Professional Behaviors and Expectations

Undergraduate Social Work Program

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West Chester University of Pennsylvania
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Introduction

Professional Behaviors in the Classroom and Field

All students in the Undergraduate and Graduate Social Work program within the College of Education and Social Work (CESW) must adhere to the code of ethics as outlined by the National Association of Social Workers. CESW views its students as mature individuals who are either preparing to be members of the profession or continuing to develop their knowledge and skills within the profession. Students are expected to exhibit a high level of integrity, humility and empathy when working with others (clients, peers, instructors, etc) all while upholding the professional standards of conduct. Students are also expected to adhere to additional expectations set forth by Faculty and Field Instructors.

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 clients' diverse lifestyles 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 ethical misconduct, impairment, or incompetence.

Ethical misconduct occurs when the NASW Code of Ethics is not followed. This code is intended to provide both the general principles and the specific decision rules to cover most situations encountered by professional social workers in their professional activities. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. It is the individual responsibility of each social worker to aspire to achieve the highest possible standards of conduct. Social workers promote social justice and social change, respect, protect human and civil rights, and do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

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 or unwillingness to acquire professional skills and reach an accepted level of competency; or
- Inability or unwillingness to control personal stress, psychological disorder, or emotional reactions that may affect professional functioning.

Incompetence is defined as a lack of ability. This lack of ability may include inadequate professional or interpersonal skills, or academic deficiency. When students continue to provide social work services beyond their current level of competence they are violating the ethical standard of competence.

The following is a list of some, but not all, practice behaviors that can be used to infer students' ability to demonstrate the competencies outlined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Students are provided opportunities to demonstrate these behaviors in a variety of settings. Behaviors can be displayed through the quality of assignments a student completes, their interactions with instructors, staff, and colleagues, and through experiences in field practicum settings. This document will be used when a student exhibits problematic behaviors, ethical misconduct, impairment or incompetence. These behaviors may also be in violation of West Chester University policy (ex. academic integrity).

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social workers:
• make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
• use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
• demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
• use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and • use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Social workers:
• apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
• present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
• apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Evaluation of Professional Behaviors

The evaluation of Professional Behaviors of students is conducted through online fillable forms and stored on Tk20, the assessment software system used by the College of Education and Social Work. Concern forms may be completed at any time over the semester by a faculty member, staff, or in conjunction with a Field Instructor.

