

# Simmons UNIVERSITY

School of Social Work

## School of Social Work Graduate Student Handbook 2024-2025



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## SSW GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Simmons University is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian university providing undergraduate and graduate programs across a range of Practicums.

The University makes all reasonable efforts to deliver the programs of study, other services, and facilities in the way described in its materials and on its website. However, the University shall be entitled, if it reasonably considers it to be necessary (including in order to manage its resources and pursue its policy of continuous improvement appropriately):

- To alter the timetable, location, number of classes and method of delivery of programs of study, provided such alterations are reasonable.
- To make reasonable variations to the content and syllabus of programs of study (including in relation to placements).
- To suspend or discontinue programs of study to make changes to its policies and procedures which the University reasonably considers necessary. Such changes if significant will normally come into force at the beginning of the following academic year, and if fundamental to the program will normally come into force with effect from the next cohort of students.
- Not to provide programs of study or to combine them with others if the University reasonably considers this to be necessary (for example, because too few students apply to join the program for it to be viable).

Students are responsible for knowing the policies and procedures in this document, as well as the particular policies and procedures from their academic program, and the policies of Simmons University, which are available on the Simmons University website.

The information in this document is subject to change, and Simmons reserves the right to change any policy or procedure without notice.

## ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISING

### Academic Advising

Students are assigned an Academic Advisor when they enter their program. The Academic Advisor provides guidance in regards to concerns or conflicts that might arise with course progression, plans of study, status (leave(s) of absences, withdrawals, change of program options), and academic performance issues. In addition, the Academic Advisor might assist with clarification of learning styles and needs, along with guidance with materials found in any of the student handbooks. The Academic Advisor serves as an advocate during a student's tenure as a graduate student and helps to connect students with academic and other support. Advisors also provide advising pertaining to post-graduate social work careers and career resources.

### Practicum Advising

Each year students in Practicum placements are assigned a Practicum Liaison who serves as a liaison between the student and the Practicum placement agency. The liaison collaborates with Practicum agency instructors in evaluating student progress and learning and, when necessary, serves as a mediator in problem situations. The liaison also participates in discussions, as needed, about concerns or problems in Practicum placement or academic coursework as it pertains to Practicum education. See your program's Practicum manual for more information.

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

### Tutoring & Writing Center Resources

Students in need of academic tutoring support should reach out to their Academic Advisor to explore resources. Students may obtain a private tutor at their own expense if desired. For any submitted work, it must be clear to doctoral faculty that a student has completed their work independently.

MSW students may use the services of the Writing Center at Simmons University. [The Simmons Writing Center](#) is available for students, in a limited capacity, to assist in the understanding of structure of the current APA format and proof reading of research papers. The description for the Writing Center and its resources are explained in the Simmons Foundations Course. Students may use editing services, however it must be clear to doctoral faculty that a student has completed work independently on their own.

## STUDENTS WITH ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS/ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who wish to receive academic accommodations for a course must first register due to a documented diagnosis/disability with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). The most commonly requested accommodations are extended time for testing and use of the OAS Testing Center. OAS will provide eligible/registered students with an Academic Accommodations Authorization form to share with each instructor to confirm the student's authorized accommodations.

Please note that emergency absences such as hospitalizations and emergency surgery are not within the purview of the Office of Accessibility Services. The Academic Advisor is the best resource for support during that time.

For more information about the services and accommodations available through the Office of Accessibility Services please review [their webpage](#).

## ATTENDANCE

### Classroom Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Attending class means arriving to synchronous classes on time and ready to participate, or in an asynchronous format, completing all required asynchronous content satisfactorily and on time. Absences, including tardy arrivals or leaving class early, may result in overall grade reduction. Excessive absences, defined as missing more than 20% of combined asynchronous and synchronous work, will typically result in a failing grade for the course. For example:

- Missing more than 2 class sessions in a 14 week term may result in course failure. For online students, 1 class session = completion of the asynchronous work **and** attendance of the synchronous/live session).
- Missing more than 1 class session in a 9 week term may result in course failure.
- Missing any class in an intensive course may result in course failure.

Attendance differs from participation; expectations for each are typically articulated in course syllabi.

### Religious Observance/Student Absence

Simmons abides by the Massachusetts law on Religious Observances. Students who are unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in an examination, class, or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from the class, study, or work requirement and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up the examination, study, or work they may have missed consistent with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 151c, Section 2b. That law states:

“Any student in an educational or vocational training institution, other than a religious or a denominational education or vocational training institution, who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study, or work missed because of such absence on any particular day; provided, however, that such make-up examination or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of their availing themselves of the provisions of the sections.”



A student should inform the instructor prior to missing a class if they expect to miss class because of their religious observances. Questions about absences for religious observances should be directed to the Director of Student Support, or their designee.

### Asynchronous Course Work Policy

Asynchronous course work is an essential component of student acquisition of knowledge, values and skills related to course content and professional development. Asynchronous course work and the live session comprise at least three hours of contact time for each course, per week. Some classes have little or no asynchronous course work (typically those hosted on-ground) while other classes may have 50% or more of class time each week be asynchronous.

A student who submits asynchronous course work late, submits incomplete work, or does not submit asynchronous course work for the week has effectively been absent from class. Unless a student has negotiated an extension in a timely manner with their instructor or has accommodations that enable them to submit work after the deadline, missing 20% or more of combined asynchronous and synchronous work will typically result in a non-passing grade. (Note: this policy applies only to academic courses. There is a separate asynchronous attendance policy for Practicum courses.)

### Auditing Classes

Auditing classes is permitted in some programs and not others. Check your program handbook or with your academic advisor for more information.

### Information Regarding Class and Clinical Placement Attendance for Students Who Are on Active Duty in the U.S. Military

The Simmons School of Social Work (SSW) is committed to supporting students who are enrolled in the SSW while on active duty in the U.S. Military.

We recognize that active-duty students are subject to unexpected and unavoidable changes in their schedules and that you may be deployed to areas where internet access is unreliable or unavailable. We know it is not uncommon for students in the military to miss one or more live sessions or clinical placement hours due to military obligations. In most instances, we expect students will know in advance when they will need to report for duty and how the nature and location of the deployment may impact their ability to attend live sessions or to participate in Practicum placement. Thus, when students have advance notice that they will be absent from a class or clinical placement due to a military assignment, they are asked to provide the following in writing to their instructor (if missing a class) or to both their Practicum instructor and Practicum Liaison (if missing Practicum placement hours):

- A list of all the dates/times of live sessions and/or Practicum placement hours from which the student anticipates being absent due to military service obligations.
- If the student cannot specify a precise date of absence but know of circumstances or conditions that might preclude them from attending one or more live sessions or to report at their clinical placement site, students must provide their faculty member with as much information as they can regarding the potential absence and how it will affect completion of course work or requirements.

Once the student has notified their faculty member of the planned absences, they are asked to talk with their faculty member no later than the end of the first week of the term to discuss how they will make up the missed class and/or clinical placement hours.

When a student is absent for one or more live sessions due to military duties, it is likely that their faculty member will assign them one or more supplemental or replacement assignments. The decision to assign supplemental or replacement work for absences due to military deployment rests in the sound discretion of the faculty member as is the decision regarding the nature and kind of supplemental or replacement academic work that may be submitted by the student to fulfill the course requirements. Agreements by faculty and students on whether and how replacement or supplemental work will be done, and the dates of completion, should be completed in writing to confirm expectations and to avoid misunderstandings.

If the student will be absent from Practicum placement, they must discuss their anticipated absences with their Practicum instructor and Practicum Liaison. Students should review the Practicum Education Manual for their program, for policies relating to absences.

For urgent military matters in which students are called to service with little or no warning, they are required to notify all relevant faculty, the Academic Advisor, and the Program Director as soon as they know when they will be absent from class or clinical placement. To the extent feasible, the same process for determining expectations related to make-up work will be employed. If a student's deployment requires them to be disconnected from the internet, or with limited or no access to the internet, they must notify their Academic Advisor, their instructors, and, if in Practicum, their Practicum instructor and Practicum Liaison of these extenuating circumstances.

