

**WALDRON COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN  
SERVICES**

**Communication Sciences & Disorders**

**Occupational Therapy**

**Physical Therapy**

**School of Nursing**

**School of Social Work**

**STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL  
PRACTICE EDUCATION**

**Radford University  
Radford, Virginia**

**March, 2012**

# **Standards for Professional Practice Education**

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# **STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE EDUCATION**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out Standards for Professional Practice Education that apply to students enrolled in the Waldron College of Health and Human Services at Radford University involving the health, welfare, and safety of people across the lifespan.

The Waldron College has distinct expectations of students that are in addition to those outlined in the Radford University Student Handbook. These standards are aligned with students' abilities to become effective health and human service professionals and are provided so that students and faculty can be clear about expectations and procedures to address practice performance. The ultimate goal of the standards is to help students become successful health and human service professionals.

Since becoming a professional is a gradual and lengthy process, while all criteria are expected to be met, additional supervision may be needed in novice situations. Students are always considered to be responsible for their own actions and are expected to be properly prepared for their experiences. Persons who teach and supervise students, along with program coordinators, will assess student academic performance and apply their professional judgment to determine if standards are being met during a student's educational career. Professional judgment is the capacity to assess a situation by applying the values and knowledge of related professions, combined with a professional's own experience and practice wisdom. It also represents the application of knowledge, values, and skills to making decisions in an ethical and compassionate manner.

All students will be expected to read and apply the Waldron College Standards for Professional Practice Education. Students will be required to sign an acknowledgement verifying their intent to abide by these standards. The form will be kept in the student's file. (See Appendix A.)

## **2.0 EVALUATION**

In order to meet their responsibilities to provide quality health and human service professional education and to ensure that its graduates are able to function in a broad variety of professional situations, the disciplines within the Waldron College evaluate the academic performance of students in four general areas: (1) basic abilities to acquire professional skills; (2) mental and emotional abilities; (3) professional performance skills; and (4) scholastic performance. Meeting the criteria for scholastic achievement is necessary but not sufficient to ensure continued enrollment in a program. Both professional behavior and scholastic performance comprise academic standards.

## 2.1 BASIC ABILITIES NECESSARY TO ACQUIRE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

### **2.1.1 Communication Skills**

Demonstrates sufficient written and verbal skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings.

- a) *Written:* Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling, and applies appropriate writing style, including American Psychological Association (APA) referencing, appropriate source citation, and documentation. Demonstrates sufficient skills in written English to understand content presented in the programs and to complete adequately all written assignments as specified by faculty members.
- b) *Verbal:* Communicates effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, clients, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates sufficient skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to complete adequately all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences as specified by faculty members and site supervisors.

### **2.1.2 Interpersonal Skills**

Demonstrates the interpersonal skills needed to relate effectively to other students, faculty, staff, patients, clients and professionals and to fulfill the ethical obligations of the profession. These include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, and demonstration of respect for and consideration of others. Takes appropriate responsibility for own actions and considers the impact of these actions on others.

### **2.1.3 Cognitive Skills**

Exhibits sufficient knowledge of the chosen profession and clarity of thinking to process the information and apply it to appropriate situations in classroom and field. Demonstrates relevant knowledge and skills including relationship building, data gathering, assessment, intervention, problem solving, and evaluation of practice. Exhibits ability to conceptualize and integrate knowledge and apply that knowledge to professional practice.

### **2.1.4 Physical Skills**

Exhibits sufficient motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and practicum placement, with or without accommodations.

## 2.2 EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL ABILITIES NECESSARY FOR PERFORMANCE IN THE PROGRAM AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### **2.2.1 Stress Management**

Demonstrates ability to deal with current life stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms. Handles stress effectively using suitable self-care and developing supportive relationships with colleagues, peers and others.

### **2.2.2 Emotional and Mental Capacities**

Uses mature judgment. Seeks and effectively uses help for medical and emotional problems that interfere with scholastic and professional performance. Provides evidence that appropriate counseling or help with personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse or mental health difficulties has been obtained. No student will be allowed to continue if personal situations

- compromise scholastic and/or other performance
- interfere with professional judgment and behavior or
- jeopardize the best interests of those to whom the student has a professional responsibility.

Personal information will be held in strict confidence with those in positions of authority with a need to know.

## 2.3 PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR WORK WITH CLIENTS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### **2.3.1 Professional Commitment**

Exhibits a commitment to the goals and ethical standards of the profession. Demonstrates commitment to the essential values of the health and human services professions including the respect for the dignity, worth, and rights of each individual, and abides by discipline specific Code of Ethics.