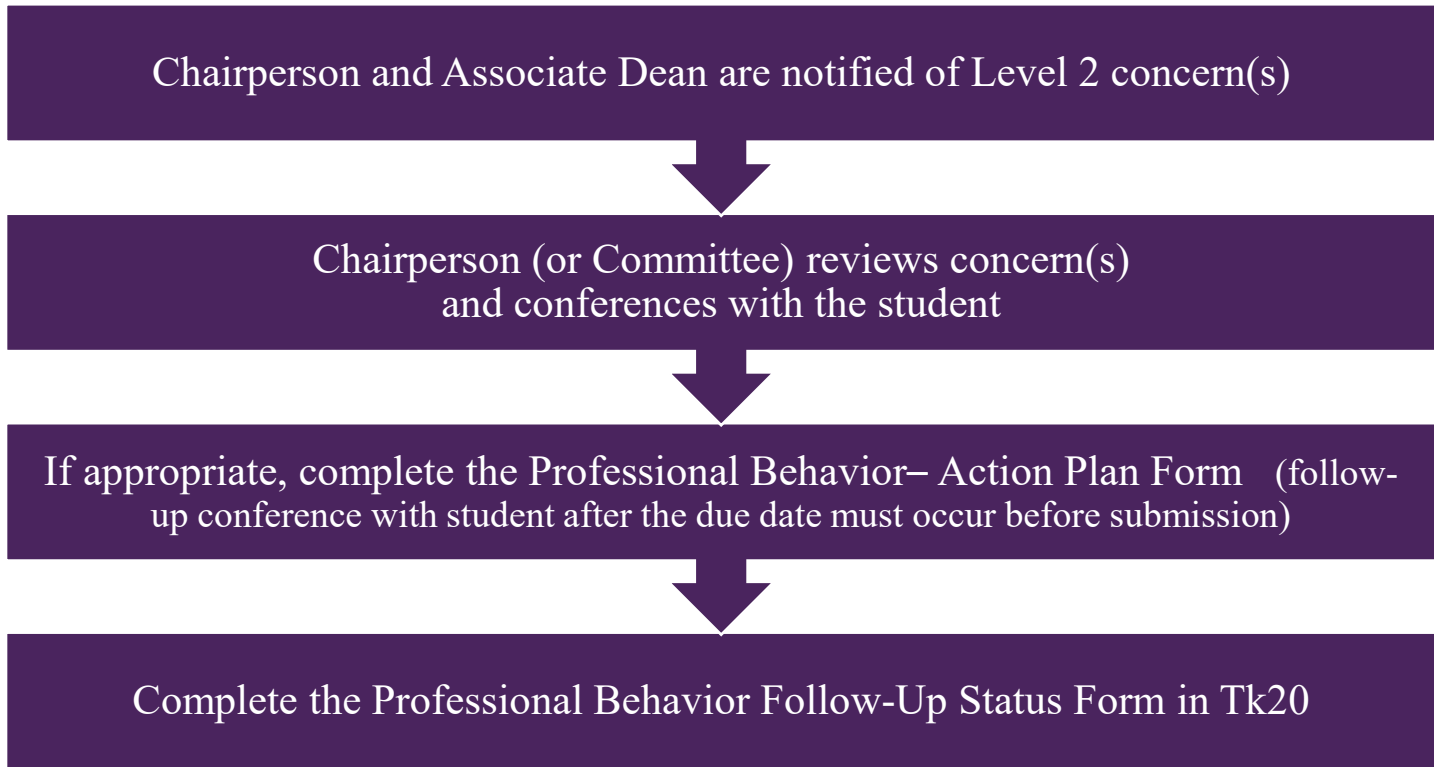Below describes the process:

Level 1

A West Chester University faculty or staff member can submit a concern on a student by first completing section one of the Professional Behavior – Concern Form. The person completing the form should conference with the student to discuss the concern and complete section two. The form should be filled out and **signed** by those present at the conference and a copy given to the student.   Lastly, the form should be scanned and emailed to CESWAssessment@wcupa.edu and is stored in Tk20.

Complete section one of the Professional Behavior– Concern Form
Relevant parties conference with the student and complete section two of the form
Upload form into Tk20
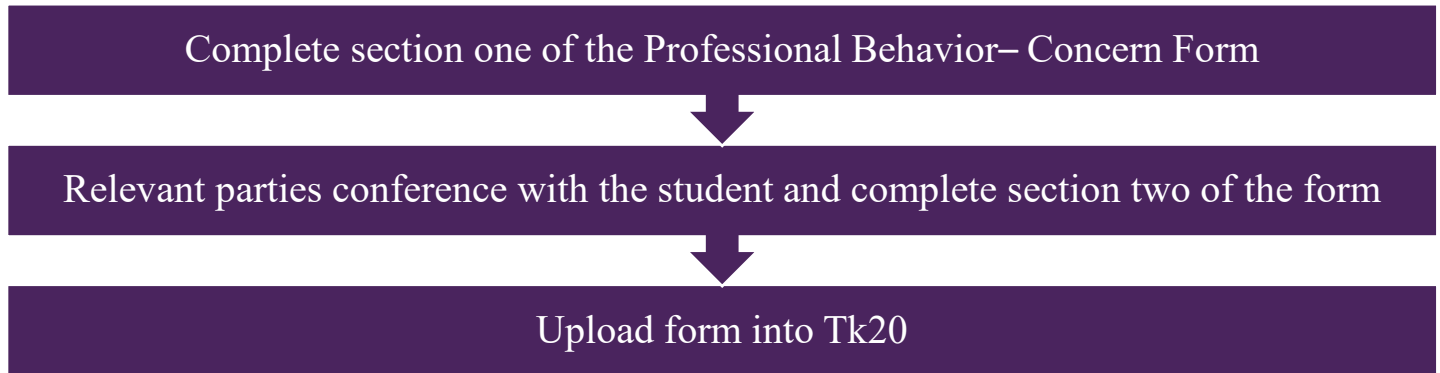
Level 2