## PROCEDURES FOR GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

Students have the right to grieve actions or decisions, which can include grieving a final grade, appealing status decisions, appealing a sanction related to an Academic Standards, Academic Integrity, or Student Code of Conduct finding, or filing a complaint.

Specifically, students can:

- Appeal a final course grade by following the grade appeal process. (See Handbook section below on Appeal of Final Course Grade.)
- Appeal a dismissal by writing a letter to the SSW Dean or designee that addresses allowable appeal criteria. (See Handbook section below on Appeal of Dismissal.)
- Appeal a sanction pertaining to an academic integrity violation or academic misconduct (see Simmons Academic Integrity Guidebook, and Handbook section below on the review system and Academic Standards Committee.)

Other complaints and grievances not covered in the above processes should be addressed as follows:

- For a class-related issue, a student should first discuss the issue with the faculty member
- If discussion with the faculty member is not appropriate to the situation, or the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, the concern can be brought to their Academic Advisor.



- If discussion with the Academic Advisor is not appropriate to the situation, or if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, the issue can be brought to the Director of Student Support or their designee. Except where otherwise stated, the decision of the Director of Student Support, or their designee, is final for student complaints, grievances, and appeals.

For Ethical Complaints and Grievances, please see here: <https://www.simmons.edu/report-incident>

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

Course faculty evaluate students' academic performance throughout the semester culminating in a final course grade. The grading scale is published in the SSW Student Handbook and can typically be found on course syllabi. Additional expectations about attendance, participation and timeliness of work are also listed in syllabi and this Handbook. Assignment grading rubrics, when used, are also given to students.

Students are required to follow all academic policies outlined in SSW Student Handbook and to adhere to academic progression guidelines for their particular program. Students who exhibit uneven or poor performance are referred for additional support and advising. Students can also have a Level 1, 2 or 3 review. (See description of Level Reviews below in this Handbook).

Simmons University also maintains an Academic Integrity Policy that includes procedures for addressing a student's academic performance when there is a question of academic dishonesty. This may include a formal hearing by the Simmons Academic Integrity Board (AIB), and/or review by the AIB Secretary.

Student's professional performance is integral to their overall academic performance and success in the program. Students are informed of their program's criteria for evaluation of professional performance as part of new student orientation. Students are required to read and abide by the SSW Standards for Professional Practice and the NASW Code of Ethics. This conduct is evaluated as part of program progression. Students who exhibit unethical conduct or unprofessional behavior can be referred for a Level 3 review by the academic standards committee (see description of Level 3 review in this Handbook), or other disciplinary action as appropriate.

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

### **NASW Code of Ethics**

Students are expected to adhere to the [\*NASW Code of Ethics\*](#) and established norms, values, and behavior during class, professional work, Practicum placements, and in all other aspects of their professional and academic work while earning their Social Work degree. The *NASW Code of Ethics* outlines behaviors and responsibilities expected of all professional social workers. The NASW considers students to be professional social workers from the time they enroll into a social work program. Students should obtain a copy of the *NASW Code of Ethics* and become familiar with its contents.

### **Simmons School of Social Work Standards for Professional Practice**

SSW students are also expected to be familiar with and abide by the Simmons School of Social Work Standards for Professional Practice (Appendix 1), and students in online programs shall follow the SSW Live Session Protocol and Online Etiquette (Appendix 2). Failure to meet generally accepted standards for professional conduct, ethics and personal integrity requisite for professional social work practice, as outlined in the *NASW Code of Ethics* and the SSW Social Work Standards for Professional Practice, may constitute grounds for a Level 3 review, filing of a Student Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity Board infraction, and/or could result in academic sanctions including dismissal.

### **PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE AND ACADEMIC REVIEWS (LEVEL 1, 2, 3)**

The SSW is committed to supporting student success and the achievement of academic and practice proficiency while also upholding professional standards and the expectations set forth by the University-wide Student Code of Conduct. A three-level review process is used to address student academic performance and professional conduct issues. The specific level of review depends upon the severity of the concern. Information shared by the student with faculty and school administrators related to the concerns being reviewed will not be treated as confidential if the information shared raises concerns about professional performance or student safety. Faculty and administrators may share pertinent information with each other on a need-to-know basis for the purpose of identifying student issues and enhancing problem solving about those issues and concerns. A student will be reviewed at the level (1, 2 or 3) that is appropriate to the concern. Instances of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration) are addressed in the processes described by the Simmons Academic Integrity Policy.

Reviews of students can occur for the following circumstances, among others:

- To identify need for academic support
- To determine a remediation plan for a violation of the the academic integrity policy, University Student Code of Conduct, or *NASW Code of Ethics*
- If a student fails to meet or maintain academic requirements
- If a student is terminated from a Practicum placement or internship either by the placement or by SSW administrators due to performance issues
- If a student is rejected by three agencies during the Practicum placement process in one term
- If a student exhibits behavior judged by faculty to be in violation of professional ethics and/or Simmons University, SSW, or program-specific policies
- If a student exhibits consistent pattern of unprofessional behavior in the classroom or in Practicum placements

### **Three Levels of Review**

There are three levels of review to address student academic performance and professional conduct issues. A student can be reviewed at any level, and consecutive level review is not required. Thus, a student may undergo a Level 3 review without prior reviews, or may have undergone a Level 1

review and then may be asked to engage in a Level 3 review, without having engaged in a Level 2 review.

### **Level 1: Student/Instructor Consultation**

A Level 1 review involves a consultation between a faculty member and a student, typically at the request of the faculty member. When a faculty member has concerns about a student meeting academic criteria, whether related to professional behavior or academic 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 Academic Advisor of the concerns
- Summarize the meeting, plans and/or recommendations in an email to the student

If a problem arises in an external training site (e.g. Practicum placement) the supervisor is expected to promptly discuss concerns directly with the student and with the Practicum Liaison. It is the responsibility of the Practicum Liaison to appraise their Practicum department contact of the concerns.

The purpose of the Level 1 review is to provide the student an opportunity to receive feedback from their instructor about areas of concern and suggestions for addressing the concerns.

The outcome of many Level 1 consultations is that, together, the faculty and students resolve the concerns and no further reviews are desired or required. Examples of situations triggering a Level 1 review are attendance issues, a poor grade or missed assignment.

### **Level 2**

A Level 2 meeting can be convened when concerns have not been resolved at Level 1 or when a student appears to be developing a pattern of not following academic or program standards, policies, or procedures. All students on academic probation will have a Level 2 review meeting.

A Level 2 review is a meeting that usually involves the student and the student's Academic Advisor and can also include the appropriate faculty member and appropriate program administrator. If a problem arises in an external training site, the external supervisor and Practicum Liaison can also be included.

The student will be informed of the Level 2 review by their advisor, their instructor, or the Director of Student Support. In preparation for the Level 2 meeting, the advisor or program administrator will gather information about the nature of the concern. The meeting will be used to discuss the concerns and to develop a Corrective Plan to address those concerns. If the outcome of the meeting is that no further action is needed, the meeting will be documented to the student and the program director but no Corrective Plan will be created. When a Corrective Plan is determined to be the appropriate next step, the Corrective Plan may address the need for the student to modify their behavior and/or seek appropriate help or academic assistance. All parties to the Level 2 meeting, including the student, shall receive a copy of the Corrective Plan.

The purpose of a Level 2 review is to assist students in fully understanding and addressing the academic or professional conduct concerns that are negatively impacting their success in the

program. Examples of issues that may lead to a Level 2 review are repeated attendance problems, poor grades, and general difficulties meeting the standards and expectations of coursework or Practicum placement.

The administrator overseeing the Level 2 review may determine if the Level 2 assessment is sufficient or whether it would be in the student's and/or Simmons's best interests to conduct a more comprehensive review, pursuant to Level 3.

### **Level 3**

A Level 3 review typically involves: (1) the SSW Director for Student Support, program director, or other designee of the SSW Dean, (2) members of the Academic Standards Committee, and (3) the student. Generally, the Level 3 review is called when serious or complex problematic patterns are identified with students or when the issues are serious enough to require formal consultation with faculty and the student. A student can be referred for a Level 3 review by a faculty member or administrator.

