that has been submitted for credit in another course. Many professors allow re-working or building on prior work; however, multiple submissions are permitted only with the prior permission of the instructor(s), and only when the student acknowledges the multiple submission in the work itself.

#### (b) Faculty Role

The faculty member has two clearly defined roles: first, to establish preventive measures; and, second, to ensure that detected instances of academic dishonesty are dealt with appropriately and reported.

Preventive measures should include a statement to each class by the faculty member outlining expected standards of intellectual honesty and the necessity for such standards. The faculty member should also maintain reasonable security of all examination materials and procedures. Generally, the faculty member should employ any reasonable methods to discourage acts of academic dishonesty.

A faculty member may take action up to and including failing a student accused of academic dishonesty. Some often-used penalties include:

- i.* A low or failing grade on the assignment in which the offense occurred.
- ii.* An additional assignment.
- iii.* Reduction of the final grade up to and including failure.
- iv.* Any combination of the above.

In all cases, a report describing the nature of the dishonesty and the subsequent action taken by the faculty member shall be filed with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. If this is a first violation, unless egregious, the complaint will simply remain in a file in the VPAA's office. However, if a student has more than one reported incident (either in the same course or in different courses), the student will have a hearing from the Academic Standing Committee at the School of Social Work. Additionally, the faculty member may recommend that the student have a hearing in front of the Academic Integrity Board (<http://www.ric.edu/Academic-Integrity-Board/Pages/default.aspx>)

#### (c) Vice President for Academic Affairs Role

The Vice president for Academic Affairs shall maintain a file of any and all reports of academic dishonesty. At the discretion of the vice president for academic affairs and depending upon the severity of the infraction, the student may be informed in writing about possible consequences of further infractions.

In the case of multiple infractions, the vice president for academic affairs will refer the student's name to the Academic Integrity Board for review and possible action.

#### d) Academic Integrity Board's Role

The Board shall consider cases referred to it by a faculty member or the vice president for academic affairs, and has the option to recommend any of the penalties ranging from those available to the faculty member to placing the student on academic probation or expelling the student from the College.

#### *i.* Appeal

Any student accused of academic dishonesty may appeal action taken by the instructor in a case to the Board.

#### *ii.* Appeals Procedure

- Appeals or referrals to the Board will follow the standard procedure of the Board.
- The Board shall inform the student, the faculty member, and Vice President for

Academic Affairs of its decision.

- A record of the cases concerning academic dishonesty will be kept in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- A student may appeal the decision of the Board (concerning academic dishonesty) to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Appeals may be considered on the basis of new information or procedural errors.

### **Freedom of Expression**

The faculty of the BSW department recognizes the right of all members of the academic community – including students, faculty, and staff – to express their opinions. The BSW Department faculty has a commitment to engage students in critical examination of diverse ideological views, particularly with respect to their relationship to social work values. Discussion and debate about diverse ideological views should be conducted in a manner that respects the rights of others, consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards contained in the National Association of Social Workers *Code of Ethics*.

### **Criteria for Evaluating Academic Work**

**A. Written Work:** Writing is an essential skill for social work practice. Students should carefully proofread their papers for typographical, grammatical, sentence structure, and spelling errors. Most papers begin with an introductory statement of purpose and an overview of the ideas to be presented. The ideas must be discussed in a coherent, logical, well-organized manner and must be supported by one's own arguments, by research findings, and theoretical discussions from relevant literature, when appropriate

**B. Class Presentations:** The purposes of the presentation are made clear at the beginning and should demonstrate self-awareness, practice insights and skills, and integration of material from the readings and class discussions.

**C. Attendance and Class Participation:** The student is expected to behave in a way that demonstrates that they have integrated the core values and skills of the profession. This means that the student attends each class session, arriving on time. Students who must be late or absent (because of illness, for example), are expected to contact their instructor to inform them of the absence and plan to complete work they have missed. The following policy applies to all classes:

*Attendance is crucial for both your learning experience and the learning experiences of your peers. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. A student's grade will be affected if more than three hours of class is missed.*

The student's participation should show an ability to make purposeful use of self in interactions within the classroom; awareness of their own feelings, behaviors, and motivations; receptiveness to feedback and an ability to integrate feedback into behavioral change; an ability to make appropriate use of “air time” in class, i.e., willingness both to use it and to limit one's use of it; a respect for difference and for others' feelings, including a nonjudgmental attitude, sensitivity to diversity and oppressed groups, respect for confidentiality and client self-determination; and an ability to use the group to meet one's own needs, while respecting the needs of others.

