Accreditation Standard 5. Student Professional Development

5.0 The program has admissions criteria and procedures that reflect the program’s goals and objectives.

As discussed in the University General Catalog, p. 77 and the Social Work Student Manual, (Volume III, p # ) admission to the Social Work Program occurs in the second semester of the sophomore year. Prior to pre-registration for the next regular semester, sophomore pre-social work majors complete an application for Admission to the Social Work Program. They must meet the following criteria for admission:

1. Completion of all courses in the pre-professional curriculum.

2. A cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above.

3. A minimum grade of C or above in Social Work 2090, 2100 and English 1010 and 1020.

4. Adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics.

5. Submission and approval of an Application for Admission to the Social Work Professional Program prior to the pre-registration period for the next regular fall or spring semester.

Applications are made available in the office of the Department of Social Work and on the departmental web page. Upon submission of the application by the student, the Director of Social Work Admissions completes an advising audit on the student and attaches it to the application. Applications are then processed. Students are admitted to the professional program, admitted on probation to the professional program, or they are denied admission. All those students who are denied admission are automatically sent to their advisor or department head to discuss an appeal. All students receive a letter indicating their admission status and any deficiencies in admission criteria are noted if they are admitted on probation or denied admission.
AS 5.2 The program has a written policy indicating that it does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience.

Under no circumstances are academic credits awarded in social work courses for life or work experiences. This is specified in the Social Work Student Manual. (Volume III, p.)

AS 5.3 In those foundation curriculum areas where students demonstrate required knowledge and skills, the program describes how it ensures that students do not repeat that content.

AS 5.3.1 The program has written policies and procedures concerning the transfer of credits.

Transfer credit is described on page 30 of the NSU General Catalog. Credit may be transferred only from officially accredited two-year and four-year institutions. Transfer Credit Practices of Designated Educational Institutions, published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), is used as a basis for determining the accreditation status of other institutions. With two-year institutions, transfer of credit is limited to a total of 65 transfer credits. The only exception to this rule is in the case where NSU and the Department of Social Work have established an articulation agreement specific to the CSWE accredited BSW program. In these cases, NSU may accept more than 65 hours of transfer credit for freshman and sophomore level classes. A determination is made of the appropriate course designation for transfer credits after an examination of the transferring institution's catalog. The Board of Supervisors for Colleges and Universities of the state of Louisiana has established “crosswalks” that specify which courses may be transferred. Social work classes are not included in this crosswalk.

The department head determines how transferred credits may be applied to BSW
degree requirements. Courses that do not correspond to courses offered at NSU will transfer as elective credits. The department head will determine whether the content and objectives of courses taken at other universities from CSWE accredited programs are substantially equivalent to the academic content offered in the NSU BSW curriculum. To do this, faculty responsible for the course to be evaluated will evaluate the other university's course syllabi including course objectives, content outline, learning activities, theoretical frames of reference, and bibliographies of courses considered for transfer. If the faculty member determines that course credit should be awarded for a social work class at NSU, the department head will then inform the Registrar's office who can then award the transfer credit. The Department of Social Work routinely does not transfer in credits from a non CSWE accredited program. In the event that a student presents strong documentation regarding the similarities in course content, course objectives, content outline, learning activities, theoretical frames of reference, and bibliographies, the department head will consider transfer. The same procedure utilized for transfer from accredited programs applies. Additionally, field practicum courses may not be transferred from an unaccredited program.

Credit by Examination is discussed in the General Catalog on page 31. Students are not permitted to take a proficiency test nor a challenge exam in any required social work class.

