

# ***KSU SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM***

## ***Policy for Addressing Concerns about Student Performance or Functioning***

### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Graduate programs that prepare professional school psychologists have an obligation to protect the public and the profession. This obligation requires the KSU school psychology training program to (a) establish criteria and methods through which aspects of competence other than, and in addition to, a student-trainee's knowledge or skills may be assessed (including, but not limited to, emotional stability and well being, interpersonal skills, professional development, and personal fitness for practice; and (b) ensure—insofar as possible—that the student-trainees who complete their programs are competent to manage future relationships (e.g., client, collegial, professional, public, scholarly, supervisory, teaching) in an effective and appropriate manner. Because of this commitment, the KSU school psychology training program strives not to advance, recommend, or graduate students or trainees with demonstrable problems (e.g., cognitive, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, technical, and ethical) that may interfere with professional competence to other programs, the profession, employers, or the public at large.

This commitment obligates the school psychology program faculty to continually assess the progress of each graduate student in a variety of area of academic and applied settings. The primary purpose of this assessment is to facilitate professional and personal growth. It is important that there are regular contacts and close working relationships between graduate students and program faculty so that these guidelines and procedures can be implemented in a way that maximizes student growth and development.

The training program also recognizes that developmental stressors are inherent both in the transition from undergraduate to graduate school, as well as during the course of the training program. During graduate school, higher academic expectation is frequently encountered. In addition, when clinical work begins there is stress inherent in being a member of a helping profession. Further, supervision is more intensive, concentrated, and frequent during the graduate program, which may increase the student's sense of personal and professional vulnerability.

Because graduate students make significant developmental transitions during their graduate training and may need special assistance during this time, it is the responsibility of the training program to provide recommendations, activities, procedures and opportunities that can facilitate growth and minimize stress. Such measures include, but are not limited to: orientation meetings, individualized programs, clear and realistic expectations, clear and timely evaluations that may result in suggestions for positive change, and contact with support individuals (e.g., supervisors) and/or groups (e.g., other graduate trainees, former students).

## RETENTION STANDARDS

The KSU School Psychology Graduate Program requires the following for students to maintain academic good standing in the program:

1. Because Licensure as a school psychologist by the Ohio Department of Education requires a background check and documented absence of potentially relevant legal difficulties, retention in the program requires that students have no record of such difficulties.
2. Students must maintain a minimum of 3.0 average in all academic work completed.
3. Students who earn a grade of "C" (or lower) or a grade of "U" in any required courses will be required to meet with their advisor to evaluate the impact of that performance on the overall course of study and to identify an appropriate response, which may include a faculty-approved remedial plan to develop and demonstrate mastery of essential competencies.

Coursework includes both academic and skill-related training (e.g., diagnostic assessment, intervention, report writing). In addition to traditional academic and skill-related growth in graduate professional training, personal and professional growth is critical for future effective functioning as a school psychologist. The following exemplars illustrate professional dispositions that are considered critical for adequate progress and performance in the program:

### ***Professionally related interpersonal/professional skills included the following:***

#### *Ethics*

- Demonstration of knowledge/application of APA/NASP Ethical Guidelines.
- Demonstration of knowledge/application of other statutes regulating professional practice.
- Demonstration of concern for client welfare.
- Demonstration of appropriate client-school psychologist relationships.

#### *Professional Deportment*

- Appropriate manifestation of professional identity, as demonstrated by attire and behavior judged by practica, internship, and other field-based partners to be appropriate for educational settings.
- Appropriate involvement in professional development activities (e.g., professional associations)
- Appropriate interaction with peers, colleagues, staff, trainees, etc.
- Awareness of impact on colleagues (faculty and students).
- Completion of assigned tasks in a timely fashion and in an acceptable format.

*Sensitivity to Client Issues.* Acknowledgment and effective interactions with:

- children
- parents
- teachers
- school administrators
- other school staff (e.g., social workers, counselors, therapists, etc.)
- sensitivity to the needs, resources and priorities for individuals from different cultural backgrounds (including differences in SES, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, etc.)

*Use of Supervision*

- Appropriate preparation.
- Accepts responsibility for learning.
- Openness to feedback/suggestions.
- Application of learning to practice.
- Willingness to self-disclose and/or explore a personal issue which affects professional functioning.
- Appropriately self-reliant.
- Appropriately self-critical.

