

Academic Review Policy
University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

Policy Code #12:1

Revised: January 1975; April 1975; January 1989

Revised and approved by faculty: April 16, 2003

Academic Review

SECTION I. Statement of Purpose and Definition

- A. The purpose of Academic Review is to provide a mechanism for insuring qualitative standards of achievement for degree students in the School of Social Work. Achievement embraces field-based performance and learning, grades in academic courses, and reasonable rates of progress toward completion of degree requirements
- B. Academic review is a problem solving and decision making process that seeks to establish just procedures for reaching decisions on those matters defined herein.

SECTION II. Types of Academic Review

A. Mandatory Review

Under certain conditions, consistent with the educational responsibilities of the School, academic review proceedings are required.

For the baccalaureate program, this would obtain in instances where:

- 1. a student's cumulative QPA is below 2.00 on a 4.00 scale;
- 2. a student's cumulative social work QPA is below 2.5 on a 4.00 scale.

For the Master's Program, this would obtain in instances where:

- 1. a student admitted on provisional status fails to achieve a minimum cumulative QPA of 3.00 within the required time frame (see Provisional Admission Policy);
- 2. a student's cumulative QPA falls below the 3.00 level on a 4.00 scale;
- 3. a student receives a grade below a "B-" in a required course;
- 4. a student receives a grade of "N" in field.

For the doctoral program, the academic review process is initiated if a student receives a grade below "B-" in a required course or if a student's a cumulative QPA fall s below 3.0.

B. Discretionary Review

This pertains to academic matters not specified above such as the accumulation of "G" or "I" grades, a term QPA of less than 3.00 for an MSW student, two or more grades below "B-" for an MSW student, and/or other instances as set forth in Section I, paragraph A. Discretionary review is not meant to by-pass the relationship between the student and her or his faculty advisor (or field liaison). Nor is it meant to preclude problem solving by these parties. Rather, discretionary review offers a formal venue for addressing and attempting to resolve impediments to a student's academic performance and progress.

SECTION III. Process

- A. The director of the program in which the student is enrolled shall send written notification of the academic review to the student and to her or his advisor. The notification shall indicate the reason for the review, the parties being asked to attend, and the date, time, and location of the meeting. Notification and scheduling of reviews shall occur as soon after the start of the following term as possible. A copy of the notification shall be placed in the student's folder.

The director of the program in which the student is enrolled, or his or her designate, shall convene the academic review meeting. The meeting shall include the student and his or her advisor. As appropriate, course or field instructors, Office of Field Education staff, or other relevant parties may be asked to attend

The discussion shall seek to arrive at a plan that will permit the student to improve his or her academic performance and to make reasonable progress toward his or her degree. Such a plan may entail:

1. modification of the student's current registration.
2. delay or suspension of field placement.
3. specification of a course of study to be followed to complete the degree.
4. use of academic support services.
5. use of other supportive services or a short-term leave of absence where significant personal issues are impeding the student's academic performance and progress.

The time frame, consistent with the length of time specified in the Policy on Academic Probation, for demonstrating satisfactory performance and progress shall be noted in the plan.

A written copy of the recommended plan shall be sent to the student no later than three working days after the meeting. A copy of the signed plan shall be placed in the student's folder.

- B. Referral to the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee

The matter shall be referred to the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee, except in those instance where failure to demonstrate satisfactory academic performance results in dismissal, if:

1. it is not possible to develop a plan during the academic review meeting;
2. subsequent to accepting the plan, the student does not abide by its provisions or fails to demonstrate satisfactory performance and progress,

The director of the program in which the student is enrolled shall submit a request to the Chair of the School's Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee that the Committee be convened. The rationale for the request should identify:

1. a statement of the problem;

2. efforts at resolution by the faculty advisor, other involved parties, and the Program Director;
3. a summary of the academic review meeting, including the plan accepted, if appropriate;
4. the Program Director's recommendation to the Associate Dean for Academic Dean.

The Chair shall schedule a meeting of the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee within 15 working days of his or her receipt of the Program Director's request. He or she shall notify Committee members of the scheduled meeting and shall make available for their review, no later than three days before the meeting, a file to be kept in a central location that contains:

1. the Program Director's request;
2. other documents considered during the academic review;
3. materials provided by the student, if any.

The Chair shall inform the student by certified special delivery mail of the scheduled Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee meeting and shall request that the student attend the Committee's meeting, if he or she chooses. The student will be informed that she or he can submit materials for the Committee's consideration; The Chair must receive such materials no later than three working days before the meeting. The student shall be advised that she or he may invite up to two faculty members and/or students to attend the meeting with her or him; however, a student shall not be permitted to bring as a representative an attorney or law student. The letter shall include a copy of the School's Policy on Academic Review.

