NON-ACADEMIC TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Objectives for Learning Social Work Practice

Social work practice is guided by the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics. The Code states, "the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2017). Students must uphold this mission as they prepare to become social work practitioners through admittance to Seattle University's Social Work program.

Social work education prepares undergraduate and graduate students for the practice of social work. Practice is defined as the process of doing the work of enhancing human well-being and meeting the basic needs of vulnerable, oppressed, and impoverished people within real-world agency settings. Seattle University's Social Work Program (BSW and MSW) is guided by the NASW Code of Ethics and Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE adopted a competency-based educational framework that focuses on student learning outcomes. These outcomes require students to demonstrate social work competence by integrating and applying social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes in real-world practice situations (CSWE, 2015). CSWE (2015) defines cognitive and affective processes as the exercise of critical thinking, good judgment, and the capacity to manage affective reactions when engaging in social work practice. Critical thinking and judgment are essential skills for social work practice and they require a willingness to integrate other sources of knowledge with one's own assumptions and personal biases when engaged in social work practice.

Learning integration involves a student's ability to conceptualize course content and integrate new knowledge into the field practicum experience (Boitel & Fromm, 2014). Learning integration in Seattle University's Social Work Program is evaluated based on student learning outcomes from both coursework and the field practicum experience. To achieve these learning outcomes, students must have the capacity to learn and apply a set of cognitive, behavioral and social attributes necessary to demonstrate social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes in real-world practice situations. Before deciding to apply to the Social Work Program, applicants must consider their capacity to achieve these learning outcomes, with or without accommodations.

The Social Work Program has established a set of technical standards that are required to achieve these learning outcomes. Technical standards are defined as the non-academic criteria established by an educational program that are deemed essential for students to successfully progress through and complete academic requirements (Blacklock & Montgomery, 2016; de Saxe Zerden, et al., 2019). Upon admission, any violation of these standards may become grounds for dismissal from the Social Work Program.

Technical Standards and Disability Accommodations

Seattle University's (SU) Social Work Program is committed to supporting students' educational experiences as they proceed in the program. The Social Work Program recognizes that students present with various levels of ability in their pursuit of undergraduate and graduate education. This is illustrated by the Program's commitment to make course materials and program activities accessible to students with diverse learning abilities. Students may request accommodations to support their learning. SU's Disability Services Office works collaboratively with the Social Work Program to facilitate equal access to courses, programs, and activities. The partnership between the Social Work Program and Disability Services facilitates students' access to resources that support the achievement of the technical standards required for admission to, progression through, and completion of degree requirements. However, accommodation requests cannot serve to compromise or fundamentally alter the educational standards of the Social Work Program's degree requirements.

Technical Standards for Social Work Education

Applicants considering admission to SU's Social Work Program must evaluate their capacity to learn and apply, with or without accommodations, the specific non-academic criteria outlined below. These criteria, hereinto called *technical standards*, explain the following skills: *effective use of communication and interpersonal skills, respect for diversity, equity and inclusion, exercise stress management skills, demonstrate self-awareness, and adhere to SU's academic standards and the profession's conduct and ethical standards.*

Communication Skills
Communication is defined as the transfer and exchange of messages in all modalities, which can include verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (Matsumoto et. al., 2013). The form of communication used must first and foremost serve to engage with clients and constituents (i.e. practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). Students must prepare to learn and apply the following:

- A capacity to convey empathy and self-reflection within all aspects of social work practice.
- A capacity to express feelings and ideas that contribute to learning transfer and integration.
- A capacity to suspend judgment when listening to others.
- Be proficient in the verbal and written English language. English is the language by which course content, classroom discussions, and assignments are articulated at Seattle University.

Interpersonal Skills
Interpersonal skills involve the application of behaviors and types of communication to effectively interact with others. In social work practice, interpersonal skills are integral to achieving the overall wellbeing of client systems (i.e. individuals, families, groups, and/or communities). Students must prepare to learn and apply the following:

- An ability to interact with diverse clients and constituents, including colleagues (students and field agency staff), faculty, and organizational leadership.
- Recognize the importance of exercising empathy as an acknowledgement of the multivariate lived experiences of others.
- Understand the importance of operating within established channels to resolve conflicts and affect change towards the overall wellbeing of clients and constituents.
- An ability to apply problem-solving skills that respond to personal and academic challenges.

Respect for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Seattle University prohibits discrimination and/or harassment based on an individual's lived experience and social/cultural identities. The Social Work Program promotes an equitable and inclusive learning environment within classroom and field practicum settings. Students must prepare to learn and apply the following:

- An appreciation for diversity and inclusion of people's lived experiences and social and cultural identities.
- Commitment to increasing awareness of one's own personal biases and how they impact the learning and demonstration of social work practice.
- Receptivity to acknowledging structural and systemic inequities that marginalize and disenfranchise diverse populations.
- A capacity to respond to inequities and foster inclusive practices in the learning environment and through practice in the field.

Stress Management
When learning new information and skills, particularly those that are challenging to take in, students may experience a stress response (Sue, 2013). Managing personal stress is demonstrated through an ability to be aware of how stress impacts emotions when interacting with others (MacCann et al., 2011; Goleman, 2006). The ability to manage personal stress is imperative for effective social work learning and practice. Students must prepare to learn and apply the following:

- Exercise organizational and time management skills to consistently prepare for and be punctual to class and field practicum.
- Meet due dates, keep appointments, and proactively plan for the unexpected when preparing for course and field education requirements.
- Navigate transportation and travel to and from field practicum.
- When needed, identify supports and strategies to manage personal stress.

Self-awareness
Self-awareness is an active and continuous process of understanding ourselves, how we make decisions, and being conscious of how we behave in different situations (Trevithick, 2018). Self-awareness and interoceptive awareness skills increase one's capacity for emotional understanding and the ability to have attention and tolerance for the physical sensations, feelings, and thoughts experienced between individuals in the present moment. The ability to exercise these skills helps social workers maintain attention on growth and restoration during practice (Porges, 2011). Students must prepare to learn and apply the following:

- A commitment to examining one's own values, beliefs, biases, prejudices and how they impact behavior and interaction with others.
- A commitment to critically examining one's lived experiences and beliefs.
- A capacity for applying critical thinking skills in their knowledge and skill development of social work practice.
- The ability to accept constructive feedback and use resources (i.e. supervision) to facilitate learning and skill development.

Academic and Professional Conduct Standards
Acceptance to and continuance in the Social Work Program is contingent upon students upholding the academic requirements necessary for completion of degree requirements at Seattle University. Applicants must attest to the accuracy and authenticity of all items in their application package. Upon admission, students are expected to uphold the technical standards. Students must also adhere to the ethical standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, Seattle University's Professional Conduct Policy: Appeal Procedures and Code of Student Conduct.

Citations

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OF SEATTLE UNIVERSITY'S SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

I have read Seattle University's Social Work Non-Academic Technical Standards for Social Work Education and understand how these non-academic criteria will be used by Seattle University's Social Work Program to evaluate students' abilities to progress through and complete academic requirements. I understand that my inability to learn and apply these essential skills may impact my admission to the Social Work Program and/or completion of the program's degree requirements.

Signature_____

Print Name_____

Date_____