

National University

JFKSOPSS

Department of Marriage and Family Sciences

Community Culture, Standards, and
Expectations

The contents of this document are specific to this department and what is listed in the table of contents, and are not exhaustive of all program, department, and university policies, procedures, and expectations.

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National University (NU) MFT Programs Desired Program Culture

As a student in one of the marriage and family therapy (MFT) degree or certificate programs at NU, what follows is a description of the culture we strive to co-create in the NU MFT programs. As a valued member of our community, we invite your collaboration in nurturing a program environment in which all people can thrive.

Eight key elements comprise the culture we aspire to create: (a) professionalism, (b) growth mindset, (c) commitment to SJEDI [social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion], (d) curiosity, (e) anxiety management, (f) self of therapist work, (g) personal accountability and emotion management, and (h) collaboration. Each of these eight elements is described below.

Professionalism

Marriage and family therapy is a profession. Thus, we are training you to be a *professional*. A profession has been defined as “any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education” (Oxford, 2024). We believe that aptly describes MFT. As a professional, it is anticipated that you will embody the characteristics of a member of a profession as defined above. Accordingly, professionals should adhere to certain standards of behavior that reflect your education and training and garner the respect associated with your profession. That means your interaction with others involves decorum and respect. As an NU MFT student, when you interact with others in the program and University—no matter the channel (in-person, videoconference, email, telephone, etc.) or who you are interacting with (Advisor, Service Desk Technician, Faculty, etc.), it is expected you will exhibit grace, respect, and professionalism, and should receive the same in return. We recognize that at times, others may not exhibit professionalism, but how we respond to unprofessional behavior from others is within our control.

“Set an example. Treat everyone with kindness and respect, even those who are rude to you—not because they are nice, but because you are.”
~Jonathan Lockwood Huie

Growth Mindset

Coined by psychologist, Carol Dweck (2006), a growth mindset refers to the belief that we can learn, grow, change, and improve. In contrast, a *fixed* mindset is reflected in the belief that it will be difficult to change. Believing it will be difficult to change can lead to behaviors that hamper the growth process needed to be successful in the program and may also serve as an indicator that the student is not prepared to be a

therapist. With a growth mindset, when we begin a graduate program, we (a) believe we can change and improve, (b) commit to work hard, (c) are optimistic we can develop our skills and abilities, (d) seek appropriate guidance, and (e) engage in effective communication with others. A growth mindset also requires openness to feedback from others, including feedback that may feel uncomfortable, challenge your self-perception, or invite you to consider how you are showing up academically and professionally.

The process of becoming a therapist tends to differ from the academic training in many other fields. It is intense and there are elements of self-examination, personal growth, and evaluation of biases and blind spots. In addition, exposure to the pain and trauma of our clients can uniquely stretch and trigger us. Facing that reality, MFT students with a fixed mindset tend to shrink from this growth, second guess their choices, and struggle to put in the effort to change and grow. On the other hand, students with a growth mindset lean into this challenge, study hard, and go the extra mile in their assignments. They also consult with peers, instructors, and supervisors. In addition, many seek personal therapy to address their own issues, so they don't spill over into the therapy room.

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." ~Martin Luther King, Jr.
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Commitment to Whole Human Education, Equity, and Advocacy

Whole Human Education is a core value of National University and the MFT programs. We appreciate the kaleidoscope of personal and social characteristics that make each person unique and valuable. As members of a diverse learning community, we seek to cultivate belonging, respect, and opportunity while supporting the academic, personal, and professional growth of all learners.

As marriage and family therapists, we understand that individuals, couples, and families exist within larger relational, cultural, social, and institutional systems. While our work often focuses on the challenges experienced by clients at the individual, couple, and family micro-levels, we recognize that broader systemic factors can significantly influence well-being, relationships, and access to resources. Accordingly, we believe effective systemic practice requires awareness of both micro- and macro-level influences on human experience.

