

Responding to Serious Concerns Regarding Student Progress

When a serious concern is raised regarding a student's work in their placement, the student, Faculty Field Liaison, and Field Instructor will always attempt resolution of the concern together as a group. The Field Education Coordinator must be contacted, however, if the concern is serious enough to include the perception that the student's behavior may be unprofessional, inappropriate, unlawful, or unethical and is, or could be, detrimental to those who receive services from the placement agency ("clients"), the agency, the University, or the student.

It is ultimately the decision of the Field Education Coordinator to move the concern into a formal academic review process or to move toward resolution without the formality. A formal academic review process would include broadening the scope to include the student's faculty members, academic advisor, and/or appropriate program coordinator (BSW or MSW) to convene a Faculty Field Subcommittee. The intent of the subcommittee would be to interview the parties directly involved in the concern and generate a final academically-grounded resolution. In some instances, it may make sense for the student to suspend their engagement within their placement agency/organization until a resolution is reached—the Field Education Coordinator is responsible for making this decision.

In some instances, an agency may determine that it is not possible for the student to return to their internship prior to the formal review process. It is within their right to do so. Please see the policy "Agency Decision to Terminate Student Placement Prior to Faculty Process" on the UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#).

Suspension: If a student is suspended from their placement, the student is not permitted to continue in the placement until the completion of a formal academic review process. Because placement situations of concern are unique to each student, the agency and the situation itself, the review process length and depth will fall within very broad parameters, but not to exceed thirty (30) days. It is in the best interest of the student, the agency, the Field Education program, and the Department of Social Work as a whole to move as quickly as possible on the matter, while also balancing the need to hear the complete experiences of everyone involved in the situation of concern. At minimum, the student's Faculty Field Liaison, academic advisor, corresponding Practice course instructor, and the

appropriate program coordinator (BSW or MSW) will be made aware of the suspension. The Field Education Coordinator and Faculty Field Liaison will work with other selected members of the faculty (Faculty Field Subcommittee) to review the concerns and make a final determination about next steps.

Students are invited to attend any formal consultation regarding their status within the Field Education program and will be included in attempts to set times conducive to the participants' schedules. Students may propose an alternative manner of participation, if they so choose.

The decision options regarding any serious concerns regarding student progress are as follows:

1. The student will continue in the same field placement with an action plan to address the serious concerns initially expressed. This plan will be in writing and signed by the Field Instructor, Faculty Field Liaison, student and Field Education Coordinator.
2. The student will be assigned to a different placement, with an agreement between the student, Faculty Field Liaison, and Field Education Coordinator about how the "request for placement change" will be explained to the new placement Field Instructor.
3. The student will be permanently terminated from the current placement with an end-of-semester grade of "Incomplete." The "Incomplete" will include specific stipulations as to what will be required for the student to turn this into either a letter grade (BSW) or "S/U" (MSW) in the corresponding semester of the following academic year. At that time, the student will be assigned to a new placement with the expectation that they will meet the outstanding "Incomplete" requirements, and that also, because the placement experience is immersive and contextual, there would be (and need to be) some repetition of assignments (like the Learning Agreement and Process Records), but from the new context. At the beginning of the semester during which the student plans to return to placement, they will be required to meet with the Field Education Coordinator, Faculty Field Liaison and the corresponding Practice course instructor(s) to discuss the overlay between Field Experience/Practicum and Practice (see the "Interdependence

between Field Experience/Practicum and Social Work Practice Courses” policy on the UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#)).

4. The student will be permanently terminated from the current placement with an end-of-semester grade of "Unsatisfactory" or "Failure." An action plan to address ethical or behavioral concerns will be agreed on and a method for evaluating this completion will be made in writing and signed by the student and Field Education Coordinator. Future placement matching will be contingent on a positive evaluation of the agreed-upon action plan. This plan generally involves the delay of enrollment in field by at least one semester, if not two.
5. The student will be permanently terminated from the current field placement with an end-of-semester grade of "Unsatisfactory" or "Failure" **and without** the possibility of a field placement in the future.

During the formal review process, the following intersecting academic policies will be made explicit and will have significant bearing on the final decision and corresponding action plans:

1. Because the Field Experience/Practicum must be taken concurrently with Social Work Practice courses (see the Interdependence between Field Experience/Practicum and Social Work Practice courses” policy on the UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#)), a student who is not registered for their Field Experience/Practicum course may not register for any of the designated Practice courses (SWSS 4680, 4690, 6120, 6130, 6140, 6150). Undergraduate students may also not register for Field Experience Seminar (SWSS 4710 or 4720).
2. A student may be terminated from a placement once and only once and still remain in their degree program. A subsequent termination from another placement constitutes grounds for dismissal from either the BSW or MSW Program.
3. Likewise, the Faculty Field Subcommittee's decision to terminate the student permanently from the current placement with an evaluation

of “Unsatisfactory” or “Failure” and without the possibility of being placed again (see decision option #5 above) also constitutes grounds for dismissal from the BSW or MSW Program.

4. Any student dismissed from the MSW Program may apply for readmission to the program after a minimum period of two years.

If, after completing the above procedure, a Field Experience/Practicum student has been permanently terminated from placement and believes that they have not been accorded due process, they may request a review of their circumstances by the Chair of the Department of Social Work. See the “Grievance and Appeals Procedures” policy on the UVM Department of Social Work Field Education [website](#)) for more information.