

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
MSW STUDENT COMMITMENT CONTRACT**

It is expected that once a student is accepted into the MSW program, academic requirements and standards will be maintained. As a professional program, social work expects students to progress toward a professional level of performance. The MSW degree is reserved for students who have demonstrated that level of competence. In addition to mastering a body of knowledge, a social worker must possess professional attitudes, skills, values, and ethics. Academic performance in the program includes classroom and field performance, attendance, ethical behavior, communication skills, and psychological well-being sufficient to maintain positive and constructive relationships with peers, faculty, field supervisors and staff, and clients. A continual evaluation of the student includes not only periodic objective evaluations, such as grades and performance in field placements, but also professional faculty appraisal of the student's progress and potential. Continuation in the program is contingent upon positive ongoing faculty evaluation of the student's grades, professional attributes, and performance in real or simulated professional situations. A student may be placed on a performance improvement plan, suspended, or terminated from the program for deficiencies in grades or violation of the Professional Expectations as indicated below. The list below contains professional expectations with areas of concern which may indicate that a student is unable or unwilling to follow the NASW Code of Ethics and/or standards set forth by the social work program.

**Professional Expectations of Student Behavior**

1. **Accountability:** Attend class and field as scheduled.
  - a. Set and follow weekly schedule for field experience.
  - b. Arrive on time, return from any break in a timely manner, and stay for entire duration of class or field day.
  - c. Actively participates in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to peers.
  - d. Complete work in a timely fashion and according to the directions provided by the instructor and field supervisor.
  - e. Come to class prepared, with readings and other assignments completed.
  - f. Make arrangements for special needs (contact Office of Disability Services)
  - g. Fulfill all commitments to your field agency.
  - h. Conduct oneself according to the NASW Code of Ethics.

*Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:* Continually unprepared, excessively late, multiple absences, not showing up during scheduled time, or leaving early without prior arrangements, turning assignments in late, sleeping during class or at field site, and not following instructions.

2. **Respect and Integrity:** Treat all your peers, your instructors, your clients, and all those with whom you come in contact, with dignity and respect at all times. Practice honesty with yourself, your peers, and your instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.
  - a. Listen while others are speaking and show respect for their opinions.
  - b. Demonstrate the ability to work cooperatively with others, using positive and nonjudgmental language.

- c. Be open to accept and benefit from constructive feedback and acknowledge areas where improvement is needed.
- d. Give feedback to peers in a constructive manner.
- e. Approach conflict with peers, instructors, or field site in a cooperative and professional manner.
- f. Follow classroom and field agency policies, rules, and standards about the use of technology in class and in field settings.
- g. Dress as professionally as other professionals in a given agency. It will project a professional image and promote professional treatment by others. If unsure how to dress in a particular setting or for a particular event, ask your Field Instructor, Field Faculty Liaison, or Field Director and err on the side of modesty.
- h. Abide by university standards regarding plagiarism and learn the rules of APA citation, citing the work of others appropriately and taking credit only for your own work.

***Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:*** Appears unwilling/unable to accept feedback, uses derogatory language, demeaning remarks or gestures, disruptive in class or in field, monopolizes discussions, engages in academic misconduct/plagiarism, consistently complains about workload, substance misuse causing interference with learning process, and disrupts or is distracted in class or during field activities by use of phone/watch/devices.

3. **Confidentiality:** Treat any personal information that you hear about a peer, instructor, or client as strictly confidential.
  - a. Follow the NASW Code of Ethics and field agency policies regarding confidentiality.
  - b. Maintain privacy and confidentiality of any potentially sensitive information shared in class, dyads, or smaller groups.
  - c. Ensure any service, field activity, meeting, or class occurring through videoconferencing or other technological devices maintains privacy and confidentiality of participants.
  - d. Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in the classroom. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral for counseling.)
  - e. Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information in the classroom or in field seminars.

***Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:*** Inappropriate disclosure of client information, violation of Code of Ethics and/or agency policies, excessively overshares personal information, privacy and confidentiality not maintained during technology-based activities (i.e. non-authorized individuals in the background or overhearing conversations).

4. **Competence:** Apply yourself to all your academic pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by your instructors and field instructors. Constantly strive to improve your abilities.