No later than three working days prior to the meeting, the Chair shall send the student by certified special delivery mail a copy of the materials made available to the Committee for review.

The Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee proceedings (exclusive of the Committee's deliberations to arrive at a decision) must be recorded. The meeting should proceed in five (5) major phases identified below:

Phase 1: Statement of Problem

The director of the program in which the student is enrolled should offer a clear statement of the problem(s) under consideration. Discussion during this phase should be limited to a charting of the historical development of the problem(s) and prior attempts at resolution and to defining the specific problem(s) to be addressed by the Committee.

Phase 2: Identification of Facts

All pertinent information regarding the problem(s) under consideration should be presented to the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee. Such information may be provided in the form of written statements submitted to the Committee via the Chair and/or in the form of direct information that may be given at the request of the Chair.

Only those persons who have been identified prior to the date of the proceedings to provide direct information may appear before the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee. These individuals must appear separately and are not to remain to hear information from other persons scheduled to appear. Exceptions can be made when the information to be provided by two (2) or more persons is so closely related that separate appearances would seriously diminish the value of the information to be provided. The Chair shall determine the order in which persons who are to

provide direct testimony are to appear before the Committee. Any member, and each of the parties present, shall be permitted to question each person providing direct information.

Phase 3: Student Responses

If present, the student and the maximum of two (2) representatives as previously designated (faculty member and/or student) must have an opportunity to address the Committee.

Phase 4: Committee Deliberations

Only the members of the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee are to be present for the deliberations. All persons who are not members of the Committee are to be excused and the tape recorder must be turned off prior to the beginning of the deliberations.

Phase 5: Voting

The Committee must arrive at a decision. A minimum of five (5) concurring votes is required for a Committee decision. The Committee can uphold the recommendations of the academic review, accept the student's recommendations in place of those of the academic review, or formulate its own recommendations.

If the student is available, she or he will be informed of the Committee's decision immediately upon completion of the meeting.

The Committee via the Chair shall submit the following material to the Dean, who shall make an independent review of the hearing proceedings.

1. the complete file as available to the Committee;
2. a summary of the proceedings;
3. the tapes of the proceedings intact;
4. the signed recommendations of the Committee

The Dean may affirm or overrule the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee on any matter, in whole or in part, or may remand the matter for further consideration. Upon completion of such additional proceedings, if any, and within a reasonable time the Dean shall issue a final decision.

SECTION IV. Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee

A. Permanent Members

The Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee is to be composed of seven (7) permanent members of whom four (4) are faculty persons appointed by the Dean and three (3) are degree students selected by the Student Executive Council. It is required that the student representation consist of one (1) individual from each degree level (undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D.).

B. Alternate Members

There is to be a total of seven (7) alternate members of the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee. Four (4) of the alternates are to be faculty persons appointed by the Dean and are to be designated as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Alternate. Three (3) of the alternates are to be students selected by the Student Executive Council and are to be designated as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Alternate. If a vacancy occurs, a replacement shall be immediately appointed.

The Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee can be convened only when there are seven (7) members present of whom four (4) are faculty and three (3) are students. In the event that permanent member(s) cannot attend the initial Committee session for any given review proceeding, the Chair must contact the appropriate alternate (faculty or student) in the sequence in which they were designated. The Alternate(s) would then serve on the Committee for the duration of those proceedings.

All appointments to the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee are to be for a twelve-month term. The Dean is to submit a written request for identification of student members and student alternates to the Student Executive Council. This request should specifically mention the requirement set forth above.

C. Chairperson

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall serve as the Chair of the Academic Review and Academic Committee without the benefit of vote. In the extended absence of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the person appointed by the Dean to perform the Associate Dean's functions shall serve as Chair of the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee. If the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs is not available, the Dean shall appoint an alternate chair from among the Administrative Officers.

D. Conflict of Interest

Any faculty member, class or field, with a current academic relationship with the student under review may be included in the discussions, but will not be included in the formal deliberations and vote.

In the event that circumstances involving conflict of interest results in the elimination of permanent members and the three (3) alternates in either category, the Dean shall appoint faculty replacements and the Student Executive Council shall identify student replacements.

SECTION VI. Timeliness

It is the responsibility of all parties, including administrative officers, to take prompt action in order that grievances may be resolved quickly and fairly. While no explicit time limit could apply to all cases,

failure to use diligence in seeking redress may constitute grounds for denial of a hearing or other relief, especially if prejudice results.

SECTION VII. Retention of Materials

The Dean is to be responsible for safeguarding the materials given to him or her by the Academic Review and Academic Integrity Committee. All materials should be retained no less than two (2) years and may be retained longer at the Dean's discretion.