### **2.3.2 Professional Behavior**

Exhibits behaviors that are in compliance with program policies, School, and University policies, professional ethical standards, and social laws in classroom, field, and community. Appearance, dress, and general demeanor reflect a professional manner. Demonstrates responsible and accountable behavior by knowing and practicing within the scope of the discipline, respecting others, being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, keeping appointments, and accepting supervision and constructive criticism. Works effectively with others, regardless of level of authority. Advocates for him/her in an appropriate and responsible manner and uses proper channels for conflict resolution. Shows a willingness to accept feedback and supervision in a positive manner, as well as use such feedback to enhance continued professional development.

### **2.3.3. Self Awareness**

Exhibits knowledge of how personal values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect thinking, behavior and relationships. Accurately assesses one's own strengths, limitations, and suitability for professional practice. Shows awareness of self and how others perceive one. Reflects on one's own limitations as they relate to professional capacities. Is willing to examine and change behavior when it interferes in working with clients and other professionals.

### **2.3.3 Ethical Obligations**

Current behavior and classroom performance demonstrate adherence to the ethical expectations and obligations of professional practice. Ethical behaviors include:

- Abides by Radford University Honor Code.
- Abides by expectations outlined in the current Radford University Student Handbook
- Maintains compliance with laws and regulations for professional practice according to each profession's Commonwealth of Virginia regulatory agency.
- Evaluates client situation in an unbiased, factual way with suspension of personal biases during interactions with others.
- Comprehends another individual's way of life and values. Empathic communication and support of the client as a basis for a productive professional relationship.
- Appreciates the value of cultural pluralism. Effective and nonjudgmental relation to and work with others who are different from oneself. Appropriate service to all persons in need of assistance, regardless of the person's age, class, race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or value system. No imposition of personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on clients.
- Demonstrates respect for the rights of others. Commitment to client's rights to freedom of choice and self-determination.
- Maintains confidentiality as it relates to human service, classroom activities, and field placement.
- Demonstrates honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences and qualifications, doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.
- Demonstrates clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. Does not sexually harass others; make verbal or physical threats; become involved in sexual relationships with clients, supervisors, or supervising faculty; abuse others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways, or participate in personal relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.

## 2.4 SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Evidence of meeting academic performance criteria may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Feedback or reference letters from faculty, work supervisors, or supervisors at volunteer human service activity or other field experiences
- Feedback from agency-based field instructors/staff
- Observation of classroom, volunteer, or field behaviors
- Performance in oral and written assignments, examinations, labs, presentations group work, or other appropriate coursework
- Student personal statements or self-assessments
- Interviews with faculty or other professionals
- Taped interview situations (audio or video)
- Feedback from students, staff, university (RU or other colleges and universities), helping professionals, or community representatives
- Feedback from faculty in other health and human service programs that students may have attended

## 2.5 ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

No otherwise qualified student shall, on the basis of disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in the Waldron College. A student with a disability may be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and be eligible for reasonable accommodations that will provide an equal opportunity to meet the academic criteria related to professional behavior and scholastic performance. It is important to note that Waldron College Schools and disciplines have published technical standards that must be met to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of clients in various field settings that may substantially affect accommodation.

Any otherwise qualified student with a disability who requests reasonable accommodations must do so by registering with the Radford University Disability Resource Office (DRO) and providing documentation according to the documentation guidelines located at [www.radford.edu/~dro-web](http://www.radford.edu/~dro-web). The DRO makes recommendations for accommodations for students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to contact the DRO, request accommodations and to meet with the appropriate instructor and School Director or Department Chair to discuss the accommodation package. The Schools or Departments within the Waldron College will review academic performance criteria in light of individual student circumstances to explore issues of appropriateness and accommodation. An initial assessment, input from outside experts (including the DRO Disability Services Specialists), and periodic checks between the Schools or Departments of the Waldron College and the student are appropriate courses of action in facilitating accommodations. Accommodations require a signed contract with the faculty member for each class in which accommodations are being requested. Accommodations will be based on current best practices and will not compromise the technical standards or the content required for success in the professional discipline.

### **3.0**

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Student performance is evaluated regularly in a systematic manner as outlined in the course syllabus, faculty directions, and university policy. If there is a problem involving professional practice performance, maintaining client safety is the first priority. Opportunities for student academic appeal will follow the current Radford University Student Handbook.

Any information that may be disclosed during student meetings with faculty, program coordinators, or School or College administrators may not be kept confidential if the information raises concerns about professional performance. Faculty and/or program/course coordinators will share pertinent information with each other for the professional purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about the concerns. They will follow university procedures related to student performance issues.