*Other Training Issues*

- Effective management of personal stress.
- Lack of professional interference because of own adjustment problems and/or emotional responses, as reflected by ability to maintain appropriate level of concentration, focus, and commitment to graduate study and professional demeanor in academic, social, and field-based settings.
- Formulation of realistic professional goals for self.
- Appropriate self-initiated professional development (e.g., self-initiated study).

## **DEFINITION OF IMPAIRMENT**

For purposes of this document, impairment is defined broadly as an interference in professional functioning which is reflected in one or more of the following ways:

An inability and/or unwillingness...

- to acquire and integrate professional standards into one's repertoire of professional behavior,
- to acquire professional skills in order to reach an acceptance level of competency, and/or

- to control personal stress, and/or excessive emotional reactions which interfere with professional functioning.

It is a professional judgment as to when a graduate student's behavior becomes severe enough to be considered impaired rather than just problematic. For purposes of this document a *problem* refers to a trainee's behavior or attitude, which, while of concern and requiring redemption, is perceived not to be unexpected nor excessive for professionals in training. Problems become identified as *impairments* when they include one or more of the following characteristics:

- the student does not acknowledge, understand, or address the problem when it is identified,
- the problem is not merely a reflection of a skill-deficit which can be reflected by academic or didactic training,
- the quality of services delivered by the student is sufficiently negatively affected,
- a disproportionate amount of attention by training personnel is required, and/or,
- the trainee's behavior does not change as a function of feedback, remediation efforts, and/or time.

## **DUE PROCESS: GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Due process ensures that decisions made by program faculty about graduate students are not arbitrary or personally biased, requires that programs identify specific evaluative procedures which are applied to all trainees, and have appropriate appeal procedures available to the student so he/she may challenge the program's action.

General due process guidelines include:

1. presenting graduate students, in writing, with the program's expectations related to professional functioning,
2. stipulating the procedures for evaluation, including when and how evaluations will be conducted (such evaluations should occur at meaningful intervals),
3. articulating the various procedures and actions involved in making decisions regarding impairment,
4. instituting a remediation plan for identified inadequacies, including a time frame for expected remediation and consequences of not rectifying the inadequacies,
5. providing a written procedures to the graduate student which describes how the graduate student may appeal the program's action,
6. ensuring that the graduate student has sufficient time to respond to any action taken by the program,
7. using input from multiple professional sources when making decisions or recommendations regarding the graduate student's performance, and,

8. documenting, in writing and to all relevant parties, the action taken by the program and its rationale.

## **EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND TIME LINES**

Students who have graduate research or teaching assistantships in the department are evaluated each semester by their faculty supervisors. Graduate assistantship reappointment is dependent, in part, upon the results of these performance evaluations.

In addition to the grades and in-course evaluations students receive as part of all courses:

- A. Periodic reviews are conducted of all graduate students' academic performance, applied skills, and professional and ethical conduct. These reviews/evaluations involve all members of the School Psychology Faculty, and written and oral feedback is provided on at least an annual basis. If significant concerns about a student's performance or functioning is identified, the following procedures will be implemented:
  1. The student will be formally notified of the specific problem areas noted by the faculty.
  2. Unless the problems are severe enough to warrant a forced withdrawal, a plan to remedy the problem will be developed by the Faculty Committee. This plan will, as much as possible, define the student's problem(s), identify the expected behavior or attitude, specify possible methods that could be used to reach those goals, and designate a date for goal attainment or re-evaluation. During this remedial period, the student is on programmatic-probation. If the student chooses not to accept the remedial plan, he/she will be automatically dismissed from the program.
  3. At the time of re-evaluation, four options exist for the Committee:
    - a. a decision that the specified concerns no longer present a significant problem, and the student is allowed to continue in the program.
    - b. continued probation and remediation, an updated remedial plan, and a date set for another re-evaluation.
    - c. recommending to the student that he/she leave the program.
    - d. recommendation of formal dismissal from the program to the Associate Dean, Office of Academic Services.
- B. Frequent feedback is provided on a case-by-case basis to students enrolled in practica by both field supervisors and core faculty.