A concern is Level 2 when there have been at least two concerns submitted or Level 2 was indicated on the initial concern submitted for a student. The department chairperson is notified via email and the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation is copied onto this communication. The department chairperson has the option to convene a committee to discuss the concern and to review Level 1 data. The department chairperson and/or the committee then conference with the student. *The Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* is completed and signed by all appropriate parties and a copy must be given to the student. If the department chairperson or the committee determine the student will not have to submit any evidence (e.g., reflective statement, paper), then the department chairperson completes the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20 and *The Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* must be uploaded before submission.

If the department chairperson or the committee determine the student will have to submit evidence, then the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* is completed. A due date for the student to submit evidence must be noted on the form. Once the due date passes, the department chairperson or the committee must hold a follow-up conference with the student. Afterwards, the department chairperson completes the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20. The person completing the form must indicate the Level 2 status (e.g., action plan completed or not completed) along with uploading the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* before submission. If the student did not complete the action plan, then proceedings move to Level 3.

Chairperson and Associate Dean are notified of Level 2 concern(s)

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Chairperson (or Committee) reviews concern(s) and conferences with the student

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If appropriate, complete the Professional Behavior– Action Plan Form (follow-up conference with student after the due date must occur before submission)

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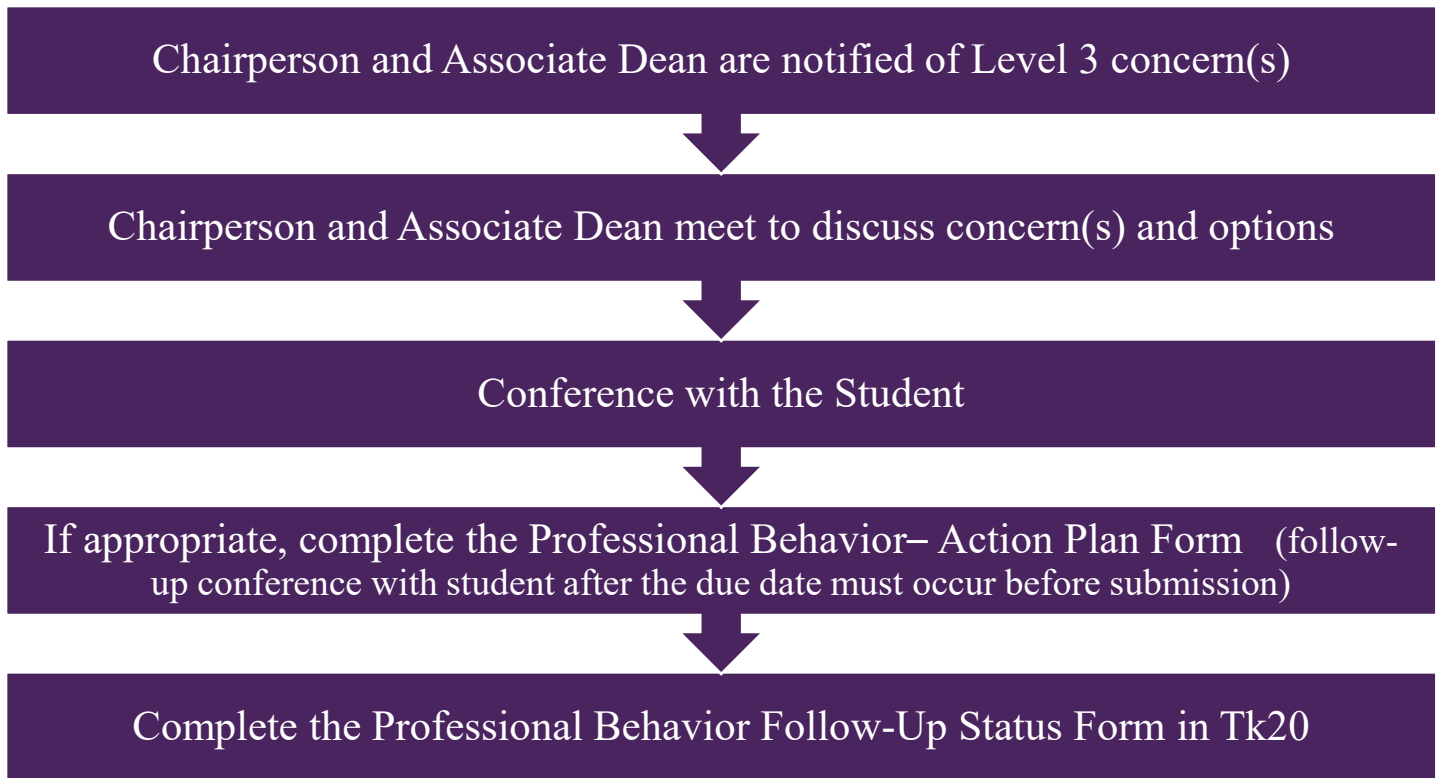| Complete the Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form in Tk20 |
|:---:|