A Level 3 review may be conducted when concerns have not been fully resolved at prior Level 1 or Level 2 meetings, when a student continues to not meet the criteria for academic performance, or when a student exhibits unprofessional or unethical behaviors in a classroom, Practicum placement, or other clinical setting.

The SSW Director of Student Support will convene a meeting with the appropriate faculty and the student. Information will be provided by the student and by appropriate faculty to determine the nature of the problem and to identify alternatives for its remediation.

The student will be notified in writing of the concerns and meeting date, with sufficient time to prepare for and attend the meeting, as determined by the Director of Student Support but typically at least three business days. If a student is unable to attend, or chooses not to attend, a finding can be made with the available information in the student's absence.

Once an understanding has been reached, the student will be excused from the meeting. Faculty conducting the Level 3 review will confer and agree on recommendations, which will then be made to the Director of Student Support who will implement a course of action based on the recommendations and inform the student of the decision, which may include one of the following among others:

- Continue the student in the program with no conditions.
- Establish written conditions for the student's continuance in the program.
- Consult with or refer to another office, such as the Academic Integrity Board or the Simmons University Dean for Student Life or their designee
- Dismiss student from the program

In any Level 3 review, there will be clear, concise documentation of the problem areas as well as verification that the concerns have been discussed with the student and attempted to be ameliorated when appropriate.

Decisions which result in dismissal can be appealed following the SSW dismissal appeal policy. Other appeals must be made within five calendar days of the student's receipt of the

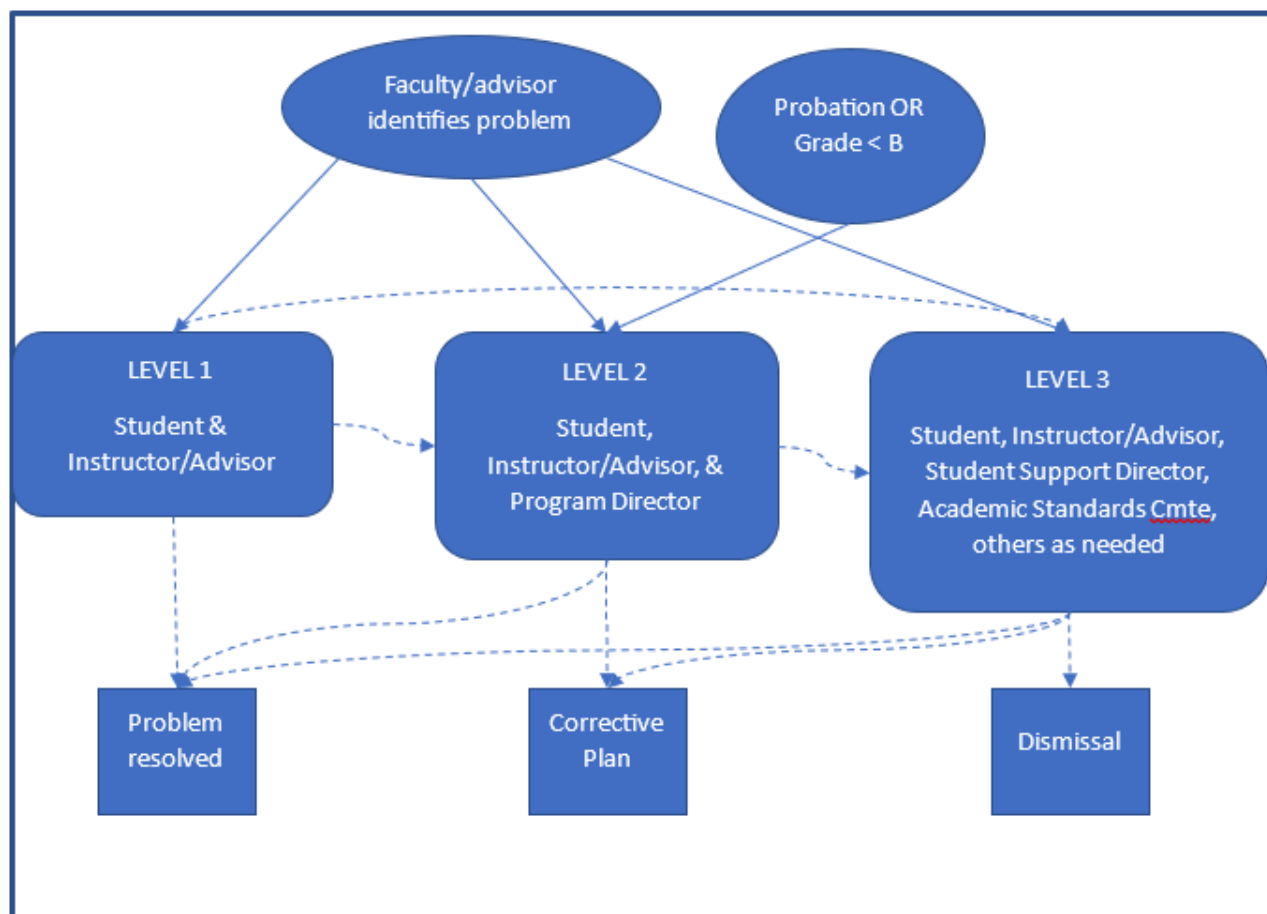
committee's decision. Appeals should be made in writing to the SSW Dean, or their designee, and may be made on these grounds only:

- a) procedural error that unfairly affected the outcome of the committee's decision;
- b) new information that was not reasonably available at the time to the review;
- c) sanctions imposed are arbitrary and capricious, or disproportionate to the nature and severity of the offense and the cumulative conduct of the responding party.

In some instances the Dean of Student Experience, and/or the Director of Academic Integrity, or their designees, may be consulted to determine whether a Level 3 review, a non-academic incident referral, or an academic integrity referral is the most appropriate course of action.

If a University-level review is appropriate, the student will be notified. Situations that may result in referral include, but are not limited to: academic dishonesty; plagiarism; cheating; unlawful discrimination or harassment; sexual harassment; damage or destruction of University property; conduct that endangers the health or safety of any University student, employee, campus visitor, or member of the Simmons community; and conduct that disrupts the functioning of the University as an open, educational community. The University may place the student on a temporary suspension until the case can be reviewed.

Cases that are referred to another body may be referred back to the Director of Student Support, or their designee, for the purpose of developing a corrective plan. The Director of Student Support, or their designee, may consult with the Academic Standards Committee, Program Director, and/or the Dean of Student Experience, or their designees, for guidance in developing the corrective plan.



### Simmons University Academic Integrity Policy

Simmons University maintains and strictly enforces a policy on academic integrity. See the [Simmons website on academic integrity](#) for more information about what constitutes academic integrity, and the process following an allegation of academic integrity violation at Simmons.

### Use of TurnItIn

TurnItIn is similarity-detection software that locates areas in student writing that closely resemble or exactly match the data source from which ideas are extrapolated. TurnItIn may be used for major written assignments in some courses as indicated in course syllabi. The purposes of this tool include providing students with feedback when:

- Their citations are not in compliance with APA Style Guide guidelines;
- They are incorrectly representing their work as original ideas or meaning making informed by reliable evidence and literature;
- They are drawing verbatim from text sources, but either not citing appropriately or at all;
- If potential plagiarism is indicated, then the procedure outlined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) will be followed.



## GRADING

All students are expected to maintain a B (3.0) grade average or better throughout their program in the SSW. **Some programs may have additional or more stringent requirements: check your program handbook for more information.** Courses are graded using the A-F grading system. School of Social Work students must take all classes for a letter grade with the exception of social work Practicum education courses, in which case Pass, Marginal Pass, or Fail are used instead of a letter grade. The numerical equivalent for each grade is as follows:

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA equivalent	Point scale equivalent
A	4.0	100-94
A-	3.67	93-90
B+	3.33	89-87
B	3.0	86-84
B-	2.67	83-80
C+	2.33	79-77
C	2.00	76-74
C-	1.67	73-70
D+	1.33	69-68
D	1	67-64
D-	.67	63-60
F	0	59 or below

## ACADEMIC STANDING AND DISCIPLINE

### Course Grades Below a “B”

Any student earning a grade lower than a B in a course may be required to have a Level 2 review, no later than the end of the second week of the subsequent term. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the grade, the reasons for the low academic performance, and to develop a Corrective Plan, which will be sent to the student. Possible actions include a stipulation that the student retake the class and earn a passing grade.