The professional responsibilities of marriage and family therapists include service, advocacy, and participation in efforts that contribute to healthier families, communities, and society. The preamble to the Code of Ethics for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (2026) states:

Marriage and family therapists are defined by an enduring dedication to professional and ethical excellence, as well as the commitment to service, advocacy, and public participation. The areas of service, advocacy, and public participation are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects. Marriage and family therapists embody these aspirations by participating in activities that contribute to a better community and society... (para. 3)

Consistent with these professional responsibilities, students are encouraged to examine how systemic inequities, discrimination, oppression, and barriers to opportunity may affect the lives of clients, families, and communities. Students are expected to develop the cultural humility, ethical awareness, and systemic sensitivity necessary to work effectively with diverse populations and to advocate for the well-being of those they serve.

In addition, as aptly argued by NU faculty member, Dr. Brian Tilley (2023), racism is a moral issue. Because of our shared humanity, the presence of racism damages all of us. Taken a step further, it is our contention we all have a collective, moral obligation to address any forms of -ism (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism) in the lives of our clients and society.

As you progress through the program, be prepared to engage in ongoing self-reflection, examine your own assumptions, biases, and prejudices (we all have them), and consider how your unique constellation of identities and experiences (e.g., age, sex, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, socioeconomic status, ability status, and other dimensions of diversity) influences your interactions with others. This process of self-awareness and reflection is an essential component of ethical and effective systemic practice.

"Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible – the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family."
~Virginia Satir

Curiosity

Good therapists are curious. They seek to understand why a particular relationship functions, what factors shape individuals' behaviors, and why they react the way they do to certain clients and presenting problems. Curiosity promotes genuine interest and questions for colleagues, clients, and supervisors. When our clients' lives and relationships seem messy and chaotic, but it works for them, curiosity invites us to set aside our standards and values about relationships and strive to understand why this

type of relationship is stable and meets their needs. When we encounter someone whose values, religious or political attitudes, or life choices are diametrically opposed to our own, curiosity encourages us to wonder what life experiences, values, attitudes, and beliefs shape their perspectives and choices.

Curious therapists also introspect about their own values and reactions. Occasionally, we have encountered students who indicated their existing knowledge and skills are strong—thus we aren't likely to teach them much—and the program is simply a means to an end. Students who refuse to be teachable and curious in the program are more likely to carry this behavior into the therapeutic environment, which may pose a threat to the wellbeing of potential clients. We strive to value what students bring with them to the program, while also expecting they are curious about what they can learn in the program to integrate with their existing knowledge and ultimately take into their professional practice.

"Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning." ~William Arthur Ward
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Anxiety Management

Murray Bowen profoundly articulated the ways anxiety manifests in relationships. Anxiety, as defined by Bowen and Kerr (1988), is the "response of an organism to a threat, real or imagined. It is assumed to be a process, that in some form, is present in all living things" (p. 112). As human beings in a complex world, all of us experience real and imagined threats that lead to us feeling anxious. Graduate school and clinical training can add a few more layers of anxiety, including financial issues, performance concerns, grading, and role strain (being a family member, student, worker, clinician, etc.).

When we experience anxiety or conflict in a relationship, the tendency is to either triangulate and bring in a third person (e.g., a couple is fighting and one of them complains about the other to their child) or to engage in cut-offs (e.g., the silent treatment, disconnecting from family for hours, days, months, or even years). In an academic setting, this could show up as not responding to emails, not turning in work, missing meetings, etc. Bowen focused a lot on differentiation of self, the ability to remain connected to others while creating enough emotional distance to not get sucked into strong emotions associated with either your anxiety or theirs. We become differentiated by recognizing when we are distressed and avoiding "emotional contagion," feeling compelled to match the level of distress displayed by others. Then, we choose how we will respond, rather than engaging in a spiral of escalating emotions with them.

Thus, if you are anxious about a grade, rather than solely complaining to your advisor or a family member, arrange a time to meet with the faculty member and address your concerns. If that doesn't resolve the issue, then utilize the appropriate channels

and speak to the Program Director, rather than continue venting to your advisor or on social media. If you feel disrespected in an interaction, seek to understand what contributed to that feeling, refrain from disrespecting others in return, and utilize the appropriate channels to address any concerns.