For additional criteria for evaluating student performance, see the School of Social Work policies below regarding (1) confidentiality in the classroom and (2) professional behavior.

### **Special Learning Needs**

Students with special learning needs should inform their instructors, advisor, and field supervisor early in the semester so that needed accommodations can be made to facilitate learning. Students who require accommodation because of a disability should contact the Disability Services Center, Fogarty Life Science, Rm. 137, 456-2776, <http://www.ric.edu/disabilityservices>. Students must be registered with the Center to request accommodations in class and/or field.

### **Disability**

The School of Social Work is committed to removing learning barriers and facilitating inclusion throughout its curricula, specifically in the classroom learning environment and in field education. We wish to offer an integrative, accepting, and facilitating environment that is conducive to learning and professional growth for all students including those with disabilities. Students who have disabling conditions are entitled to reasonable accommodation. We strongly encourage students to self-identify and contact the Disability Services Center, Fogarty Life Science, Rm. 137, 456-2776, <http://www.ric.edu/disabilityservices>. Students must be registered with the Center to request accommodations in class and/or field.

Disability Services Center is the central resource for students with disabilities on campus. Staff makes every effort to verify and coordinate learning needs with faculty and to advocate for changes in policies and procedures. By contacting this office and registering, students will learn about the special services and equipment available to them. Moreover, registration assures student compliance with guidelines requiring reasonable accommodation.

### **Confidentiality**

The faculty of the School of Social Work recognizes the value and importance of each student's right to confidentiality. Students may request that specific information shared with individual members of the faculty, field instructors, and/or academic administrators is kept confidential. The School of Social Work regards faculty, faculty advisors, field instructors, and school administrators as members of each student's educational team who may be consulted periodically to discuss student progress. There are routine reviews of student progress at twice monthly BSW

faculty meetings. Information shared confidentially by a student will be shared with other team members only when a team member deems it necessary to address a student's educational needs. The procedure for sharing such information will be to first inform the student of the issue to be discussed; only after that will the issues/concerns be discussed. Discussions will include those individuals directly concerned with the issue, such as the Dean of the School of Social Work, the chair of the department, the faculty concerned, the student's advisor, and/or the director of Field Education.

If a faculty member is unable to notify a student ahead of time, in person, the faculty member will attempt to reach the student by e-mail or phone. If contact is still not made, the faculty member will send a written notice, return receipt requested, to the student's address on file with the BSW program. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the student.

The faculty of the School of Social Work recognizes the value and importance of free and open classroom discussion. Students are encouraged to express opinions and offer observations relevant to course content. In sharing information about others (e.g., clients in their practice), students are expected to protect the confidentiality of those individuals. Other students in the classroom are expected to treat classmates' comments with respect and courtesy, and to protect the confidentiality of comments and observations offered in the classroom, to the extent possible under law and college/school policy. Students are expected to refrain from divulging content of classroom discussion to others outside of the classroom. The confidentiality of classroom discussion cannot be guaranteed because of "duty to protect" and "mandatory reporting" laws and/or other policies that may require disclosure.

In writing papers and in class discussions it is important for students to disguise any potentially identifying information about clients.

## **Professional Behavior**

Students matriculating at the School of Social Work are preparing for entry into the profession of social work. The behavior of professional social workers is outlined by the *NASW Code of Ethics* and students are required to act in accordance with that professional code throughout their period of matriculation, including but not limited to both field and classroom related learning. Failure to adhere to the *Code of Ethics* or the Professional Code of Conduct described below may result in review and action by the School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee.

Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice, inappropriate or disruptive behavior

toward colleagues, faculty, or staff (at school or field placement) will be the basis for nonacademic termination (Council on Social Work Education, Commission on Accreditation,

Supplement to the Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures). Please read the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics [here](#).

The following framework further outlines the policy on professional conduct:

### **Ethical Obligations**

Students are ethically and professionally bound to:

- adhere to the NASW *Code of Ethics*
- appreciate the value of diversity by demonstrating effective and nonjudgmental relationships in working with others who are different from oneself; and
- adhere to all issues of confidentiality as they relate to human services, classroom activities, and field placement.