**AS 5.4 The program has academic and professional advising policies and procedures that are consistent with the program’s goals and objectives. Professional advising is provided by social work program faculty, staff, or both.**

Good academic advising is a year round process. Students are encouraged to speak with their advisors anytime they feel the need to assess their academic progress or
plan. Social work students are advised prior to preregistration. They now have the option of enrolling early through on-line registration or with an academic advisor during regular preregistration. With on-line registration, students come to their advisor for academic planning prior to registering for courses. The academic audit is available to all advisors via computer. Advising is assigned among the faculty on the basis of approximately equal divisions of the alphabet using the last names of the students. Nine faculty members serve as advisors. The department head serves as backup on advising for all students should they have problems, questions, or in the event their advisor is not available. Incoming freshman are advised through the Freshman Connection program and the university Orientation class. First time freshmen visit the department to meet the department head and faculty, orient themselves with the physical plant and to register for classes in the BSW curriculum by the department head. These students are advised as a cohort and they are scheduled into classes as a Freshman Interest Group (FIG). Sophomores are advised by the departmental faculty in preparation for admission into the professional program.

The Social Work Faculty Advisors assist students with professional concerns. They are concerned with academic advising, class scheduling, educational motivation and career counseling. Faculty orient students to the profession of social work and assist them in assessing their aptitude and motivation for a career in social work. However, faculty do not engage in personal counseling of students, but rather make referrals to the University Counseling Center. Faculty Advisors discuss the student's performance in classes and guide students in selecting areas of course work. They are also responsible for assisting the student in completing an application for field instruction and discussing
with the student their options for the future.

**AS 5.5 The program has policies and procedures specifying students’ rights and responsibilities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs. It provides opportunities and encourages students to organize in their interests.**

Students’ rights and responsibilities at different levels are enumerated in university and departmental publications. All students at Northwestern, upon entering the University, are provided with a copy of the Northwestern *General Catalog*. The catalog contains a complete description of student rights and responsibilities. Under "Academic Information," pages 19-24, and "Student Life" pages 37-41, such topics as "degree requirements," "maximum and minimum load," "adding, dropping, repeating, and substituting courses," "class attendance," "scholastic probation, suspension, and readmission regulations," "academic appeals for suspension," and "appeals of reported grades" are described in detail. Furthermore, all students must take Orientation 1010 and this information is reviewed carefully. The Department of Social Work has a select session of Orientation 1010 for social work majors. This class is taught by an MSW and orients the student not only to the University, but also the profession of social work. Under the topic "Student Life," the catalog describes the disciplinary procedures, privacy rights, and appeals of academic records.

In addition to the general student regulations, a "Code of Student Conduct" is contained in the *Northwestern Student Handbook*. This is included in Volume III of the Self Study Documents, pp. . This code describes the University as a "community" and describes the rights and responsibilities of students. The various sanctions are also listed and the procedure by which they are enforced. A full description of "due process for students" is contained in this publication and includes the notice of charges, the right to a
written description of the violation, the right to face the accuser and to present testimony, the right to an attorney, the right to testify, and the right to a closed hearing. An appeal procedure is also outlined. The *Northwestern Student Handbook* also enumerates policies concerning Academics, Student Life, Alcohol and Drug Policy, Safety and Security Procedures and NSU policies on Sexual Harassment.

The *Social Work Student Manual* includes the NASW Code of Ethics. Students must sign a statement prior to acceptance into the professional program that they have read the Code and agree to adhere to the Code of Ethics. This manual outlines procedures for reviews of student progress and describes circumstances under which a student might be dismissed from the program.

All students at the University are members of the Student Government Association and may freely participate in the election of officers. Through the Student Government Association, students may voice suggestions and discontents with procedures and policies at the University. Participation in the formulation and modification of policy affecting academic and student affairs and in the evaluation of the program is realized through several avenues. The Student Government Association is the official representative to the NSU administration for all students and frequently advocates on behalf of the general student body in matters pertaining to academics. At the program level, student opinion is solicited through Student Evaluation of Instruction. All students at the University evaluate every instructor in every course every semester. Additionally, each semester every student is asked to evaluate their advisor. The university administers the mandatory “Graduation Senior Survey” to all graduating students. Additionally, information is solicited in an informal manner by the program staff with respect to
program effectiveness. The Social Work Club provides a student representative to serve on the Community Social Work Advisory Board.