Level 3

A concern is Level 3 when a third concern has been submitted after a Level 2 action plan or when a student did not successfully complete the Level 2 action plan. The student's department chairperson and the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation are notified. They meet to discuss the situation and to determine how the process proceeds. Possibilities include:

- Determining the concern should be elevated to Level 4 and then conferencing with the student to inform them of the decision and next steps.
- Outlining a comprehensive Action Plan and then conferencing with the student to explain the terms of the plan.
- Conferencing with the student to discuss if the concern should remain a Level 3 with an Action Plan or if the concern should be elevated to Level 4.

If the concern is to be elevated to Level 4, the department chairperson and Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation conference with the student to discuss next steps. *The Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* is also completed and signed by all appropriate parties and a copy must be given to the student. The department chairperson completes the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20 and uploads the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form*. If the concern is to remain at Level 3, the department chairperson and Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation conference with the student to outline the specific expectations and to sign the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form*. A copy of the signed form must be given to the student. Upon the passing of the due date, if the student successfully completed the action plan, the department chairperson completes the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20 and uploads the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form*. If the student did not successfully complete the action plan, the department chairperson completes the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20 and uploads the *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form*. The concern is automatically elevated to Level 4.

Chairperson and Associate Dean are notified of Level 3 concern(s)

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Chairperson and Associate Dean meet to discuss concern(s) and options

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Conference with the Student

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If appropriate, complete the Professional Behavior– Action Plan Form (follow-up conference with student after the due date must occur before submission)

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Complete the Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form in Tk20

Level 4

A concern is Level 4 when a fourth concern has been submitted after a Level 3 Action Plan has been initiated or when a student did not successfully complete the Level 3 Action Plan. The student's department chairperson and the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation are notified. They meet and then communicate the concern to the Dean of the College of Education and Social Work. Other relevant parties may provide input. The Dean or their designee conferences with the student. Afterwards, the Dean decides if the student should be recommended for probation. If the student is not recommended, then they may be counseled out of the social work program into another career opportunity by the Dean or their designee. If the student is recommended for probation, then the Dean and all appropriate parties will outline the specifics of the student's probation. The Dean or their designee will conference with the student to explain the terms of the probation and both parties will sign the probation contract. The Associate Dean for Curriculum and Accreditation or the Dean will complete the *Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form* in Tk20 and will upload the signed *Professional Behavior – Action Plan Form* before submission.

