

**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY**  
College of Education and Human Services  
Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy  
School and Community Psychology Program

**POLICY ON THE RETENTION AND REMEDIATION OF STUDENTS**

*I have read and fully comprehend the Policy on the Retention and Remediation of Students.*

*Signature of Student:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return one signed copy of this page to Dr. Thomas Massarelli, Director of Internship Training or Dr. Avivah Dahbany, Director of Practicum Training by the first day of classes for the semester.*

**Objective**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the areas of competence and professional behavior expected of each student and the procedures for identifying and addressing problematic behaviors, incompetence, and/or ethical violations that occur during the course of their training to become school psychologists.

**Introduction**

As described in the Student Handbook, the overarching goal of the Ed.S. Program in School & Community Psychology is to prepare school psychologists in line with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) guidelines to assume roles as responsible, competent members of the professional psychological community. In addition to technical competence, students are expected to maintain high standards of professional and ethical behavior in their interactions with students, peers, supervisors, and faculty, including confidentiality, honesty, and academic integrity. Specific goals and expected competencies are described in the Student Handbook and cover the following three areas:

- A. Knowledge of the Science of Psychology and School Psychology as a Specialty;
- B. Integration of Research and Practice; and
- C. Commitment to an Ongoing Contribution to the Specialty of School Psychology.

Students are expected to be familiar with the Program goals and to ensure that their academic and professional development plans are consistent with the achievement of these goals. This policy describes the procedures used to monitor progress, to identify deficiencies and to assist the student in remediation where possible, or to dismiss the student from the Program when remediation is not possible.

**Definitions**

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

Incompetence is defined as a lack of ability, which may include either professional or interpersonal skill, or academic deficiency. When students continue to provide psychological services beyond their current level of competence, this is an ethical violation.

Ethical Misconduct is when the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* produced by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2002) and/or the *Principles for Professional Ethics and Guidelines for the Provision of School Psychological Services* (NASP, 2000) are not followed. These codes are intended to provide both the general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by school psychologists in their professional activities. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom psychologists work. It is the individual responsibility of each school psychologist to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. School psychologists respect and protect human and civil rights, and do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices. It is assumed that unethical behavior and impairment are overlapping concepts that all unethical behaviors are reflective of impairment, whereas problematic behaviors may involve other aspects of professional behavior that may or may not result in unethical behavior.

As future school psychologists, the National Association of School Psychologists has published its professional conduct manual called *Principles for Professional Ethics and Guidelines for the Provision of School Psychological Services* (2000) (<http://www.nasponline.org/pdf/ProfessionalCond.pdf>). Both documents clearly outline professional standards and conduct for school psychologists. Copies of these documents are provided to you and reviewed with you throughout your program (e.g., at new student orientation, in the course CPSY 8100 - Seminar: Ethical and Legal Issues in Professional Psychology and at the beginning of your Practicum and Internship placements).

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 client's diverse life-styles 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 impairment status [Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson. (1991). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 22, 291-296].

## **Identification and Verification of Problems Requiring Remediation or Dismissal**

Impairment, incompetence, ethical violations, or problematic behaviors can be identified in a variety of ways. Informal evaluation of each student's progress takes place semi-annually during pre-registration, which is described in the Student Handbook. Practicum and Internship evaluations are done throughout the semester, as well as at the end of the semester by both the University supervisor and the site supervisor.

### Informal Identification of Problems

In addition to problems identified during the pre-registration meeting, any faculty member, supervisor, or student may raise an issue at any time. Practicum supervisors should initially discuss their concerns with the Practicum Coordinator, who will gather additional information and raise the issue at the next scheduled Program faculty meeting. Students who have a concern about a fellow student should first discuss the issue with their own advisor, who will then raise the issue with the other Program faculty. Advisors and faculty members will protect the confidentiality of the student reporting the potential problem, but they may request that the student meet with them to provide additional information. The Program faculty will briefly discuss the potential problem during the meeting in which it is raised, and if necessary the advisor of the student concerned will gather additional data and will report to the Program faculty within one week. If the concern appears valid, a formal review will take place as described below.

### Review Procedures for Possible Problems

When a possible impairment or problematic behavior has been identified, the faculty of the Program meet with the student to review the evaluation, and to determine whether a problem actually exists. In addition the original report of the problem, information will be gathered from formal written and/or verbal evaluations of the student and from informal sources, including observations of students outside the training environment or reports from other interested parties.