The Department of Social Work has a student organization or Social Work Club that serves as an important aspect of our Social Work Program. It is comprised of students from the Program that have organized to begin to put into practice the values of helping in our local community. Meetings are held both on campus, and at the Learning Center for Rapides Parish in Alexandria. The motto chosen by the students is, "Caring, Curing, Changing," and is directed at changing and helping the local community. In addition to helping out in the community, the Social Work Club sees that there are several major purposes in their organizing, which include:

1. To promote the development of the undergraduate Social Work education major at NSU.
2. To provide fellowship and support for the student majoring in Social Work.
3. To explore community needs and implement some of the knowledge learned in the classroom to assist special, vulnerable, or oppressed populations in our community.
4. To encourage an understanding and an appreciation for the importance of networking in the educational environment that can be transferred to the working or professional environment.

Some of the recent activities sponsored by NSU's Social Work Club include:

- Manning the information/donation table at the D.O.V.E.S. Awareness program
- Donating local restaurant gift cards to Natchitoches Center for Addictive Disorders in recognition of their clients of the month for March and April
- Visiting local retirement centers to interact with senior residents
- Doing yard work with the teenage residents of a local group home for girls, Cane River Children's Services, then providing them a pizza supper
- donating food to needy families at Thanksgiving
- forming teams and raising money for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life
- participating in Peoples State Bank's Adopt an Angel Christmas project
- raising monies (via bake sales) to purchase and send Christmas gifts to our "Adopt a Troop" group in Iraq.

**AS 5.6 The program informs students of its criteria for evaluating their academic and professional performance.**

Students are informed of the expectations placed on them relative to academic performance in several publications, from the classroom level, through to the university’s requirements to remain in good academic standing. Academic standards for performance in individual courses are described in the syllabi that accompany each course and vary depending on the faculty member. All students are tested for mastery of content in each course through regularly scheduled examinations. Overall academic standards for the social work program are outlined in the university catalog, p. 77, and reiterated in the Social Work Student Handbook. Criteria for evaluation of field performance are fully described in the Field Instruction Manual, and include student participation in the evaluation process, as well as evaluation by the agency field instructor and the faculty liaison. University requirements for remaining in proper academic standing are found in the *General Catalog*, p. 27.

**AS 5.7 The program has policies and procedures for terminating a student’s enrollment in the social work program for reasons of academic and professional performance.**

Student dismissal from the Social Work Program can be for either academic or nonacademic reasons. Infractions of student conduct (nonacademic) are handled in a university-wide process, and academic dismissal or academic integrity can go before the
larger university. Autonomous professional programs such as social work have the authority to dismiss students from its program, though not from the University itself. Nonacademic problems that can be linked with violation of the NASW Code of Ethics are processed as academic matters. The NSU program requires all students to sign with their application a statement to abide by the NASW Code of Ethics. It is our interpretation of professional literature that the separation of an offense into strictly nonacademics results in providing the student a lengthy due process. It is our position that if the nonacademic behavior violates the NASW Code of Ethics, then the issue is clear and can sustain dismissal from the program.

**Criteria for Dismissal From The Program**

Dismissal from the Social Work program can be for both academic and nonacademic reasons. Including, but not limited to:

1. Failure to earn at least a C when repeating or enrolling for the second time in the same required social work course.
2. Failure to maintain a 2.0 average for two consecutive semesters.
3. Academic cheating or plagiarism.
4. The unlawful or unauthorized use, abuse, possession, distribution, transportation, manufacture, concealment, consumption, promotion or sale of alcohol, illegal drugs, legal drugs obtained illegally, controlled substances, or designer drugs.
5. Illegal possession of weapons.
7. Serious violations, as determined by the social work program faculty, of the NASW Code of Ethics.