Chairperson and Associate Dean are notified of Level 4 concern(s)

Chairperson and Associate Dean meet and
then communicate concern(s) to the Dean

Dean or designee conferences with the student

If appropriate, complete the probation contract and
Professional Behavior– Action Plan Form

Complete the Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form in Tk20

College of Education and Social Work
SOCIALWORK PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS – CONCERN FORM

SECTION ONE – CONCERN

Student's Name: _____ Date (when concern was initiated): _____

Name of Person Completing Form: _____ Competency: _____

Name of Person Who Observed the Behavior: _____ Status: _____

Staff only complete Section One and email this form to CESWAssessment@wcupa.edu

Description of the Behavior

Use measurable terms to describe the behavior. Include the date(s), setting(s), and a description of the concern (the professional behavior at issue).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION TWO – CONFERENCE

Complete this section if you are meeting with the student in a formal conference regarding the concern outlined above.

Date of Conference: _____ Program: _____
(If different from the date the concern was initiated)

Faculty/Staff Present at Conference: _____

Expected Behavior

After the conference, describe the changes expected from the student and/or what the student will do differently in the future.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Does the concern warrant a Level 2 Department Review?

☐ NO – If the student receives another Level 1 concern at any point during their program, they will be immediately elevated to Level 2 requiring a Departmental Review.

☐ YES – The concern will be elevated to a Level 2 requiring a Departmental Review. The Department Chairperson will contact the student.

Additional concerns may result in Level 2, 3, or 4 review process (see Professional Behaviors Handbook)

SIGNATURES

Signatures indicate you were a participant at the conference and read the above information.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Faculty/Staff: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Other: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

College of Education and Social Work
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS – ACTION PLAN FORM

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Student's Name: _____ Date of Conference: _____

Faculty/Staff Present at Conference: _____

DIRECTIONS

- This form can only be completed by a Department Chairperson, Associate Dean, or Dean (or Designee).
- The faculty/staff member will meet with the student to discuss the concern(s) and provide guidance for support.
- An action plan will be developed outlining the expected behavior and strategies to develop the behavior to an acceptable level.
- If the concern status under review is a Level 3 or 4, a comprehensive action plan (Academic Support Plan) may be developed. This may require long-term monitoring and follow-up by the Associate Dean or Dean (or Designee). In addition to this form, it is suggested a detailed contract outlining the specifics should be included with this document.

ACTION PLAN

Action Plan (additional documents may be attached)   Check box if no additional action is required ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

Student Actions/Responsibilities

_____

_____

Faculty/Staff Role

_____

_____

Date and Time of Follow-Up Conference: _____

Additional concerns may result in Level 2, 3, or 4 review process (see Professional Behavior Handbook)

FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE & OUTCOME (IF APPLICABLE)

Has the Student successfully completed the Action Plan?   ☐ YES   ☐ NO

Rationale

_____

_____

_____

Faculty/Staff complete the Professional Behavior Follow-Up Status Form and upload this form in Tk20

SIGNATURES

Signatures indicate you were a participant at the conference and read the above information.

Student: _____ Date: _____

Faculty/Staff: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Other: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Competency #1 Ethical and Professional Behavior

1a Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context

Acceptable	Concern
Models ethical decision making (models appropriate decorum and ethical behavior) in a variety of situations (field, class, community, etc). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Consistently apply ethical principles • Seek consultation with others (when appropriate) • Evaluates the impact of ethical decision making • Acknowledge faulty reasoning	Ethical decisions are made haphazardly or without a process to ensure the decision that was made was appropriate for the situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Does not consistently apply ethical principles • Refuses or does not seek consultation from others • Has difficulty seeing implications of ethical decisions • Cannot acknowledge errors in reasoning
Compliance with relevant laws, regulations and procedures as outlined by the NASW code of ethics as appropriate to the situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Refers to various ethical codes when faced with ethical dilemmas • Identifies and applies ethical principles • Complies with mandated reporting laws	Non-compliance with relevant laws, regulations and/or procedures as outlined by the NASW code of ethics in at least one situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Does not reference various ethical codes when faced with ethical dilemmas • Struggles to identify and apply ethical principles • Does not comply with mandated reporting laws
Compliance with the university and program specific policy and procedures (i.e. academic integrity policy, student handbook, field manual, etc.).	Non-Compliance with university and program specific policy or procedures (i.e. academic integrity policy, student handbook, field manual, etc.).
Produce original work and/or cites/references other's work according to current APA style. • Free from grammatical errors • Little to no issues with content and structure	Produces work that is either not original and/or cited/referenced incorrectly according to current APA style. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional expectation: • Self-plagiarism or plagiarizing the work of others • Purchasing and submitting pre-written materials for an assignment