Students are required to meet all of the following requirements to maintain good standing:

### **Professional Behavior**

- Compliance with program policies, institutional policies, professional ethics standards, and societal laws in the classroom, field, and community
- Appearance and personal demeanor reflective of a professional manner
- Sound judgment in decision making
- Responsible and accountable behavior including, but not limited to, practicing within the scope of social work, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements, and accepting supervision and critiques in a positive manner
- Work and communication with others to resolve issues in a manner that is direct, professional, and geared toward problem resolution while avoiding triangulation
- Advocacy for oneself undertaken in an appropriate and responsible manner using proper channels for conflict resolution
- Willingness to receive and accept classroom feedback and field supervision in a positive manner to enhance professional development
- Professional and respectful interpersonal behavior with colleagues, faculty, and staff in class, field, and the college community

## **Personal Behavior**

### Stress Management

- Use of appropriate self-care, resources and supportive relationships with colleagues, peers, and others to deal with current life stress that may affect scholastic and professional performance.
- Recognition of the need to seek support and appropriate coping mechanisms if personal problems, psychosocial distress, and/or substance or mental health difficulties compromise scholastic performance or interfere with professional judgment or behavior.

## **Oppression and Discrimination**

In accordance with the *NASW Code of Ethics*, the faculty of the school of social work condemns any and all oppression of individuals or groups on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, we reaffirm the code's precepts that social workers have a duty to fight discrimination and other forms of injustice.

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

Pursuant to the philosophy of the Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education, Rhode Island College prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, on the basis of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, citizenship status or status as a special disabled veteran, recently separated veteran, Vietnam era veteran, or any other veteran who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized. Rhode Island College also prohibits all forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Should you encounter any type of discrimination and/or harassment, you are encouraged to contact a member of the social work faculty/staff, a responsible college employee or the Title IX Coordinator. (Click [here](#) for contact information and details on who is a responsible college employee). To access information on the Rhode Island College policies regarding Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, Click [here](#). Complaints of discrimination and/or harassment may be filed with the College's Title IX office. Click [here](#) to access the Title IX office. Allegations of violations of the Statement of Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action are adjudicated through the Office of Institutional Equity. If a person is found to be responsible for violating the Statement of Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, they may be subject to additional sanctions according to this policy.

## **Rhode Island College School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee: Description, Procedures and Composition of the Committee**

The School of Social Work maintains an ongoing Academic Standing Committee.

## **Committee Responsibility**

The Academic Standing Committee is charged with:

- Hearing all appeals/grievances, with the exception of grade disputes,
- Hearing cases of alleged unethical behavior involving students, and
- Recommending resolution of appeals/grievances to the appropriate program chair

The Academic Standing Committee may review any student's performance in relation to the application of the above policies. Dismissals from the BSW program and other consequences resulting from a violation of the policies stated in this manual may be appealed to the School of Social Work Academic Standing Committee.

The Committee shall consist of up to eight members:

Two (2) BSW Faculty Up to Two (2) BSW Students Two (2) MSW Faculty Up to Two (2) MSW Students

The faculty members are elected by the School of Social Work faculty and serve two-year terms. The chair of the committee is elected from among the faculty representatives who are in their second year on the committee. The chairs of the BSW and MSW departments cannot serve on the Academic Standing Committee. The student representatives will be selected by the respective student organization.

## **Procedures of the Committee**

- Students have the right to due process in disciplinary action and can appeal any adverse action.
- If students believe that the Committee's recommendation provides no support for their concern, they may appeal the recommendation to the appropriate program/department chair in the School of Social Work.
- An appeal of the decision of the chair can be made to the Dean. Appeals to the decision of the Dean can be made to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

## **Appeals/Grievances to the Committee**

- Appeals/grievances to the Committee must be submitted in writing to the chair of the Committee with all documentation.
- The appeals/grievance statement must include a summary of not more than one written page stating the specific policy or policies violated or the exact nature of the grievance, the specific actions upon which the appeal is based, and the remedy being sought. Supplementary materials may be presented to support the grievance.
- Types of student grievances:

- Violation of established academic policies and regulations (e.g., examination policies, advisement policies, and registration policies).
- Violation of student's academic freedom.
- Grievances related to violations of the NASW *Code of Ethics*, the school's professional code of conduct, or the Rhode Island College policies on academic integrity. This includes behavior that intimidates, threatens or endangers the health and safety of any person as well as behavior that, intentionally or negligently, causes physical, financial or emotional harm.
- Appeal of dismissal from the program.