Areas to be reviewed and discussed include the nature, severity, and consequences of the reported impairment or problem behavior. The following questions will be posed at this stage (adapted from Lamb, Cochran, & Jackson, 1991):

- What are the actual behaviors that are of concern, and how are those behaviors related to the goals of the Program?
- How and in what settings have these behaviors been manifested?
- What were the negative consequences for the training agency or others (e.g., clients, other students) of the problematic behaviors?
- Who observed the behaviors in question?
- Who or what was affected by the behavior (clients, agency, atmosphere, training program, etc.)?
- What was the frequency of this behavior?
- Has the student been made aware of this behavior before the meeting, and if so, how did he or she respond?
- Has the feedback regarding the behavior been documented in any way?
- How serious is this behavior on the continuum of ethical and professional behavior?
- What are the student's ideas about how the problem may be remediated?

While each case is different and requires individual assessment, the following factors may indicate that the problem is more serious and may represent a more serious impairment rather than a problematic behavior that is easier to remediate:

- The student does not acknowledge, understand or address the problematic behavior when it is identified.
- The problematic behavior is not merely a reflection of a skill deficit that can be rectified by training.
- The quality of service delivered by the person suffers.
- The problematic behavior is not restricted to one area of professional functioning.
- The behavior has the potential for ethical or legal ramifications if not addressed.
- A disproportionate amount of attention by training personnel is required.
- Behavior that does change as a function of feedback.
- Behavior negatively affects the public image of the agency or the university or the training site.

After the initial meeting with the student, the faculty will meet to determine whether impairment or problematic behavior exists. If the faculty determines that there is a problem, they will develop a written plan for remediation or a recommendation for dismissal and will schedule a meeting to discuss this plan with the student within three weeks of their initial meeting with the student. Students are encouraged to submit their own ideas for remediation to the faculty, through their advisors. The faculty will consider the student's recommendations in developing their own recommendations. The student's advisor, using the Student Performance Remediation Plan form that immediately follows this document, will document the plan.

After the faculty members have presented their recommendations to the student and answered his or her questions, the student must sign the Performance Review Cover Sheet (a copy follows this document) indicating that the recommendations have been presented and explained. The student will be given the opportunity to accept the recommendations, to provide a written rebuttal, and/or to appeal. If the student chooses to provide a rebuttal, the Program faculty will meet again to consider any new evidence presented by the student, and will provide written documentation of their decision within three weeks of the date the rebuttal was received. If the student wishes to appeal the faculty's decision, he or she may follow the appeal procedures outlined in the Seton Hall University Student Handbook.

Regardless of the outcome of the feedback meeting, the student's advisor will schedule a follow-up meeting to evaluate the student's adjustment to the review process, and recommend potential sources of guidance and assistance when necessary.

## **Remediation Procedures**

The remediation process will follow the written plan, which must include scheduled review dates and target dates for each issue identified. Examples of actions that may be included in the remediation plan are an increase in didactic instruction, a decrease in course load, a decrease in or temporary suspension of practicum/internship responsibilities, increased supervision and/or faculty advisement, leave of absence, and individual psychotherapy. Progress must be reviewed at least once every semester for the fall and spring semesters, at least two weeks before registration. Additional reviews may be scheduled as necessary. After each review, a copy of the current Remediation Plan including student comments and faculty signatures must be filed in the student's portfolio. If faculty view progress against targets as insufficient, they may recommend either a change in the remediation plan or dismissal. The student will have an opportunity for rebuttal or appeal, as described above.

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**STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW COVER SHEET**

Date of Initial Meeting with Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Members Present (Must include the Director of Training and Student's Advisor):

Summary of Problem (include specific behaviors, setting, and who first identified the problem):

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Date of Faculty Review Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Recommendation:

- No action required  
 Remediation required (attach copy of plan)  
 Dismissal recommended (must be reviewed and approved by Department Chair and Dean)

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:

Student's Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Training \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Student Feedback Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Student Comments:

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Does not indicate agreement)

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**STUDENT PERFORMANCE REMEDIATION PLAN**

(check one ) \_\_\_\_\_ Initial Plan Review    \_\_\_\_\_ Follow-up    \_\_\_\_\_ Final Review

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Identified Area(s) of Concern:**

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

**Remediation Plan and Schedule:**

Specific Behavioral Objectives and Target Dates	Method of Remediation	Met? Yes/No
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		

**Progress since Last Review (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_ Sufficient    \_\_\_\_\_ Insufficient

Comments and Recommendations:

**Date of Next Review (if applicable):**

**Student Reactions:**

**Signatures:**

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Practicum/Internship Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Director of Training: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_