These criteria are presented to the students in the University *General Catalog*, p. 77, and the *Social Work Student Manual*, Volume, p. 
Policy on Academic and Professional Performance

Students admitted to this program of social work education are expected to progress in their command of social work knowledge, their skill in the application of social work methods, and their demeanor as an entry-level professional. While most students adjust well to the performance expectations, the following policy guidelines ensure that students experiencing difficulty are monitored and given appropriate corrective intervention, and that appropriate procedures are established in the event that a student cannot or will not use corrective action, and must be asked to consider alternative educational goals.

1. Student Agreement

There must be a signed Student Agreement in the student folder of each student who has been admitted into the social work program following successful application and screening.

2. Reviews

2a. Scheduled reviews are to take place at the time of admission (when the student signs the student agreement), annually thereafter, and in the field practicum application and interview process. These reviews are held between the student and the assigned advisor, with the exception of that held in conjunction with the field practicum application and interview, which follows those established procedures.

2b. Unscheduled reviews may take place as circumstances warrant, and may be initiated by the advisor, a faculty member, field instruction liaison, or the student.

3. Responsibility of Faculty

It is the responsibility of advisors, classroom instructors, field practicum instructors, and agency field work supervisors to monitor students relative to appropriate social work values, ethics, comportment, knowledge and skill. Any faculty member
observing behavior or performance not in keeping with the expectations and standards of
the program has a duty to express these concerns to the student and to initiate corrective
action.

4. **Corrective Action**

   Three levels of corrective action are established. Generally, the first level (a)
should be used first, with higher levels engaged in succession with repeated infractions.
It is permissible, however, in consultation with the Department Head, to engage directly
in level (c) as circumstances warrant.

4a. Verbal discussion. The concerned faculty member should discuss privately with
the student on the specific concerns perceived. A note indicating only that the
discussion took place should be placed in the student's file. It is advisable that the
faculty member keep a personal record of the discussion.

4b. Verbal discussion with written record. Following a second meeting, a written
record outlining the concerns and corrective action to be taken, signed by the
student (signifying receipt) and faculty member is placed in the student's file, with
a copy going to the student.

4c. Academic hearing. Continued substandard performance, including GPA and/or
failing grades as noted in point 5 below warrants a program academic hearing. A
hearing committee of five persons will be appointed by the Department Head,
selected from five names submitted by the student, and one faculty member of the
Department Head's choosing. The student may submit the names of two students
out of the list of five submitted for the hearing committee. The committee is to
interview all appropriate parties, weigh all sides of the issue, and submit a written
report with recommendation to the Department Head. Possible recommendations
include: 1) continuance in the program, 2) continuance in the program with
prescriptive correction action, and 3) dismissal from the program. It is the
responsibility of the Department Head to inform the student of any decision made,
whether in concurrence with the recommendation or not.

   The student will have the right (and is expected) to appear in person before the
academic hearing committee, to choose to submit a written statement in addition to oral
statements made, to have a classmate or faculty member in attendance with the student,
and the right to choose to follow the established procedure for appeal.
5. Grade and Grade Point Average Standards

Admission into the social work program is contingent on, among other things, a GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. Students are expected to maintain an overall GPA of 2.0. Any student failing to maintain the minimum GPA for two consecutive semesters (excluding summer terms) will appear before a program academic hearing committee. Any student with two or more failing grades in social work courses will be required to have a hearing.

Student Admission Agreement

The "Statement of Understanding and Agreement" presented below is to be signed by each student as part of their admission to the Social Work Program.

Statement of Understanding and Agreement

I understand that although I am admitted to the social work program, if my professional development is not deemed satisfactory by the appropriate social work faculty (including agency field placement supervisor), the program has the right and responsibility to request reassessment of my suitability for the major in social work.

I hereby agree to abide by the standards outlined in this document and the NASW Code of Ethics. I also understand that I must maintain an overall GPA of 2.0.

________________________________________  _____________________________
Student Signature                           Date