Know also that as you progress through the program, faculty members have different approaches and may tailor their grading expectations and feedback to specific course content and placement in the curriculum. While they share the same overall grading rubric, they may emphasize different elements when grading your work. To prevent anxiety about this reality, please reach out to your faculty member and ask them to share their overall approach to grading in the course. It is not realistic as a student to expect them to change their grading approach because previous faculty have not pointed out such issues. Instead, ask them what you should focus on in your work to ensure you are meeting grading expectations.

“Every time you are tempted to react in the same old way, ask if you want to be a prisoner of the past or a pioneer of the future.”
~Deepak Chopra

Self-of-Therapist Work

For us to sit in a room with clients and help them tackle their challenges and metabolize their pain, we must be emotionally and psychologically healthy so that we can be fully present, acting in the best interests of the client rather than pursuing our agenda, and trampling the needs and wants of our clients.

We have all experienced challenges in life and are wounded to varying degrees—that’s part of being human. However, what sets healthy therapists apart is that they use their own struggles to empathize with clients and support them in their journey to healing. In contrast, unhealthy therapists sometimes use clients’ therapy sessions to heal their own hurts and traumas at the expense of their clients. Healthy therapists can sit with others in pain, without shifting the focus to their own needs. Thus, part of becoming a therapist is learning to manage our own anxiety and become more differentiated.

As you progress through the program, you may at times be triggered by course assignments, practicum discussions, and/or clinical work. View such experiences as opportunities to connect with your faculty member (as appropriate depending on the issue), raise the issue in clinical supervision, talk to trusted others, and/or seek your own personal therapy. Many feel a key element of becoming a skilled therapist is participating in your own therapy and experiencing what it’s like to sit on the other side of the room.

Assignments and clinical tasks scattered across the program will help you reflect on what you bring to the therapy room. Embrace them fully and commit to your own

personal growth.

"Psychotherapy is a demanding vocation, and the successful therapist must be able to tolerate the isolation, anxiety, and frustration that are inevitable in the work."
~ Irvin D. Yalom

Personal Accountability and Emotion Management

As a professional, the ability to be accountable and manage one's emotions is a critical skill. Being accountable for the impact of your interactions, regardless of your intent, includes taking ownership and responsibility of one's actions and choices as well as the resulting outcomes. Along with this comes the importance of emotional management, which is the ability to regulate your responses to situations. This involves accepting your emotions as they are and your ability to identify and understand how they are impactful in a situation and within your professional relationships. Influenced by factors such as social media and reality television, it is apparent we have seen a corresponding increase in the glamorization of drama in society. What does lack of professionalism or "drama" look like in a graduate program?

As we have experienced it over the decades in graduate programs, this often takes the form of (a) exaggerated responses to inconveniences or perceived infractions, (b) seeking to provoke an emotional response in others, and (c) efforts to stir up contention and dissatisfaction with others in the program. The instigator of drama is often dissatisfaction with an interaction, person, or experiencing increasing anxiety about a relationship or situation which can ignite a reactive or disproportionate response.

In contrast, emotion management and regulation, which is part of professionalism, looks like addressing issues with grace and respect for others, engaging in constructive dialogue to resolve issues, responding calmly rather than being reactive, and refusing to turn molehills into mountains. Additionally, this includes evaluating and taking responsibility for your role in the situation and how your personal actions and choices influence the current situation.

At the same time, we also value students having a voice, advocating for themselves, and letting us know of microaggressions or interactions that feel disrespectful. What matters in such situations is how such challenges are handled. When you are assertive, respectful, and follow the appropriate channels in addressing such issues, you are avoiding drama and demonstrating professionalism. In contrast, angry, multiple or aggressive emails (including use of all caps), attributing negative attributions to motivations of faculty, staff, and other students, threats of lawsuits, or emailing/messaging the President of the University, promote drama and demonstrate a lack of professionalism.