Your program will have specific requirements for a minimum grade below which you are required to retake a class; check your program addendum for more information.

A student’s failure to attend a scheduled Level 2 review may result in the administrative withdrawal of the student’s registration and other consequences.

A student earning 3 or more grades below a B (84) will be dismissed from the program.

### When a Student Is Required to Retake a Class

When a student is required to retake a class, both grades remain on the transcript, and are accounted for in the GPA. All students are required to earn the requisite number of unique degree credits to graduate.

No student can repeat more than two courses in which they have earned a grade of below a B. **Some programs may have more stringent limits: see your program handbook for more information.** The same course cannot be enrolled in more than twice. A student is not permitted to re-submit any work submitted in the prior class. This includes asynchronous work as well as written papers and exams. Students required to retake a class will do so at their own expense.

### Academic Probation

Poor academic performance, and poor performance in Practicum placements or external internships are grounds for a student to be placed on academic probation. For the purposes of academic probation, poor performance is defined as: receiving two grades below a B, earning a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0, or receiving an MP in Practicum placement. A student on academic probation will have a Level 2 review no later than the end of the first week of class of the subsequent term. The purpose of the meeting is to develop a Corrective Plan. A copy of the plan, written by the advisor or Practicum liaison, must be forwarded to the appropriate program administrator. A student's failure to attend a Level 2 review meeting and to develop such a plan may result in the administrative withdrawal of the student's registration.

### Academic Probation or Dismissal Due to Practicum Education Grades

Practicum grades (P, MP, F) are not factored into the cumulative GPA, however a grade of MP will result in academic probation, a grade of Fail (F) will result in dismissal; two marginal passes will result in dismissal. Please reach out to your Academic Advisor or appropriate Practicum Education Faculty for full Practicum education grading policy.

### Removal from Academic Probation

To be removed from academic probation, a student must achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher by the following term, or otherwise resolve the issues that caused them to be placed on academic probation, to the satisfaction of the responsible program director or SSW Director of Student Support.

### Program Progression

- Students who have exhausted their allowed course repeat allowances and then go on to earn a grade below a "B" will be dismissed from the program.
- Students are not allowed to withdraw from the same course more than once.
- Students must complete the program within the time allotted by their particular program's policies (e.g., MSW: 5 years).
- Students who do not register for classes in consecutive terms and are not on an official leave, or have not officially withdrawn, will be administratively withdrawn by Simmons. A

new admissions application is required to be considered for return to the active student status, and admission is not guaranteed.

### GPA Required for Graduation

Students must achieve a cumulative point average of B (3.0) to be eligible for graduation.

### Dismissal (Terminating Enrollment) for Academic and Professional Reasons

Students can be dismissed from the SSW for not meeting academic and/or professional requirements.

#### **Dismissal Due to Academic Performance**

The following academic circumstances, among others, may lead to dismissal:

- Earning a cumulative GPA falling below a 3.0 for two consecutive terms
- When a student cannot return their cumulative GPA to at least a 3.0 at the conclusion of the following term
- Earning more grades below a B than allowed by the student's particular program
  - MSW–3 or more grades below B
  - DSW–2 or more grades below B
- Failure to progress as described in program progression policy
- Failure to gain a Practicum placement after three interviews in one term
- Earning two grades of MP or one grade of F in Practicum education
- In the case of conditional admission, failing to meet the conditions determined

#### **Dismissal Due to Professional Performance or Conduct Issues**

The following professional performance or conduct issues may lead to dismissal:

- Simmons University Student Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity violations
- Behavior judged to be in violation of Simmons University policies
- Behavior that is deemed unprofessional per the *NASW Code of Ethics* or the Simmons School of Social Work Standards for Professional Practice
- Any threat or attempt to harm someone else inside or outside of the Simmons community
- Commission of a criminal act that is contrary to professional practice, occurring during the course of study at Simmons or occurring prior to admission to the School of Social Work and becoming known after admission.
- Violations of academic integrity, including requirements of the Institutional Review Board

**Procedure for Dismissal**

Prior to dismissal it is typical for problematic academic and professional performance issues to be addressed in meetings with faculty, advisors and program administrators. In most cases these meetings will include a level 2 or level 3 review. This process, however, is not required, nor is it always possible.

Students being dismissed are notified of dismissal in a letter from the SSW Director of Student Support, or their designee, which will include the reasons for the dismissal.

**Appeal of Dismissal**

The student may appeal a dismissal decision, in writing, to the SSW Dean or their designee. A written appeal must be received within three (3) calendar days of the date of the dismissal letter from the Director of Student Support, and should be submitted using the dismissal appeal form (available from the Director of Student Support). This appeal does not constitute a new review process. Rather, it is a request by a student to have the Director review the original record of the dismissal on one or more of the following grounds:

- (1) one or more errors in the dismissal process;
- (2) new evidence or information material to the case that was not available at the time of the dismissal process; or
- (3) a substantive error occurred because the decision maker misinterpreted evidence used in the dismissal process.

The appeal letter should include an explanation regarding the grounds for appeal and should reference one or more of the three grounds for appeal listed in this policy. The student shall provide the Director, or their designee, all relevant documentation necessary for the appeal to be considered. The decision of the SSW Dean, or their designee, is final.

If the appeal is premised on a grading dispute, the grade appeal process will be completed before the SSW Dean will decide on the dismissal appeal. Regardless of the premise of the appeal, the student's written appeal of dismissal must be received by the SSW Dean within three (3) calendar days of the date of the dismissal letter.

**Reapplying after Dismissal**

Students who are dismissed from the program, and have been denied reinstatement, must wait at least one year from the date of program dismissal before reapplying. A new application must be submitted. Prior admission does not guarantee subsequent admission. Students readmitted after a dismissal are not eligible to appeal future dismissals.

**Students' Right to Appeal Final Grades**

Grade appeals can occur for the following two reasons: a computational error, or arbitrariness/capriciousness (described in the next section). If a student believes that they have the basis to appeal a final course grade, and the student wishes to appeal their final grade, the student must follow the grade appeal procedures and deadlines outlined below. A student cannot appeal a grade after they have graduated. Appeals can only be initiated after final course grades have been posted, and only final course grades can be appealed.

Please note that although individual assignments become part of a course grade appeal, only the final course grade is open to appeal under this process. Individual assignment grades cannot be appealed. As a result of the grade appeal process, the final grade may be raised, lowered, or stay the same. The grade appeal process will not result in the grading or re-grading of individual assignments or aspects of course work; only the final course grade is subject to change. Similarly, no new or revised course work may be requested by the student or accepted by the faculty member as part of a grade appeal process. Students are strongly encouraged to keep copies of all work submitted to the faculty member as well as graded work returned to the student by the faculty member.

An explanation of grounds for the appeal and process are described below.

### **Explanation of Grounds for Appeal and Deadlines**

#### **1. Computational error**

An appeal on the basis of “computational error” means the student has a good faith belief that the faculty member made a mistake in the mathematical computation of the course grade.

#### **2. Arbitrariness or capriciousness**

An appeal on the basis of “arbitrariness or capriciousness” means the student believes:

- That the grade was based on something other than the student’s performance in the course (i.e. non-academic criteria);
- The grade reflects standards of evaluation different from those applied to other students in the course; and/or
- The grade departs from the standards of evaluation set forth in the syllabi, rubric, or other written document in a substantial, unreasonable, and unannounced way.

### **Grade Appeal Procedures and Deadlines**

#### **1. First Step: Informal Resolution with Course Faculty Member**

A student who disputes the accuracy of their grade shall first attempt to resolve the matter informally with the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member shall communicate with the student, and will consider their reasons for believing the final grade to be unfair.