1b.Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations

Acceptable	Concern
Demonstrates the ability self-regulate (monitor and control emotions) personal values in accordance with the demand of the situation (e.g. field practicum, classroom setting, email communication, etc.). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Models appropriate behavior when presented with negative verbal or non-verbal cues • Models appropriate behavior in stressful situations • Utilizes effective self-care strategies to monitor personal behavior	Struggles to self-regulate (monitor and control emotions) personal values in accordance to the demand of the situation (classroom, practicum setting, email communication, etc.). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Exhibits verbal or non-verbal aggression • Does not regulate personal emotions or monitor behaviors

1c. Demonstrate professional demeanor and behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication

Acceptable	Concern
Completes work in a timely manner, meets deadlines and is punctual as outlined in the course syllabus, practicum site, etc.	Struggles to complete work in a timely manner, does not meet deadlines, is excessively tardy or absent and is not in accordance with course or field expectations.
Dress and appearance is consistently appropriate to the setting (classroom and professional settings).	Dress and appearance is not appropriate to the setting (classroom and professional settings).
Communicates in a non-judgmental, non–derogatory, respectful fashion (including email, face-to-face, social media, etc.) on campus and in the field. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Polite, kind and courteous to others • Communicates in a calm demeanor • Respects others privacy • Written or verbal comments are respectful of diversity of all individuals	Communicates in a judgmental, derogatory, disrespectful fashion (including email, face-to-face, social media, etc.) on campus and in the field. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Inappropriate language (coarse or rude language) or threats • Belittling others • Makes assumptions or generalization based on opinions (not based on valid research or facts) • Verbal or written work is discriminatory toward others
Exhibits professional behavior in a variety of situations (field, class, etc.). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Attentive and alert • Shows a genuine concern for others (caring and courteous) • Treats others with dignity and respect	Exhibits unprofessional behavior (e.g. inattentiveness and/or disruptive) in a variety of situations (field, class, etc.). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Sleeping in class or field site • Teasing others or engaging inappropriate side conversations • Demeaning others
Communicates with instructor (class, field) prior to the occurrence of tardiness or absence. In rare cases when this is not done prior, the instructor is contacted after scheduled class or field hours.	Students either rarely contacts the instructor (class, field) prior to the occurrence of tardiness or absence or the communication is generally happening after the occurrence.
Maintains appropriate boundaries with others (colleagues, peers, clients, instructors, etc.) in a variety of situations (class, field, interactions with others, email other social media outlets). This includes acting in the best interest of the client. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Sets appropriate limits with others (especially will dealing with difficult clients, peers, etc.) • Recognizes or avoids conflict of interest • Resolves differences with colleagues	Has difficulty maintaining appropriate boundaries with others (colleagues, peers, clients, instructors, etc.) in a variety of situations (class, field, interactions with others, email and other social media outlets). The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Violates personal space • Physical contact with others • Engages in practices that can be interpreted as a conflict of interest
Works collaboratively and adapts communication style to fit goal, audience, context and situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Actively listens • Effectively uses verbal and nonverbal cues • Conveys ideas that is sensitive to the level of knowledge and degree of sophistication of others • Openly communicates with others	Has difficulty collaborating with others and struggles with the ability to effectively use verbal and nonverbal cues to fit goal, audience and situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Makes inappropriate, facial expressions, gestures, tone, pitch body language in a professional setting • Struggles with being an active listener • Engages in frequent miscommunication