"Drama does not just walk into your life. Either you create it, invite it, or associate with it."

~Brandi L. Bates

Collaboration

Like the African proverb it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to train a therapist. During your time in the MFT program at NU you will interact with a host of individuals who are invested in your growth and success. Admittedly, online programs do lack the routine in-person interaction of on-ground programs. However, there are several vehicles for interaction with faculty and other students and we encourage you to take advantage of them. Please always participate in opportunities to meet with your faculty member teaching each course via Zoom. Connect, get to know each other, discuss the course, and establish an educational alliance (a professional working relationship with the express goal of facilitating learning and professional socialization and development). We recommend all students engage in the Commons, NU's information hub and social networking site. Make an initial post in the MFS Community Forum and the regional MFTSA group, as well as pursue other groups. Routinely monitor the posts in the Commons. Doing so can contribute to an increased sense of community and collaboration.

We also hope you attend webinars and the monthly Peer Mentoring Mastermind group facilitated by the MFT Student Advisory Council. We encourage you to peruse the offerings of the NU Whole Person Center (<https://www.nuthewholepersoncenter.com/>), as well as monitor the announcements at the top of the National University Courseroom to note presentations and activities in which you can participate.

Conclusion

We have worked hard at NU to create an MFT program culture that allows us all to feel supported, grow, and thrive. If you are committed to such a culture, we look forward to working with you as you complete your graduate degree.

Your signature below indicates you have reviewed this document and commit to helping us create such a culture in our program.

Signature

Date

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DEPARTMENT OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SCIENCES MFT PROGRAMS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

OVERVIEW

Training to become a mental health provider is a challenging and intense process. It's not uncommon for issues to arise as students matriculate through a marriage and family therapy (MFT) program. Most of the time, students' reactions to difficulties are mild and manageable. In some instances, however, they emerge as conduct concerns. This document describes how such issues are handled.

The Professional Standards and Expectations Policy for the MFT programs at National University (NU) is discussed below. The first section examines issues that arise prior to the clinical phase of the programs. The last section explains the Standards and the program process for dealing with program related violations of the Professional Standards and Expectations.

Program Standards and Expectations

NU students are expected to uphold and abide by certain standards of behaviors that form the basis of the *program's professional standards and expectations*. These standards are embodied within the set of core values below.

The MFT programs consider the behavior described in the following sub-sections as inappropriate and in opposition to the core values set forth in this document. These expectations and rules apply to all students, whether graduate, certificate, or non-degree seeking. Any student found responsible for violations of the Professional Standards and Expectations are subject to the sanctions outlined below.

General Standards for Students

Freedom of speech and expression is valued in academic settings. Equally valued is the respect given to computer systems and information technology. To that end, students will adhere to the following online standards of conduct:

- Access National University courses only for lawful purposes.
- Respect the privacy of other members of the class and other students.

- Respect the diversity of opinions among the instructor and members of the class and respond to them in a courteous manner. For example, electronic communication consisting of all caps, large font, or bold print may be considered unprofessional and a form of verbal abuse.
- Demonstrate professional behavior and communication with all faculty, staff, university leadership, and personnel.
- Maintain an environment free of harassment, stalking, threats, abuse, insults or humiliation to the instructor and members of the class. This includes unwanted sexual advances or intimidations by email, or on discussion boards and postings in courses.
- Abide by all rules and regulations published by the University and agree to be subject to disciplinary actions as described in this Professional Standards and Expectations document.