If the faculty member does not believe there is merit for a grade change, they notify the student. If the student still believes the grade is erroneous, then the student may proceed to the second step below. If the faculty member believes there is reason to change the grade, they should request and submit a Grade Change Form from/to the Director of Student Support. If approved, the Director of Student Support will notify the registrar’s office.

**Deadline:** The student must either speak to the respective faculty member or send the faculty member an email regarding the student’s belief the final grade is inaccurate, not before grades are posted, and no later than seven calendar days after the posting of the grade.

#### **2. Second Step: Formal Appeal to the Program Director or their Designee**

If, after receiving the faculty member's determination (as described above), the student continues to dispute the accuracy of the final grade and wishes to continue the grade appeal process, the student may submit the formal Grade Appeal petition, using the grade appeal form which can be requested through the student's Academic Advisor. As part of the Grade Appeal petition, the student must provide a written statement that includes the student's reasons for appealing the grade, all supporting course materials, and any other supporting materials. The Program Director, or their designee, shall review the Grade Appeal petition and attendant materials.

As part of their review, the Program Director or designee may meet with the student, faculty member, and/or other relevant faculty, staff, or administrators, and may request the submission of additional supporting materials. If the program director, or designee's, review determines that there is no merit to the grade appeal, they will inform the student that the final grade stands. If they agree that the grade should be changed, they complete a "Change of Grade" form, including a clear explanation of the reason for the change that is consistent with the terms of this grade appeal policy, and submit the "Change of Grade" form to the Director of Student Support who will approve and submit to the Registrar.

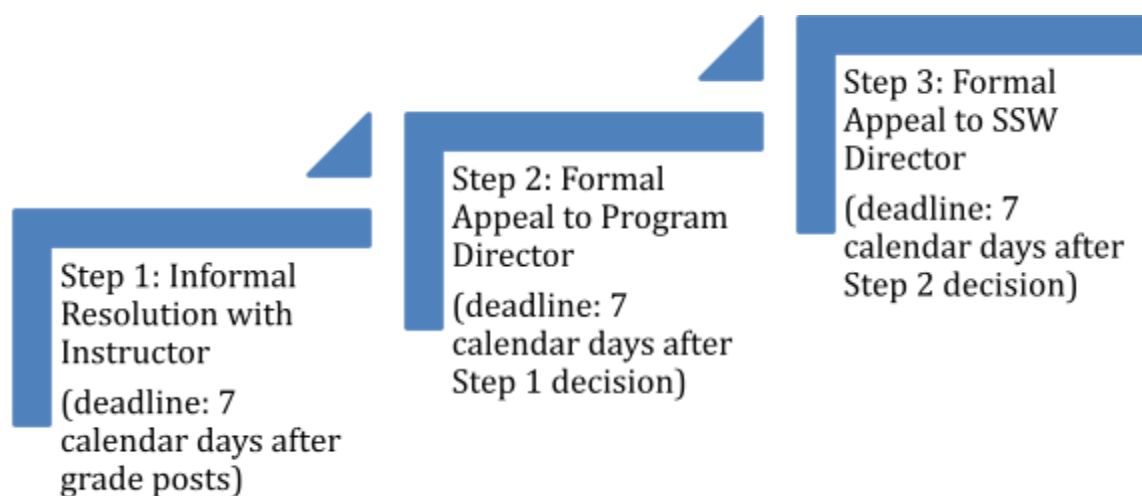
**Deadlines:** The student must submit an appeal to the Program Director, or their designee, within seven calendar days after the decision in the "First Step" above is issued to the student.

### 3. Third Step: Formal Appeal to the SSW Dean or their designee.

If, after receiving and completing steps 1 and 2 above, the student continues to dispute the accuracy of the final grade and wishes to continue the grade appeal process, the student may submit the formal Grade Appeal petition to the , who may hear the appeal directly or delegate it to a designee. As part of the Grade Appeal petition, the student must provide a written statement that includes the student's reasons for appealing the grade, all supporting course materials, and any other supporting materials. The Director, or designee, shall review the petition and attendant materials, and follow the same process described in Step 2. The decision of the SSW Dean, or designee, is final, and no higher appeals will be heard.

**Deadlines:** The student must submit an appeal to the SSW Dean, or designee, within seven calendar days after the decision in the "Second Step" above issued to the student.



*Figure 1: Grade Appeal Process*

## SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FINANCIAL AID

To be eligible to continue to receive Federal Student Aid (FSA), students must make satisfactory academic progress by achieving and completing their program of study as measured using qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (completed credits) standards. The Fall SAP policy can be found on the Simmons student financial services website and should be read to understand how and when this is evaluated.

## EXTENSIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to complete coursework assignments on time. Individual instructors typically articulate their policies regarding extensions on the course syllabus and their grading policy for work/assignments passed in after the deadline. These vary from instructor to instructor. In most cases, an extension (when allowed) must be requested by a student prior to the due date of the assignment and a revised date for submission of work must be approved by the instructor, before work can be submitted late. A student who submits work late, even with the instructor's permission, may nonetheless receive a lesser grade from the instructor to reflect the missed deadline.

Students who are approved for extensions through the Office of Accessibility Services should consult their accommodation letters for extension guidelines.

## REGISTRATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Prerequisites and Plans of Study

When registering for classes each term, students must follow the plan of study provided to them by their program. Students must successfully complete all required foundational courses before registering for advanced courses, including electives, per the requirements of their particular program. Information about course sequencing, plans of study and pre-requisites is available through Student Success and academic advising. Students are strongly encouraged to consult these resources before registering.

Exceptions to the above are rarely allowed and only under highly exceptional circumstances. A request to enroll in an elective, or any course out of sequence, before completion of required generalist course work must be discussed with the Academic Advisor and receive final approval from the Director of Student Support. An exception may be granted only after the student has completed at least one term of Generalist Practicum Education.

Students must register for at least 6 credits to be considered part-time or 9 credits to be considered full-time. For information on Financial Aid implications and the amount of course credits taken per term, [please review the Financial Aid website](#).

### Waitlist Policy

Students must use the automatic waitlist system when they wish to be placed in line for a closed/full class. Professors cannot override the system and add students to their classes. The student should **not** contact the professor to be put into the class.

Waitlisted students should monitor their Simmons email for further information and for notification that they may enroll in an open seat. Students must follow instructions from the Registrar, and meet any requirements/deadlines related to the process, or they will be automatically removed from the waitlist and the seat will be offered to the next student on the waitlist.

### Drop/Add

Prior to the start of classes and until the end of the second week of the term, students may add or drop by emailing the Office of the Registrar. Requests to add courses will be processed based on enrollment availability. Students are responsible for informing the instructor and for making up any missed course work in an added class. For courses dropped after week two, students must complete and submit a Course Withdrawal Form. Students may not add a class after week two. Courses dropped after the second week of the term will appear on the student's transcript with a grade of "W." Note that these requirements differ from Simmons University policies for non-SSW graduate students.

Students who change their schedule by dropping or adding a course should consult with their Academic Advisor to ensure that they will continue to meet degree and graduation requirements. Students should also consult with the Student Financial Services to be fully apprised of the impact of course changes on their financial aid.

### Withdrawal from a Course

Student transcripts will show a "W" grade for "withdrawn" for any courses withdrawn from after the 2nd week and up to the end of the 8th week. No withdrawals are permitted after week 8; the instructor will record the grade the student has earned. Students are not allowed to withdraw from the same course more than once.

Students must meet with their Academic Advisor and must submit the relevant form before withdrawing from a course.

## Incomplete Policy

Completion of coursework, including Practicum education, by the last day of the semester is required. An instructor may use their discretion to grant an Incomplete when the majority of the course requirements and assignments have successfully been completed and when the student is unable to complete assignments due to extenuating circumstances.

The instructor must send the student's request via the Incomplete Form to the Academic Advisor in advance of the last class session of the semester/term. The form will then be reviewed by the Director of Student Support, who may consult with the program director or a designee. The Incomplete request must include the nature of the work to be completed, the date by when assignments will be submitted to the instructor, and the date by when the instructor will submit the updated grade to the registrar. Approval of an Incomplete request is not guaranteed.