### **3.1**

## **PERFORMANCE THAT MAY RESULT IN POSSIBLE DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM/MAJOR**

Student reviews can occur under any of the following circumstances:

- Failure to meet or maintain academic requirements
- Scholastic dishonesty, including cheating, lying, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, or any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student
- Unethical behavior
- Any threat or attempt to harm oneself or someone else
- Commission of a criminal act that is contrary to professional practice, as defined by each profession's state regulatory agency, occurring during the course of study or occurring prior to admission and becoming known after admission
- Consistent pattern of unprofessional behavior
- Failure to meet any of the Standards for Professional Practice Education

### **3.2**

## REVIEW PROCESS

When a faculty member has concerns about a student meeting any of the academic criteria, whether related to professional behavior or scholastic performance, that faculty member will:

- Discuss those concerns directly with the student and seek to work with the student to resolve the difficulties
- Apprise the appropriate program/course coordinator of the concerns in order to identify potential patterns and issues related to the student
- Document dates and content of meetings with students
- Prepare a written statement to the student describing the change in behavior that is required

If a problem arises in the field, the agency-based field instructor will discuss concerns directly with the student and the faculty liaison. It is the responsibility of the faculty liaison to apprise the appropriate coordinator of the concerns.

In many instances, meetings between faculty and students resolve the concerns and do not necessarily lead to further action.

The next step involves the faculty member, student, and appropriate program/course coordinator. The faculty and coordinators will meet with the student when the student is not adhering to appropriate standards, policies and procedures or when concerns have not been resolved.

The program/course coordinator will determine the nature of the concern and gather sufficient information to develop a plan to address that concern, if one is needed. No further action may be required, or the student may be asked, in writing, to modify his or her behavior and/or seek appropriate help. This process is designed to assist students in dealing with identified concerns that have an impact on their performance.

The third step involves the faculty member, student, program/course coordinator, and faculty who have had direct experience with the student in classroom or field. Generally, this occurs when problematic patterns are identified with students or when the issues are serious. This is conducted when concerns have not been resolved; when issues relate to a student not meeting the criteria for academic performance (often involving professional or ethical behavior); or when the student is being considered for withdrawal or discontinuance of the program. The student will be notified in writing of the concerns and meeting date, with sufficient time to attend the meeting. Neither party may be represented by legal counsel at these proceedings.

### **Possible Outcomes:**

- *Continue the student in the program with no conditions.*  
In these situations, the concern has been addressed and no further action by the student or program is required.

- *Establish formal conditions for the student's continuance in the program.*  
In these situations, specific conditions must be met in order for the student to remain in the program. Action may include establishing goals, a plan, a timeline, and appropriate monitoring; providing mentoring and support; placing the student on probation and monitoring the student during the probationary period; referring the student to counseling and/or advising services; allowing the student to follow a reduced course load or delay entry to the field practicum; or requiring the student to withdraw from the program with the option of reapplying.
- *Consult with and/or refer to the Dean of Students.*  
In some instances, depending on the nature of the problem, the University's Office of the Dean of Students may be consulted. If a referral is made to that Office after consultation, the student will be notified in writing about the nature of the concern and the fact that the referral is taking place. Situations which may result in referral to the Office of the Dean of Students include scholastic dishonesty, hazing, possession or use of firearms on University property, damage or destruction of University property, and conduct that endangers the health, safety, or security of any University student, employee, or campus visitor. For racial discrimination or sexual harassment situations, students, staff or faculty should contact RU's Human Resources Department.
- *Counsel the student to change majors/degree programs and/or discontinue the student in the program.*  
In some situations, it will be recommended that the student no longer continue in the program. The student will be counseled to voluntarily change majors or degree programs. If that does not occur, the student will be withdrawn from the program. In either case the student will be provided with documentation regarding the specific reasons for their dismissal and the conditions, if any, under which they may reapply and the appropriate appeals process. If the appeal concerns a course grade, there is a formal university grade appeal process (found online under the Registrar's office).

For additional related policies see:

- Radford University Student Handbook
- School Department or Program Policies

Approved by: Waldron College Faculty and Dean May 17, 2000

Approved by: Vice President Academic Affairs July 11, 2000

Revised: June, 2009

Revised: March 2012

*Acknowledgements:*

*Special thanks are due*

*Dr. Roy Denton, School of Social Work*

*Professor Mary Beth Hunziker, School of Nursing*

*School of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin*

## Appendix A:

### Radford University Waldron College of Health and Human Services

#### Standards of Professional Practice Education

#### Student Agreement Form

The purpose of this form is to document that I have: (1) received a personal copy of the Standards for Professional Practice Education (Adopted, 2000) for the Waldron College; (2) familiarized myself with the expectations contained in this document; (3) had an opportunity to discuss this commitment with a faculty member if desired; and (4) agreed to abide by these Standards in the courses in my major in the Waldron College. I understand that these Standards are in addition to other behavioral/performance standards that are in the Radford University Student Handbook and that may be identified in expectations requested by specific community service agencies or businesses where practicum experiences are assigned.

I know that this form will be kept in my academic file until graduation and is appropriate for all learning experiences in my major. Because health and human service professional education involves responsibility for others who may be dependent on me for health and safety, I know that unwillingness on my part to accept personal responsibility for abiding by these performance expectations *will* result in my withdrawal from a major in the Waldron College.

*I understand and agree to abide by the expectations outlined in the Radford University Waldron College Standards of Professional Practice Education.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID No: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_