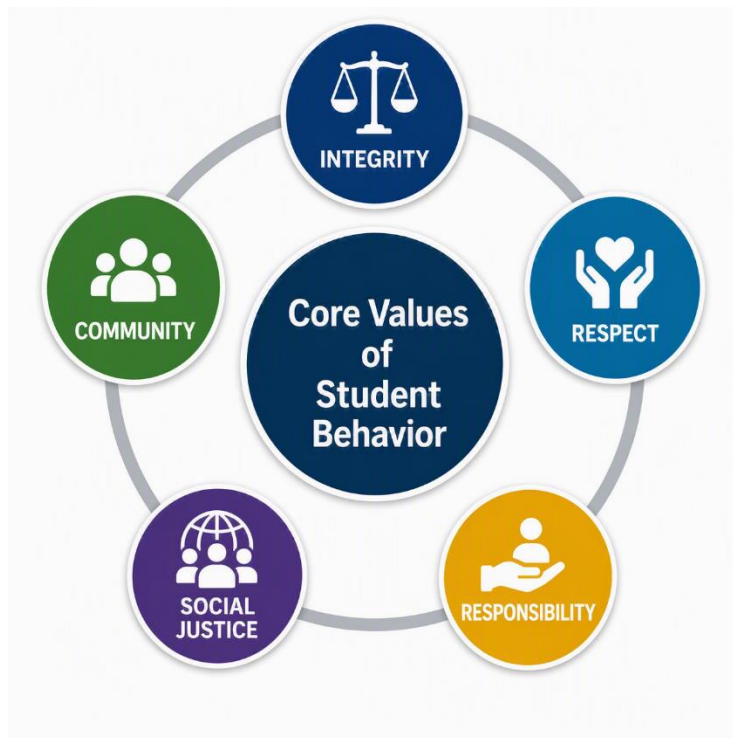
Specific Expectations for Master's Students

Students in our master's program (MAMFT) are training to be master's level therapists. Students in this program should demonstrate an ability to empathize with the experiences of others and be curious about the world around them. Students also need to recognize that while they may possess significant knowledge in other areas, they are novices in the MFT therapy room. MAMFT students need to be able to accept feedback from faculty, peers, supervisors, and program leadership about their academic and clinical skills. Given that students in the master's program are not yet independently licensed as marriage and family therapists, they are expected to follow the rules and guidelines set out by the faculty, staff, supervisors, and program leadership they work with throughout the program.

Specific Expectations for Doctoral Level Students

Students in our doctorate level programs (DMFT, PhD) often express interest in leadership and training roles. Many may already be independently licensed clinicians and may have supervision credentials as well. As such, it is the expectation that doctoral students conduct themselves with the integrity and professionalism expected of advanced members of the profession. This is demonstrated not only with the foundational professional skills described within this document, but also adherence to a more advanced level of ethical professionalism that promotes collaborative and inclusive leadership.

Core Values of Student Behavior



Integrity

Students in the MFT programs must exemplify honesty, honor, and respect for the truth in all their dealings. Behavior that violates this value includes, but is not limited to:

- Intentional close paraphrasing of the published or unpublished work of another author or authors without proper in-text attribution.
- Submitting as your own original work any assignment, paper, article, report, presentation, or book chapter written by another author or authors.
- Submitting as your own original work any assignment that includes content purchased from a commercial service or another person without explicit permission from the faculty of the current course or proper attribution.
- Inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence (AI). The National University Catalog specifies that students are responsible for the integrity of the work they submit and must give credit for any information that is not the result of original research or common knowledge. NU students are permitted to utilize available tools to learn and apply the material in their

courses and prepare for exams, assignments, and papers unless otherwise directed in individual courses, programs, or schools.

- Submitting AI-generated work as your own original work. This behavior is recognized as committing plagiarism. Failure to submit original work, cite sources according to disciplinary standards (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, Bluebook), and confirm the validity of the content represents academic dishonesty and is subject to the Student Code of Conduct.
- Writing a paper (or any assignment) on behalf of another student.
- Speaking in public (in the form of a speech, lecture or presentation) where any content in that presentation is misrepresented as your own original work or intellectual property.
- Holding yourself out to have a degree or certification you do not possess (e.g., calling yourself Dr. XXX without having completed a doctoral degree, indicating you are a licensed therapist when you are an intern, calling yourself an expert in couple therapy without documented training or certifications).
- Unauthorized collaboration with others on homework assignments.
- Attempting to obtain access to test questions or advance copies of an exam in advance of the exam.
- Publishing or otherwise making available to others (individually, through social media, or on websites that collect and sell student papers, etc.), evaluation materials, essay prompts, or other protected documentation from University coursework or services.