The student will discuss the grievance with the faculty or staff member involved in the complaint who will attempt to resolve the grievance and render a written decision to the student within five working days of the faculty member's receipt of the grievance. Copies also will be forwarded to the chair of the appropriate department in the School of Social Work and the Academic Standing Committee of the School of Social Work.

The grievance should be presented in person to the faculty member involved as soon as possible after the grievant feels that an abridgement of the grievant's rights has occurred, but in no case shall it be later than ten working days following the grievant's knowledge of the act, event, or commencement of the conditions which are the basis for the grievance.

If the grievance is not resolved, the student may submit the grievance in writing, within five working days of the grievant's receipt of the decision of the faculty member involved, to the Academic Standing Committee. Within five working days of receipt of the appeal, the Academic Standing Committee will schedule a hearing, notifying the student and the faculty member(s) of the time and place of the hearing (see Hearing Procedure).

In the case of a dismissal from either the BSW program or the MSW program, the student must submit a written appeal outlining the reasons for the appeal to the chair of the Academic Standing Committee within five working days of receipt of notification of dismissal. Within five working days of receipt of the appeal, the Academic Standing Committee will schedule a hearing, notifying the student and the faculty member(s) of the time and place of the hearing (see Hearing Procedure). Reasonable efforts, including certified mail, non-certified mail, e-mail, and attempted phone contact will be made to notify the student.

If a student is dismissed from the program, they cannot enroll in or attend classes pending results of the appeal.

## **Hearing Procedure**

- Prior to the hearing, the chair of the Committee shall notify the affected parties in writing by certified mail, outlining the concerns before the committee. All written materials must be submitted to the Committee members and affected parties 48 hours before the hearing. The student shall notify the chairperson 48 hours before the hearing who their advocate(s) will be. (See advocate bullet, below)
- Prior to the hearing, the student and involved parties have the right of access to all information that will be used by the Committee in the hearing
- All material(s) distributed at the hearing will be returned to the chair of the Committee at the conclusion of the hearing. This material will be stamped confidential and is not for distribution. The material will be placed in a file in the dean's office
- The chair of the Academic Standing Committee will ensure that materials prepared for Committee members and others contain all necessary copies of pertinent information.
- Hearings will be conducted in an informal manner, with both the student and members of the Committee having the right to question all participants on relevant matters
- The student has the right to be present throughout the entire hearing, except during the deliberation and final voting of the Committee. They have the right not to testify or appear, though the Committee will proceed with its deliberations and recommendations. However, any committee member may request an executive session at any time; in that case all non- Committee members will be asked to leave
- Students may select an advocate to appear with them at the hearing. The advocate may be a School of Social Work faculty member, field instructor, staff member, or another student. The advocate does not have voting privileges. Under no circumstances will legal counsel be permitted
- Witnesses may elect not to make verbal presentations, but rather submit a written statement, which must be submitted to the chair 48 hours prior to the hearing
- Once people are finished presenting collateral information, they will leave the hearing room
- Recommendations of the committee will be approved by majority vote of the faculty representatives, though consensus will be sought
- The chair of the Committee will send the student written notification of the Committee's recommendation by certified and regular mail within five working days. A copy of the decision will be forwarded to the BSW department chair and the student's faculty field advisor

- Appeals of the recommendation(s) made by the Academic Standing Committee must be instituted in writing within five working days of the date of receipt of the recommendation(s) to the chair of the BSW department of the School of Social Work. All appeals must be based upon existing documentation and no new materials may be presented

The Chair of the BSW department of the School of Social Work will either accept or reject the decision of the committee. The chair will notify the student in writing of their acceptance or rejection within five working days of the receipt of the decision from the committee.

Appeal of the chair's decision may be made to the Dean of the School of Social Work. Appeals must be instituted within five working days of the receipt of the chair's decision. The appeal must be in writing and must explicitly identify the basis for appeal. All appeals must be based upon existing documentation and no new materials may be presented.

Appeal of the Dean's decision can be made to the Vice President of Academic Affairs [See Manual of Academic Policies and Procedures.] Click [here](#) to access the manual.