- a. Come to class and field organized, prepared, and on time.
- b. In a timely fashion, seek out appropriate support when having difficulties in class and/or field to ensure success (not waiting until the last minute).
- c. Take responsibility for the quality of your work, such as tests, assignments, and field activities.
- d. Demonstrate knowledge of and appropriate and professional use of technology.
- e. Deal appropriately with and control personal emotions that may be affected by classroom discussions, readings, and field practicum activities.
- f. Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients. Address these issues appropriately (i.e. informing supervisor of concerns, engaging in therapy).
- g. Use self-disclosure appropriately.
- h. Demonstrate ability to handle uncomfortable discussions and situations.
- i. Demonstrate appropriate critical thinking, decision-making, and problem solving skills.
- j. Demonstrate the ability to form positive, constructive relationships (i.e. with peers, instructors, supervisors, and clients).

***Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:*** Appears unable/unwilling to control emotional reactions, substance misuse or emotional concerns that interfere with rapport building or the learning process, demonstrates poor judgement, ineffective critical thinking, decision-making and/or problem-solving skills, excessive use of self-disclosure, overreaction and/or resentment of feedback, unprofessional use of technology, and difficulty or failure to form effective client/social worker relationships.

5. **Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice:** Embrace diversity and strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds with which you are unfamiliar. Strive to deepen your commitment to social justice for all populations at risk.
- a. Demonstrate a willingness to understand diversity in people regarding race, color, gender, age, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, political orientation, sexual orientation and identity, religion, and populations at risk and/or historically excluded populations.
  - b. Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.
  - c. Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, or stereotyping.
  - d. Demonstrate an awareness of personal biases, power, privilege, values, and the impact of one's own behavior toward others.
  - e. Demonstrate an awareness of diversity/cultural preferences on the uses of and access to technology for communications purposes or to receive services (not all clients are comfortable with or have access to technology).
  - f. Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.
  - g. Demonstrate an understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups.
  - h. Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

- i. Apply an enhanced understanding of social justice issues to create change in the community where you live and work.

***Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:*** Judgmental attitudes and unwillingness to address bias, use of derogatory language and demeaning remarks, engages in discriminatory behavior or harassing words toward other on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, etc., makes verbal threats directed at clients, faculty, staff, or students, and fails to demonstrate ability to communicate empathy, positive regard, and respect for clients, peers, faculty, and supervisors.

6. **Communication:** Strive to improve both verbal and written communication skills, as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records.
  - a. Demonstrate assertive communication with peers, instructors, and clients.
  - b. Practice and engage in positive, constructive, respectful, and professional communication skills with peers, faculty, field supervisors, and clients (body language, empathy, listening).
  - c. Avoid communicating on your cell phone, iPad, and other electronic devices during class, field education settings, or during planning and professional meetings, etc.
  - d. Demonstrate professionalism in written assignments, communication, and documentation program (i.e. grammar, spelling, punctuation, clear structure, organization, logical sequence, appropriate citations, etc.).
  - e. Engage in professional and appropriate use of technology when communicating with peers, faculty, supervisors, and clients through videoconferencing and written electronic methods.
  - f. Demonstrate ability to clearly articulate ideas, thoughts, and concepts through both written, verbal, and technology-based communications.

***Areas of Concern for classroom and field conduct and behavior:*** Excessive errors in spelling, punctuation, structure, etc., and not making an effort to improve, written work is frequently vague and there is difficulty expressing ideas clearly and concisely, ideas, thoughts, concepts are not clearly articulated, communication/language skills are inadequate to effectively interact with clients and in class, lacks professionalism in written and/or verbal communications, technology devices are misused or are used at inappropriate times, causing distractions or violations to confidentiality, agency policies, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

## Consequences

The Social Work Program may terminate a student's participation in the program on the basis of professional non-suitability if the Program's faculty determines that a student's behavior has constituted a significant violation or pattern of violations of the NASW Code of Ethics or the Marshall University Department of Social Work Program's Student Handbook and/or Field Manual. These violations may include but are not limited to:

1. Failure to meet or maintain academic grade point requirements as established by Marshall University and the Department of Social Work.
2. Academic cheating, lying, or plagiarism or other behavior judged to be in violation of the NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Failure to meet standards of professional conduct, personal integrity or emotional stability requisite for professional practice.
4. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward colleagues, faculty, staff, field supervisors and/or field staff (in the Department of Social Work or in the field placement site).
5. Consistent failure to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills necessary for forming professional relationships (i.e., inability to demonstrate nonjudgmental attitude or unable to allow for client self-determination).
6. Documented evidence of criminal activity occurring during the course of study.

I have read and understand this statement of Professional Expectations of Student Behavior and Consequences. By signing this contract, I am acknowledging that I agree to comply with the performance standards and am aware that violations could result in a performance review hearing with department faculty, removal from my field placement site and/or a possible termination from the program.

STUDENT NAME (PRINT): \_\_\_\_\_ MUID#: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_