Other Examples of Behaviors Lacking Integrity include, but are not limited to:

- Knowingly acting in concert with others to violate policies and/or regulations.
- Being aware of the existence of a violation of policies and/or regulations and failing to take reasonable action to report the violations in a timely manner.
- Failing to take an appropriate level of responsibility for the actions of their guests that are on campus or clinical sites.
- Violations of positions of trust within the community and/or deliberately misleading officials or agents who are attempting to gain information for program business.

Community

Students are expected to build and enhance their university community. We create community by treating each other with decency and respect, listening to all voices and seeking genuine connections, and providing support as warranted. Behavior that violates this value and undermines community building includes, but is not limited to:

Disruptive Behavior. Disruption of the MFT programs' operations including non-adherence to and/or disregard for rules and behavioral expectations. Disruptive behaviors are separated into two different categories as per the [NU Student Code of Conduct \(SCC\)](#): Minimal and Significant. The MFT Program will work collaboratively with the Office of Community Standards (OCS) to address disruptive behavior(s) as per the SCC. For more information, please see the SCC.

IT and Acceptable Use

Violations in this category would include, but are not limited to:

- Unauthorized entry into a file to use, read, or change the contents
- Unauthorized transfer of a file
- Unauthorized use of another individual's identification
- Use of computing resources to view or send indecent, obscene, threatening or abusive messages
- Using social media (including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X, Telegram, Threads, Snapchat, Tik Tok, podcasts, blogs, etc.) in unprofessional or inappropriate ways, including bullying, harassing, or demeaning others

Discrimination

This includes any act or failure to act that is based upon an individual or group's actual or perceived status (sex, gender, gender identity, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion, sexual orientation or other protected status) that is sufficiently severe in that it limits or denies the ability to participate in or benefit from the University's educational programs or activities. (Please see [National University Equal Opportunity, Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy](#) for more information).

Harassment

This includes any unwelcome conduct in-person or online, based on an individual or group's actual or perceived status (sex, gender, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion, sexual orientation or other protected status). Any unwelcome conduct should be reported to your AFA, faculty member, program director and/or Department Chair, who will act to remedy and/or resolve reported incidents on behalf of the parties involved and the community. (Please see [National University Equal Opportunity, Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy](#) for more information).

Social Justice

National University students recognize that respecting the dignity of every person is essential in creating and sustaining a flourishing university community. They understand and appreciate how their decisions and actions impact others and are just and equitable in their treatment of all members of the community. In addition to the University's commitment to social justice, the MFT profession has dedicated itself to furthering the cause of social justice and amplifying the voices and supporting marginalized populations. Students in our MFT programs are held to the same standards of those in the profession and are expected to be prepared to evaluate their own social location, biases, privileges and power and be open to learning and growing in areas that may create challenges in working with clientele from marginalized populations.

Respect

NU MFT students are expected to show positive regard for each other and for the community. Behavior that violates this value includes, but is not limited to:

- Harm to Persons - intentionally or recklessly causing harm or endangering the health or safety of any person.
- Bullying and Cyberbullying - bullying and cyberbullying are repeated and/or severe aggressive behaviors that intimidate or intentionally harm or control another person physically or emotionally and are not protected by freedom of expression.
- Failure to comply with the reasonable directives of program officials or law enforcement officers during the performance of their duties and/or failure to identify oneself to these persons when requested to do so.

- Violating other published university policies, regulations, or rules. Students are subject to the specific policies in the academic handbook of the program in which they are enrolled. Students registered in courses that involve clinical rotations, student teaching, or internships are also subject to the specific policies of those allied third-party sites.