• Shows respect for others	• Demonstrates a lack of respect for others • Offers little or no contribution to a group

1d Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes;

Acceptable	Concern
Adheres to the ethical (e.g. maintaining confidentiality) and professional (e.g. tone, appropriate conversational language, and etc.) use of technology, email, and social networking sites. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Use appropriate intensifiers to help convey meaning (especially using email or other social media outlets). • Presents information that is accurate and consistent with NASW code of ethics • Constantly evaluates the risk and benefits of the use of technology (weighs to benefits of face to face versus online communication) when providing services or communicating with others	Violates confidentiality or unprofessional use of technology, email and social networking sites. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Uses flaming ("online screaming") or sentences in all caps • Presents inaccurate or inappropriate information • Does not follow the NASW code of ethics when providing services to others • Ignores protocols and policies to protect client confidentiality when using technology

1e Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior

Acceptable	Concern
Accepts and utilizes constructive feedback (e.g. from peers, instructors, clients, and etc.) and engages in a process of reflection and self-correction to improve personal, professional practice, judgement and behavior. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior. • Acts promptly to resolve identified problems with performance or professional responsibilities • Uses feedback to modify behavior	Has difficulty accepting and utilizing constructive feedback from others (e.g. peers, instructors, clients, etc.) and struggles with engaging in a process of reflection and self-correction to improve personal, professional practice, judgement and behavior. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Expresses anger, or dismisses constructive feedback • Continues to exhibit behavior that impedes working relationships with others

Competency #2 Diversity and Difference

2a Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels

Acceptable	Concern
Demonstrates the ability to appreciate the perspective of others in developing an in-depth understanding of the situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Asks clarifying questions when appropriate to understand the perspective of others • Summarizes comments when appropriate • Utilizes the perspective of others to develop empathy	Demonstrates the unwillingness to appreciate the perspective of others in developing an in-depth understanding of the situation. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Engages in unfriendly dialogue • Abruptly interrupts with counter arguments • Uses discouraging communication • Monopolizes conversations • Ignores or dismisses the perspective of others
Demonstrates the ability to actively work to eliminate biases through education, dialogue, or introspection of others. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Advocates for social justice and human rights	Demonstrates the inability to actively work to eliminate biases through education, dialogue, or introspection of others. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Perpetuates stereotypes or discriminatory practices.

• Has sufficient self-awareness to eliminate influence of personal bias or beliefs	• Lacks a sense of self –awareness to eliminate influence of personal bias or beliefs

2b Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experience

Acceptable	Concern
Accepts others as experts of their own experience and strives to empower others in and throughout the helping process. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Takes advantage of additional learning opportunities • Demonstrates cultural humility (willingness to assess one's limitations and the ability to be open to new ideas, contradictory information or advice).	Unwilling to see others as experts of their own experience. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Ignores input of others • Shows indifference towards others • Withholds information • Has difficulty recognizing one's limitations or accepting new ideas, contradictory information and advice

2c Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Acceptable	Concern
Demonstrates the ability to self-regulate (monitor and control emotions) personal beliefs and attitudes related to human diversity (racial, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc.) in accordance with the demand of working with diverse clients and constituencies. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Refrains from imposing personal values and beliefs on others • Comments are sensitive and respectful to the cultural diversity of clients, peers, faculty etc.	Demonstrates the inability to self-regulate (monitor and control emotions) personal beliefs and attitudes related to human diversity (racial, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc.) in accordance with the demand of working with diverse clients and constituencies. The following are some, but not all, examples related to this professional behavior: • Imposes personal values and beliefs on others • Makes discriminatory remarks to clients, peers, faculty etc.

Lamb, D. H., Presser, N. R., Pfost, K. S., Baum, M. C., Jackson, V. R. & Jarvis, P. A. (1987). Confronting professional impairment during the internship: Identification, 366 due process, and remediation. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 18, 597-603.

[Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson (1991). Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 22, 291- 296.] III.