C. The program provides a written recommendation or non-recommendation for an internship.

D. Additional policies and procedures have been developed for continued evaluation/feedback during the internship. These include:

- Written internship logs, prepared by the intern, signed by the intern supervisor, and forwarded to the university supervisor every two weeks during internship
- Visits to the internship site at least once each semester by the course instructor. These visits include consultation with the internship supervisor and with the intern
- Two written evaluation reports, one per semester, from the internship supervisor sent to the course instructor.
- Periodic evaluation reports from the intern sent to the course instructor.
- Periodic telephone conferences between the intern supervisor and course instructor interspersed between site visits.
- Periodic telephone conferences between the intern and course instructors on campus interspersed between site visits and the workshops.
- An all-day seminar on campus approximately once-monthly, unless alternate arrangements are made for out-of-state interns.

In the final evaluation report, the intern supervisor makes a recommendation regarding the endorsement of the intern for certification/licensure.

If there is to be conditional endorsement or no endorsement, the intern and instructor would generally be aware of these concerns at least one month prior to the submission of the final report, unless in circumstances where this is not possible due to serious violations of ethical and professional conduct occurring late in the internship. If the course instructor and School Psychology Faculty Committee concur with the intern supervisor's recommendation to deny licensure, and the intern is in disagreement, appeal procedures as specified in this document and other university regulations may be initiated by the intern.

If the intern supervisor, course instructor, and Faculty Committee are in agreement that a candidate should be certified, the course instructor and/or the program coordinator make(s) the final recommendation to the Associate Dean, Office of Academic Services to request that the candidate receive recommendation for certification as a school psychologist.

## **REMEDATION CONSIDERATIONS**

It is important to have meaningful ways to address impairment once it has been identified. Several possible, and perhaps concurrent, courses of action designed to remedy impairments include, but are not limited to:

- increasing supervision, either with the same or other supervisors, increasing field work experience,
- changing the format, emphasis, or system of supervision,
- recommending and/or requiring personal therapy in a way that all parties involved have clarified the manner in which therapy contacts will be used in the graduate student's progress,
- reducing the graduate trainee's clinical or other workload and/or requiring a specific academic coursework, and/or
- recommending, when appropriate, a leave of absence and/or repeating a particular experience (e.g., practicum).
- When a combination of the above interventions do not, after a reasonable time period, rectify the impairment, or when the trainee seems unable or unwilling to alter his/her behavior, the training program may take more formal action, including recommending dismissal from the program.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM**

If at any time during the course of the graduate program, concerns about performance and functioning are judged to be severe enough to warrant dismissal from the program, the Program Coordinator will notify the student of this decision in writing. The student will be given 14 days to prepare a response to the notification of dismissal and have the opportunity to request a formal review of the recommendation for dismissal from the Department Chairperson in which the program is housed. The following procedure will be followed in carrying out this review:

- a) Upon notification of a request for formal review, the Department Chairperson will charge a Review Panel, comprised of three faculty members from outside the program area. One of the three faculty members will be designated by the Chairperson as the convener of the Review Panel.
- b) The Review Panel will review evidence provided by the program and the student related to the program's recommendation for dismissal and forward a written recommendation for disposition to the Department Chair, the Program Coordinator, and the student within five days of their

deliberations. As part of their review, the Review Panel may request clarification or further information from either the student or the Program Coordinator. The student may request to meet with the Review Panel as part of this process.

- c) The student may submit a written response to the Review Panel's recommendation to the Department Chairperson within 5 days of receipt of their determination.
- d) The Department Chairperson will consider the Review Panel's recommendation and any response by the student and make a determination for disposition within 10 days of their determination. This disposition may uphold or reverse the program's recommendation for dismissal. The department chairperson will notify the student and the Program Coordinator of the disposition.
- e) The student may appeal the decision for dismissal from the program to the Associate Dean, Office of Administrative Affairs & Graduate Education within 5 days of receipt of notification of the decision. This represents the final step in the appeal process.

*Taken in part from the Comprehensive Evaluation of Student Trainee Competence in Professional Psychology Programs, developed by the Student Competence Task Force of the Council of Chairs of Training Councils, March 25, 2004*

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