If the Incomplete is approved, the student must complete the requirement(s) by the extension date. At that time, the mark of Incomplete on the student's transcript will be changed to a letter grade. If the requirement(s) are not completed, the student will be assigned a grade based on the work completed to date. Grades not submitted by the Instructor to the Office of the Registrar by the approved deadline will automatically be converted to a grade of "F."

All outstanding work must be completed and the Incomplete changed to a final letter grade before the start of the next term. A student with an unresolved Incomplete may not progress to the next term.

In rare cases, an appeal to extend an Incomplete deadline can be submitted. For courses, students submit this appeal to the Director of Student Support who may establish an alternative deadline to be listed on the form. This appeal must be submitted 48 hours prior to the expiration of the original Incomplete submission date. Approval of this appeal is not guaranteed.

## LEAVES OF ABSENCE AND WITHDRAWAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY

### Voluntary Leave of Absence

Students wishing to leave the University for a temporary period, with the intention of returning to complete their degree, may apply to take a leave of absence (LOA). Students considering an LOA should first meet with their Academic Advisor to discuss their reason for a Leave, create an updated plan of study, and receive the link to the LOA request form. Following the meeting the student can submit a LOA form. Students who take a leave of absence during the semester are assigned grades based on the Course Withdrawal policy.

A student seeking to take a leave of absence should also consult with Student Financial Services. International students should consult the Center for Global Education for the implications of withdrawal on their visa status.

If the student chooses to take a voluntary leave of absence in order to receive intensive clinical health care treatment, the Dean of Student Experience will assist with processing this request. In some instances, the student may be asked to complete the Process for Returning from an Involuntary Leave of Absence as a requirement of returning to the University. (See below.)

Leaves will not be ordinarily granted for periods longer than one academic year. The request for the extension of a leave (for a maximum of one year) is approved only in unusual circumstances. Extension requests must be made before the expiration of the original leave of absence. Leaves of absence for graduate students may not exceed a cumulative total of two years. Students who do not return at the end of an authorized Leave of Absence will be withdrawn from their academic program and must submit a subsequent readmission to the program.

### Involuntary Leave of Absence

Simmons University is committed to the safety and well-being of its community members and to the integrity of the living and learning environment. Our goals, therefore, are to maintain the health and safety of each individual in our community and to enable all enrolled students to participate fully in the life of the University.

In instances in which a student's mental, emotional, or medical health pose a threat to themselves and/or others, becomes a barrier to appropriate or prescribed levels of self-care, or causes significant disruption to the activities of the University community, such students may be required to take an involuntary leave of absence from the University.

In instances when a student's mental, physical or emotional health may pose a direct, imminent, threat to the safety and well-being of the Simmons community, or the student has been admitted to a health care setting to undergo intensive medical or psychological treatment (hospitalization, intensive outpatient or inpatient program), the Dean of Students or designee, as an interim measure, can place the student on an involuntary leave of absence from the University. When applicable the student will be informed in writing of the actions that lead to her/him being placed on leave and direct the student to the process for return. The student's emergency contact person may be notified that the student is in a potentially dangerous situation.

Any student placed on an involuntary leave of absence will not be allowed to be on campus. This includes living in residence, attending classes, engaging in Simmons online platforms, and participating in Simmons-sponsored events.

In circumstances when the student has not met direct threat/inpatient criteria, the Dean for Student Experience or designee may, based off of observable/recorded behavior, still require a student to undergo an individualized psychological and/or medical assessment in order to make an informed decision regarding the student's ability to meet the academic, social and emotional requirements of being a Simmons student. This evaluation can be conducted by a member of the University's clinical staff, or by a student's external health care provider who is treating the student. The student will be required to sign a release that gives permission to the University's designated clinical personnel to speak with her/his external evaluating health care provider and to allow for the release of any relevant medical reports as part of the assessment. If the student chooses not to engage in the process listed above, then she/he will be required to take an involuntary leave of absence and if applicable, immediate removal from the residence halls.

If following the evaluation a leave is deemed unnecessary, the Dean of Student Experience or designee may impose other conditions and/or requirements which the student would be required to comply with as a condition of continued enrollment at the University.

In any instance in which a leave is required, the Dean of Student Experience or designee will provide written notice to the student, including the specific requirements that must be met as a

condition of eligibility for re-enrollment, the timeline for initiating and completing the return process, as well as the procedure for appealing the decision.

The duration of the leave is typically no fewer than six full months, although the specific length of the leave will be based on the student's individualized assessment and determined by the Dean or designee on a case-by-case basis. When a student takes leave before the end of a semester, whether voluntary or involuntary, Simmons' usual tuition and residence hall refund schedule apply.

### Process for Returning to Simmons after an Involuntary Leave

Simmons University students who have been placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence will be required to undergo an individualized assessment to be cleared to return to Simmons, prior to their return to the University. They are also required to sign an authorization form that enables the hospital, treatment facility, and/or all pertinent external health care providers to release information necessary for the review process. The review process will involve an interview with the appropriately licensed Simmons clinical staff member as well as the Dean for Student Experience or designee. Following the interview with an individual of the clinical staff, a recommendation that is based off the student's report, their treatment history, information gathered from the external treatment facility, and/or a student's personal health care provider, will be shared with the Dean for Student Affairs or designee regarding the student's readiness to return. Then, on a case by case basis, the Dean for Student Experience or designee will make a determination if the student is permitted to return to the Simmons community. If it is determined that the student can return, the student will meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee to establish a plan to return to the University and identify community resources. As a condition of continued enrollment and, if applicable, as a condition of re-admittance to the residence halls, the following criteria must be met:

1. The consulting health care provider must find that the student has maintained a significant level of physical, mental, or emotional stability along with the skill set necessary to successfully engage in the student's academic program as well as the activities associated in being a Simmons student.
2. The student and the consulting Simmons clinical staff member in conjunction with all relevant external health care providers must establish and agree upon a plan for continued managed care after returning to the University.
3. The student must commit to following the recommended and established treatment plan.

If, after reviewing all pertinent information, the Dean for Student Experience or designee denies a student's request to return from an involuntary leave of absence, or the student disagrees with the conditions established as part of the return process, the student can appeal the decision in writing to the University's Student Affairs leadership, or their designee.

### Withdrawal from the University

Students who wish to withdraw from the university must complete a Program Withdrawal Form, available from their Academic Advisor. Students should consult with their Academic Advisors and with Student Financial Services for information on the implications of withdrawal for tuition and student loans. A request for withdrawal is effective on the day it is received in the Registrar's office.

Students who withdraw during the semester are assigned grades based on the Course Withdrawal policy.

### SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS FOR FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID

To be eligible to continue to receive Federal Student Aid (FSA), students must make satisfactory academic progress toward achieving and completing their program of study as measured using qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (completed credits) standards. For more information on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), please see the complete information and policies on the [Student Financial Services Website](#).

### NO COURSE CREDIT FOR LIFE OR WORK EXPERIENCE

The SSW does not grant course credit for life experience or previous work experience.

### GRADUATION AND COMMENCEMENT PARTICIPATION

Students who have completed all degree requirements must submit a Petition to Graduate form to the Registrar's Office by the published deadline for their graduate date. Failure to complete the required paperwork, or selecting the incorrect graduation date, could affect participation in graduation ceremonies, diploma availability, or the student's conferral (graduation) date.

Simmons University holds its in-person Commencement ceremony in May of each year. **Only** graduate students who complete **all** requirements of their programs by May of a given calendar year will be invited to participate in that same month's (May) in-person Commencement ceremony. Graduate students who do not complete all requirements by May, but whose degrees are conferred in July and August directly following May Commencement, will be invited to participate in the September online commencement ceremony and the in-person May Commencement ceremony of that *following* year. The Provost's Office determines eligibility for participation in commencement, and may change this policy without warning or notice. If you are not sure you will complete all program requirements before your intended graduation date, contact the Registrar or Provost's Office for more information on commencement requirements *before* you or your loved ones make plans (or purchase travel) to participate in commencement.

