

FITNESS TO PRACTICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the Department of Psychology and Counseling.

As part of meeting the program objectives set forth in the Department of Psychology and Counseling Program Student Handbooks and Graduate Catalog and Policies, students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. This conduct is evaluated through the Fitness to Practice (FTP) policy as an element of students' academic performance. The purpose of the FTP review process is to regularly monitor students' professional and personal development (CACREP, 2009) to ensure students demonstrate appropriate progress towards developing the necessary behaviors, attitudes, and professional competencies to practice as a counselor-in-training. Student progress is routinely monitored and discussed during faculty meetings and in consultation with other faculty members.

At the onset of their academic program, students are directed to review these standards and seek clarification when needed.

In order to successfully complete the program and be endorsed for any relevant certifications or licensure, students must demonstrate academic performance meeting or exceeding department standards in all settings, including classes, advising sessions, clinical sites, and all verbal and written communication, including:

1. Demonstrate fitness in their interactions with others as measured on the Fitness to Practice Standards, which include the following competencies:
 1. Follows ethical and legal considerations
 2. Displays multicultural competence
 3. Open to new ideas
 4. Aware of own impact on others
 5. Responsive, adaptable, and cooperative
 6. Receptive to and uses feedback
 7. Responds to conflict appropriately
 8. Accepts personal responsibility
 9. Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately
 10. Dependable in meeting obligations, and
2. Conform with the codes of ethics of professional associations in counseling and all related national and state licensure and certification boards.

The FTP Evaluation Process:

Students' competence is evaluated using the FTP Standards and documented with the FTP Evaluation Form. Admission to the program or receiving Candidacy does not guarantee fitness to remain in the program. A FTP review may be initiated on any student at any time if a faculty member, staff, course instructor, program advisor or field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior which suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency on one or more FTP criteria. Inability to show appropriate level of competency in a minimum of one competence is sufficient for dismissal from the program. Faculty also may initiate a FTP review at any time, including but not limited to the following reasons:

- a. Students who engage in illegal or unethical behaviors,
- b. Students who present a threat to the wellbeing of others or threat to self,
- c. Students who violate the NSU Student Code of Conduct, other applicable NSU policies or procedures (in conjunction with existing university procedures regarding Student Conduct) , or any other NSU Department of Psychology and Counseling policies or procedures.

In such cases, depending upon the circumstances, the fitness to practice process may result in the student being dismissed from the NSU Department of Psychology and Counseling without the opportunity for remediation.

Faculty members, staff, course instructors, program advisors, and field supervisors may evaluate all students according to these standards. Students will have the opportunity to participate and respond at each step of the FTP process.

Performance on the FTP standards will be rated on a scale of 1 (Unacceptable) to 5 (Target) as described in the Fitness to Practice Standards. A rating of 3 (or higher) on all FTP standards will indicate competence. The FTP Evaluation Form then will be shared with the student and a copy placed in the student's file. A rating of 1 on any of the FTP standards will initiate the following procedure:

(1) The student will be contacted to schedule a meeting to review the FTP Evaluation Form. The meeting will be held with the issuing faculty member, unless the FTP process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of self or others, or violated the NSU Student Code of Conduct (in conjunction with existing university procedures regarding Student Conduct) or any policy(ies), in the Department Student Handbook, or Clinical Manual (in which case, the meeting will be held with a faculty review committee, as outlined in Step 3 below).

The student has five business days to respond to the request to schedule a meeting. If the student does not respond by the close of business on the fifth business day, the matter will proceed to step 3 below.

(2) At the meeting, the issuing faculty will review the FTP Evaluation Form with the student and discuss a remediation plan. Within fifteen business days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a final copy of the remediation plan (incorporating any changes agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have ten business days to review, sign, and return the remediation plan. Failure of the student to sign and/or return the remediation plan by the close of business on the tenth business day will not impede the process and may be considered during the fitness to practice process.

The remediation plan may include:

1. Specific competency(ies) from the FTP Standards which require(s) remediation,
2. Specific recommendations to achieve remediation,
3. Specific requirements to demonstrate remediation efforts have been successful, and
4. A specific deadline for subsequent monitoring to evaluate progress.

Both the student and issuing faculty may retain copies of the signed FTP Evaluation Form and remediation plan and copies will be placed in the student's folder. At any time during the remediation process, the issuing faculty member may refer the student to a faculty review committee.

- (3) A faculty review committee will be convened if:
- a. The FTP process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or violated the NSU Student Code of Conduct (in conjunction with existing university procedures regarding Student Conduct) or any policy(ies) in the Student Handbook,
 - b. A student fails to respond to the issuing faculty's request to schedule a meeting to review the FTP Evaluation Form,
 - c. A student fails to show reasonable progress in the remediation plan, or
 - d. A student receives more than one FTP Evaluation Form rating of 1 during his or her Program of Study.

The committee will be comprised of three tenured or tenure-track faculty appointed by the Department Chair. The student will be required to meet with the faculty review committee in accordance with the procedures described in #1 and #2 above. The faculty review committee may consult with any of the full Department of Psychology and Counseling faculty regarding the development of alternative remedial strategies and/or evaluation of the student's fitness for continuation in the Department of Psychology and Counseling.

The faculty review committee is beholden to the development of a student remediation plan consistent with present concerns, to the establishment of a timeline for monitoring the student's progress toward completion of the established plan, and to the clarification of requirements necessary to achieve resolution of the remediation plan. If at any time the student is determined not to be making satisfactory progress, the faculty review committee may either modify the remediation plan or dismiss the student from the program.