Graduate students whose degrees are conferred in October and January will be invited to participate in the following March online commencement ceremony and the May in-person Commencement ceremony. See the [Registrar's website](#) for degree conferral dates and the [commencement web page](#) for information about commencement.

### COURSE EVALUATIONS

Each course is anonymously evaluated by students by the last class meeting. The evaluations can be reviewed by the instructor only after student grades have been submitted. Evaluations are reviewed by the instructor and program directors and/or their designees.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

SSW students are encouraged to become active participants in the SSW community and in their educational experience. Students participate in the governance of the SSW through membership on



SSW committees. Students help to frame SSW policies and initiate community activities; through membership on SSW committees, students participate in the formulation and modification of academic and student affairs.

### Committees and other Opportunities for Participation

Each year students receive an email soliciting their involvement on SSW committees and boards. Student representatives convey student concerns at committee and board meetings. The purpose of student participation on committees is to provide student perspective and preference in decision making about the curriculum and program policies. Students report back to the student body at student meetings and in the community newsletter. Students are members of:

- Curriculum Committee
- Assessment Committee
- Academic Standards Committee
- Student Practicum Advisory Committee
- Alumni Board
- Faculty Meeting

### OTHER SIMMONS UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Simmons University maintains a variety of policies, which all students are expected to be familiar with. Explore the course catalog and Simmons website to learn more.

## APPENDIX 1: STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### Introduction

These standards are presented in a social work framework that values diversity of perspective and experience, understands there is diversity between and within cultures, and respects difference. Achieving professionalism in social work requires a commitment to and demonstration of the values of the social work profession.

The Simmons School of Social Work (SSW) is committed to preparing its graduates to be highly competent and ethical social work practitioners. Faculty make a commitment to provide students with a curriculum that supports their educational and professional development and that assists them in adherence to these standards. Additionally, the SSW is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to promote and evaluate professional development for students in Social Work programs (BSW, MSW). Likewise, the SSW is responsible to the community at large for graduating knowledgeable, ethical, and skilled social work professionals whose practice reflects the competencies, skills, and values of the social work profession.

This document outlines eight professional performance standards: Communication, Electronic Communication, Self-Awareness, Openness and Willingness to Learn, Physical and Cognitive Ability, Presentation of Self, Emotional Stability and Stress Management, and Professional Values and Ethics. Each professional standard is accompanied by descriptions of behavioral expectations. Students must satisfy the professional standards to enroll in, progress through, and graduate from the SSW. Specifically, students are expected to act in a manner that is consistent with the values, ethics, and conduct required for professional social work practice in the classroom, in Practicum placements, and in the broader school community. Becoming a professional is a gradual process; as a result, the SSW faculty, Practicum instructors and administrators will continually assess students in accordance with these standards, which constitute the criteria for professional performance.

In addition to the standards outlined in this document, SSW students are expected to abide by the [\*NASW Code of Ethics\*](#) (NASW, 2017), the Simmons University policy on academic integrity, and the policies outlined in the SSW Student Handbook and in the Simmons University Handbook. Procedures for addressing a violation of the Standards for Professional Practice or any of the ethics, codes, or policies identified above are outlined in the SSW Student Handbook. The ultimate goal of the SSW Standards for Professional Practice is to help you have a successful experience at the SSW and to be prepared for post-graduate practice. This document does not include the complete NASW Code of Ethics or the CSWE Educational Policies, however it highlights particular ethics and competencies to serve as a framework for professional and ethical behaviors to abide by while a student at the SSW. As an SSW student, you will be informed of the Standards for Professional Practice at the time of application to the SSW and at new student orientation. The standards are on the SSW web site and also in the SSW Student Handbook.

To participate in a degree program, you are expected to satisfy program requirements, including these professional standards, with or without accommodations. If you seek reasonable accommodations for disabilities, you must contact the Simmons Office of Accessibility Services. This office will determine your eligibility for accommodations and recommend accommodations and/or services.

## Professional Standards

### 1. *Self-Awareness*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Accurately assess your own strengths and limitations and display a willingness to examine and change behaviors that interfere with your work in Practicum placement, in the classroom, on campus, and in the larger community
2. Actively examine your own biases
3. Seek supervision and use constructive feedback to inform practice
4. Take responsibility for your own actions and consider the impact of these actions on other
5. Demonstrate a willingness to examine and assess the relationship between your own personal values/socialization and their alignment with expected professional ethics
6. Reconcile conflicts between your personal values and those of the profession, as required by the *NASW Code of Ethics*

### 2. *Communication*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Express ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly in the classroom and in Practicum placement
2. In written work, communicate clearly and at a level that reflects the academic standards of SSW programs
3. Demonstrate a willingness and ability to actively listen to others with objectivity and openness
4. Communicate responsibly and respectfully, with speech that is free of bias, discriminatory language, or stereotyping in all interactions with colleagues, faculty, Practicum instructors, staff, and clients
5. Advocate for yourself in an ethical, direct, respectful, and responsible manner using SSW and agency-specific channels for conflict management

### 3. Electronic Communication and Use of Social Media

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Demonstrate respect for the privacy of your clients; refrain from gathering information about clients from online sources without the client's consent (i.e., googling client history, accessing client social media); photographing clients; or publishing client information on social media
2. Communicate about and with colleagues and peers with respect and accuracy, avoiding cyberbullying, harassment, or making derogatory or defamatory comments, or disclosing personal information without consent
3. Follow relevant laws, Practicum education agency policy, *NASW Code of Ethics* (1.07) pertaining to social media and in use of technology in all aspects of service delivery

4. Maintain awareness of how personal communications using social media could affect professional relationships with clients, colleagues, and agencies

#### 4. *Openness and Willingness to Learn; Flexibility and Adaptability*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Demonstrate openness learning new ideas and perspectives
2. As required by the demands of professional practice, be flexible and adaptable in new situations and as circumstances change
3. Assume the stance of a learner with humility; avoid solely relying on current or past professional experiences to inform your judgment or decision-making in the Practicum and in the classroom
4. Demonstrate a willingness to effectively communicate your learning needs and request clarification to understand requirements

#### 5. *Physical and Cognitive Ability, Critical Thinking*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Attend and participate in classes and Practicum placement as scheduled, demonstrating punctuality, dependability, accountability, and the ability to prioritize responsibilities
2. Navigate transportation needed to attend Practicum and classroom requirements
3. Use the technology required to engage in scholarship and effective practice including, but not limited to, use of computers, telephones, and agency electronic records and databases
4. Demonstrate the ability to acquire knowledge and reflect on experiences to inform practice
5. Demonstrate the capacity to think critically and to apply effective problem-solving skills that are well reasoned, examine multiple perspectives and worldviews, integrate evidence and knowledge, and lead to well-supported decisions and conclusions

#### 6. *Emotional and Mental Stability, and Stress Management*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. In accordance with the *NASW Code of Ethics* (4.05), demonstrate the ability to honor the best interests of people for whom you have professional responsibility by keeping personal life circumstances or problems from interfering with judgment or performance
2. Recognize current life stressors that may interfere with scholastic or professional performance; seek and effectively use help for medical or emotional problems such as those problems stemming from psychosocial distress, substance misuse, and mental health difficulties
3. Demonstrate professional boundaries, including ethical use of self-disclosure
4. Maintain respectful relationships with all colleagues, faculty, Practicum instructors, staff, and clients consistent with *NASW Code of Ethics* (2.01)

#### 7. *Professional Values and Ethics*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Exhibit judgment and conduct that is consistent with the values and ethics of the profession as stated in the NASW Code of Ethics, as well as with established laws, policies and professional standards
2. In accordance with NASW Code of Ethics section on: Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception (4.04), you should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception
3. Demonstrate professional and academic integrity, including exhibiting truthfulness in fulfilling program requirements. Students should remain aware of, and abide by, the Simmons Honor Code
4. Follow Federal and State laws and agency policies regarding confidentiality and mandatory reporting

#### 8. *Respect for Diversity and Social Justice*

Expectations to meet the standard:

1. Exhibit a willingness to relate and work nonjudgmentally across difference with others
2. Demonstrate knowledge of, and sensitivity to: diversity, oppression, and privilege, including a willingness to examine personal beliefs, values, and assumptions that perpetuate oppression

Meeting the academic degree requirements is not sufficient to successfully complete the program. If you meet the academic requirements, but fail to adhere to the *NASW Code of Ethics* and/or the Standards for Professional Practice, you are at risk for dismissal or other disciplinary action.

Acknowledgements to UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work Technical Standards Document

Approved by SSW Faculty 5/10/2018

## APPENDIX 2: ONLINE CLASS PROTOCOLS & ETIQUETTE

### Live Session Protocol

Live sessions occur each week in all online courses. Your attendance is required. The live session class time is intended to deepen your understanding of the asynchronous materials and any clinical work you have experienced in a given week. It also offers a time to discuss, demonstrate and analyze skills that will be applied in nursing practice.

Below is a list of required expectations for live-session classes:

- Be on Time
  - Log in to the session early enough to have your audio and camera setup. Be ready to work when the class time begins.
- Be Professional
  - Our online classrooms are an extension of the Practicum and therefore you are expected to treat live class time as you would a professional setting.
- Respect the Classroom
  - **Setting:** Set your live session classroom space in a quiet private area where you know family, pets and other distractions will not interrupt your learning (or the learning of your classmates).
  - **Lighting:** Be sure your camera has the appropriate lighting on your face. Be careful you do not have too much backlight, such as a bright window behind you, making it difficult for your face to be seen.
- Be Prepared
  - Each week you are expected to prepare for the live session prior to class time; specific details on work to be completed before the live session can be found in the course work area for each week. Section Instructors will review this prior to the live session and use it to inform discussion and deepen learning.
- Be Engaged
  - You are expected to be ready to work during your live session. Live session is not a passive experience—it requires your full presence and commitment to learning. Each week you must be prepared to listen to your classmates, offer feedback and engage in a lively discussion.

### Online Etiquette

All students are expected to demonstrate the same professional behavior and mutual respect for teachers and colleagues in the online environment as they would demonstrate face-to-face. The expected standards of behavior for interacting with others online are generally referred to as “netiquette.” Here are general guidelines, each of which are related to required professional standards of behavior:



- Under no circumstances are you allowed to join the class session if you are operating a vehicle. This includes joining by phone only.
- Copying, sharing or posting recordings of live class sessions is not allowed and will result in disciplinary action. Do not use or misuse substances during class time. This includes alcohol and tobacco.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your peers, clients, and agencies. Please refrain from disclosing overly sensitive private information about yourself that might not be appropriate in a teaching-and-learning environment.
- Embody the behaviors and skills of an advanced-degree social work student. This includes being honest and respectful in all communication with students and faculty. If you are feeling upset, be sure to review the content and tone of your messages prior to sending (e-mail or chat). Remember that the use of bold typeface, emojis, and capital letters may be received as you intend.
- Be mindful of how you present in the live session. This includes being in a private space with minimal distractions, ensuring that your camera and room lighting allows others to see your full face, muting yourself unless you are speaking, limiting the frequency with which you pause your video, and making sure you are muted and your video is paused when you step away from the camera.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

It is the student's responsibility to assure proper technology (i.e. computer, webcam, etc.) and reliable access to the internet/technology prior to synchronous sessions, and exams in particular in order to complete course work (i.e. exams, synchronous/asynchronous sessions, assignments, etc.). If a student anticipates a technology issue prior to any of these situations, they should notify both their Section Instructor and Student Support proactively.

### Recording of Live Sessions

Simmons and/or Simmons's technology partner may record and store any session conducted through the Learning Management System in accordance with the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

### APPENDIX 3: THE SIMMONS COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The Simmons Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was developed with input from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Council, supported by the University leadership, and unanimously affirmed by our Board of Trustees.

Simmons is committed to inclusive excellence in all aspects of an individual's community experience. Our values, vision and mission mandate that we strive to create an environment that is free from bias, prejudice, discrimination and hurtful/hateful acts that can prevent each member from thriving in the Simmons community.

#### Our Diversity & Inclusion Mission

We seek to extend to the entire Simmons University community opportunities for learning, growth, success, and meaningful participation and to build a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive culture for our community. To that end, we will engage in ongoing work to combat racism, bias, and all forms of individual and institutional oppression.

We believe diversity is necessary in all aspects of an educational and residential environment to ensure inclusive excellence. As an academic community, rich with varied life experiences, perspectives, and values, we are uniquely positioned to facilitate the ongoing engagement and intellectual dialogue that honors the inherent and unique characteristics of each member of our community. This includes, but is not limited to, interrogating socially constructed concepts and addressing issues of power, phobia, isms, or any other detractors to building and sustaining an equitable community.

Simmons will affirm diversity and inclusion by moving beyond tolerance and civility to a respect and appreciation that recognizes the social positioning of underrepresented and marginalized segments of the population.

Simmons values academic excellence, intellectual freedom, critical thinking, leadership, innovation, respect for the dignity of all individuals, and continuous improvement. We adhere to policies and practices that promote and support diversity and inclusion.

We prepare students to be well informed, open-minded, and sensitive to the values and diversity of others. We strive to foster an atmosphere where students can become actively engaged leaders in a changing, diverse society. We promote this goal through proactive and continual exchange of ideas among students, faculty and the general University community.

To ensure that these goals are attained, Simmons University commits to the following principles.

We recognize, respect and honor the inherent individuality of all. We strive to ensure that all decisions concerning the educational progress of students are based on considerations appropriate to an academic institution and not on factors such as race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, or veteran status.

All students are given equal access to the University's programs and resources. Admission to the University's undergraduate baccalaureate program considers people who self-identify as women. The University is committed to admitting qualified students of any race, color, gender, gender

identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, or veteran status to all programs and activities made generally available to students at the University, including scholarship and loan programs, athletic programs, and other University-administered student services, and social, educational and recreational programs.

We subscribe to the policies set forth in Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which mandates equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities in educational programs and activities.

We are committed to creating an atmosphere where diversity is supported with understanding, respect, and encouragement. The University does not tolerate unlawful or other harassment of employees or students. Any discrimination or harassment by any member of the faculty, staff, or student body against any other member of the community will be handled according to the process articulated in the Bias Response Protocol, Title IX Policy, Faculty Policy Manual, Employee Handbook, and other relevant Simmons policies.

### Notice of Non-Discrimination

Chartered in 1899 and opened in 1902, Simmons is first and foremost an academic community whose goals include preparing students and other members of the Simmons community to be well informed, open-minded, and respectful of the values and diversity of others.

Simmons is, therefore, committed to the following principles:

We support equal educational and employment opportunities for all persons, based on each individual's qualifications and fitness, and we seek to administer our university policies without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or parental status, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, ancestry, disability, veterans' status or genetic predisposition.

We strive to administer our educational programs and activities, as well as the employment opportunities we provide, in accordance with all relevant state and federal requirements and implementing regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Titles I and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, the Massachusetts Equal Rights Law (M.G.L. 93, Section 102 et seq.), and Equal Pay Act, and Chapter 151B of the General Laws of Massachusetts, as amended.

We are committed to making our programs and activities accessible to individuals with disabilities, including our online/digital services and offerings. We recognize that in the virtual/online learning environment, technology-dependent teaching and learning processes may create unique and unanticipated access barriers. We encourage individuals to contact us if an obstacle to access is found to exist. (See below for how to do so.)

We seek to build and maintain a Simmons where the diversity of our community members is met with understanding, respect, and encouragement, and where unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation by any member of the administration, faculty, staff, or student body against any other individual will be investigated, evaluated and redressed. The University does not tolerate unlawful

discrimination or harassment of its employees or students or retaliation against those who report incidents of unlawful behavior or those who cooperate in the investigation of such complaints.

Simmons University prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Please see the University's [Notice of Non-Discrimination](#) for information on how to report concerns or questions relating to sex discrimination.