(4) All faculty review committee decisions for a student's dismissal from the Department of Psychology and Counseling will be forwarded to the Department Chair for maintaining student records and involvement in the Fitness to Practice process. The Department Chair will forward the committee's decision to the Deans of Graduate College and the College of Education. The student may appeal the committee's decision to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Decisions by the Dean are final.

Fitness to Practice Standards

All standards are evaluated based on student performance in programmatic, academic, clinical, supervisory, and interpersonal contexts.

1. Follows ethical and legal considerations.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Displays inappropriate and/or disrespectful boundaries with clients, faculty, supervisors, and peers.- Does not demonstrate awareness of personal values or imposes personal values on others.- Breaches applicable professional counseling ethical codes and laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maintains appropriate and respectful boundaries with clients, faculty, supervisors, and peers.- Demonstrates awareness of personal values and does not impose personal values on others.- Follows applicable professional counseling ethical codes and laws.

2. Displays multicultural competence.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discriminates or expresses prejudice towards those of a different race, culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability, status, gender identity, marital status/partnership, language preference, or socioeconomic status than self.- Does not demonstrate multicultural counseling competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demonstrates sensitivity to diversity.- Demonstrates multicultural counseling competencies.

3. Open to new ideas.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dogmatic about own perspective and ideas.- Unable or unwilling to consider others' points of view.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Openly discusses and respects perspectives other than own.- Considers others' perspectives and points of view.

4. Aware of own impact on others.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows little or no concerns for how others are impacted by them. - Blames others for problems without self-examination. - Disrespectful toward peers, supervisors, and/or instructors (e.g. monopolizes discussion or gossips). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognizes how own words and actions impact others. - Avoids blaming others and examines own role in problems. - Respectful toward peers, supervisors, and or instructors.

5. Responsive, adaptable, and cooperative.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows little or no effort to adjust behaviors in response to changes in professional & interpersonal contexts. - Expresses intolerance of changes in programmatic, academic, clinical, or supervisory settings. - Reactionary and defensive in response. - Monopolizes cooperative activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows reasonable effort to adjust behaviors in response to changes in professional & interpersonal contexts. - Expresses tolerance of change in programmatic, academic, clinical, or supervisory settings. - Appropriately cooperates in cooperative activities. - Compromises in cooperative activities.

6. Receptive to and uses feedback.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responds to feedback with defensiveness, anger, and/or denial. - Shows little or no evidence of incorporating feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsive, open, and receptive, to feedback. - Appropriately incorporates feedback.

7. Responds to conflict appropriately.

Unacceptable	Target

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows minimal willingness to examine own role in conflict. - Shows minimal effort and/or ability at problem solving. - Displays hostility when conflicts are addressed. - Does not address conflict directly with individual(s) involved and addresses with others instead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively examines and acknowledges own role in conflict. - Actively participates in problem solving efforts. - Appropriately expresses emotions when conflicts are addressed. - Addresses conflicts directly with individual(s) involved.
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8. Accepts personal responsibility.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refuses to admit mistakes or examine own contribution to problem. - Lies, minimizes, or embellishes the truth to extricate self from problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examines own role in problems. - Accurate and honest in describing own and others roles in problems. - Acts professionally while experiencing difficult emotions. - Expression of own feelings is appropriate to the setting.

9. Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately.

Unacceptable	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not express <i>own</i> feelings appropriately. - Does not recognize or acknowledge feelings of <i>others</i>. - Acts out negative feelings (through negative behaviors) rather than articulating them. - Expression of feelings is inappropriate to the setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresses <i>own</i> feelings. - Acknowledges <i>others</i> feelings. - Acts professionally while experiencing difficult emotions. - Expression of own feelings is appropriate to the setting.

10. Dependable in meeting obligations.

Unacceptable	Target

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absent from scheduled program obligations (e.g., class, supervision, GA, or clinical site) and does not notify others in advance. - Arrives late for scheduled obligations. - Rarely meets deadlines (i.e., practicum and internship paperwork, applications, tapes, other assignments) or paperwork is incomplete when submitted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfactorily meets attendance requirements and notifies others in advance regarding absences. - Arrives on time for scheduled obligations. - Meets deadlines and satisfactorily completes paperwork.
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Northeastern State University
Department of Psychology and Counseling

Fitness to Practice Evaluation Form

Student Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

This is to notify you that your professional performance has been evaluated according to the Fitness to Practice (FTP) Review policy in the Student Handbook:

Standard	Not observed	Unacceptable		Acceptable		Target
1. Follows ethical and legal considerations.	N	1	2	3	4	5
2. Displays multicultural competence.	N	1	2	3	4	5
3. Open to new ideas.	N	1	2	3	4	5
4. Aware of own impact on others.	N	1	2	3	4	5
5. Responsive, adaptable, and cooperative.	N	1	2	3	4	5
6. Receptive to and uses feedback.	N	1	2	3	4	5
7. Responds to conflict appropriately.	N	1	2	3	4	5
8. Accepts personal responsibility.	N	1	2	3	4	5
9. Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately.	N	1	2	3	4	5
10. Dependable in meeting obligations.	N	1	2	3	4	5

I. Competence achieved in each FTP Standard observed? _____ yes _____ no

If no, describe the specific behavior(s) observed indicating competence not achieved:

What will happen next? (describe responsibility of student and or faculty):

_____ resolved _____ remediation plan _____ referred to Faculty Review Committee
_____ Other (explain)

Signatures (acknowledges the student received this evaluation)

_____ Student

_____ Evaluating Faculty

Others in attendance