Responsibility

NU MFT students are expected to demonstrate personal accountability in their academic, professional, and interpersonal conduct. Responsibility involves recognizing one's role in a situation, responding with honesty and maturity, and taking steps to promote constructive outcomes. Students are expected to engage in ongoing self-reflection, acknowledge the impact of their behaviors, and avoid a pattern of placing sole blame on others when challenges or conflicts arise. Students who embody responsibility strive to learn from challenges, remain open to feedback, and actively participate in resolving issues in a manner consistent with professional standards. They recognize that growth in the MFT field requires humility, introspection, and a willingness to examine one's own assumptions, reactions, and patterns of behavior. Behavior that violates this value includes, but is not limited to:

- Failing to reflect on one's own contributions to misunderstandings, conflicts, or academic or clinical concerns.
- Repeatedly externalizing blame or attributing problems exclusively to peers, faculty, supervisors, clients, or systems without consideration of one's own behaviors or choices.
- Ignoring feedback intended to support professional or academic growth, skill development, or ethical behavior.
- Avoiding communication or refusing to participate in problem-solving when difficulties emerge in coursework or clinical settings.
- Not taking steps to repair harm, clarify misunderstandings, or address one's own errors when made aware of them.
- Neglecting to follow through on commitments, responsibilities, or corrective actions agreed upon with faculty, supervisors, or peers.

ADDRESSING STUDENT CHALLENGES

Academic dishonesty violations will be addressed by the instructor utilizing the guidance in the National University Faculty Handbook on Academic Integrity and Ethics. The instructor will subsequently report any violation(s) that occur to the OCS.

In the case of academic integrity violations, the student may be subject to course, program, and/or institutional sanctions. Classroom or program-specific sanctions will be issued at the discretion of the instructor of record and program leadership (e.g., penalized grade or program dismissal).

Throughout the curriculum, there are evaluations distributed across courses for faculty to evaluate student performance in the course and for students to self-evaluate. In addition, when faculty or AFCs have concerns about a student, they complete an At-Risk Form to identify challenges observed and resources needed. The specific processes are discussed below.

Problematic situations may emerge regarding student actions over the duration of their program. In general, how they are handled is influenced by whether the student is in the clinical phase of the program, or has yet to begin their clinical experience, and whether the infraction also rises to the level of a referral to OCS and/or Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

At the program level, the Professional Standards and Expectations Committee (PSEC; discussed below) will assess the appropriateness of and enact educational and/or disciplinary sanctions. An incident or string of related incidents will generally be considered a single violation up until the point a student receives notice of the violation; additional infractions occurring after that point will be considered separately. After any occurrence, the program reserves the right to conduct a review that may result in the student being subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including, program dismissal.

Tracking Student Progress

Throughout the program, as students complete each course, the Faculty Member will post a grade and, in many instances, complete a Student Progress Evaluation (SPE) form related to the student's performance in the course. These forms are reviewed regularly by the Department of Marriage and Family Sciences Administrative Faculty and during the Clinical Preparation Process. If faculty have concerns about student progress at any time during a course, they can submit an At-Risk Form that allows program personnel to identify resources to support the student. Concerns may include but are not limited to academic performance, professionalism, and clinical readiness.

Any occurrence may result in referral to the Professional Standards and Expectations Committee (PSEC) for review. Referral to PSEC does not automatically result in dismissal. Depending on the nature of the concern, outcomes may include support, remediation, probation, dismissal, referral to other University processes, or other actions deemed appropriate by Program Leadership.

Prior to clinical training, concerns related to academic performance, professional behavior, engagement, clinical readiness, or student success may be addressed through the At-Risk referral and Student Success Summit (SSS) processes described in the Program Handbooks. Documentation relevant to clinical readiness may be shared between the Academic Program Director (APD), Director(s) of Clinical Training (DCT), and other authorized program personnel as appropriate to support student success and progression through the program

ADDRESSING POTENTIAL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS VIOLATIONS

In addition, when the program has information that an alleged professional standards and expectations violation has occurred, the Professional Standards and Expectations Review process is initiated. The next section provides examples of the types of infractions based on level of degree of severity and the corresponding program response.

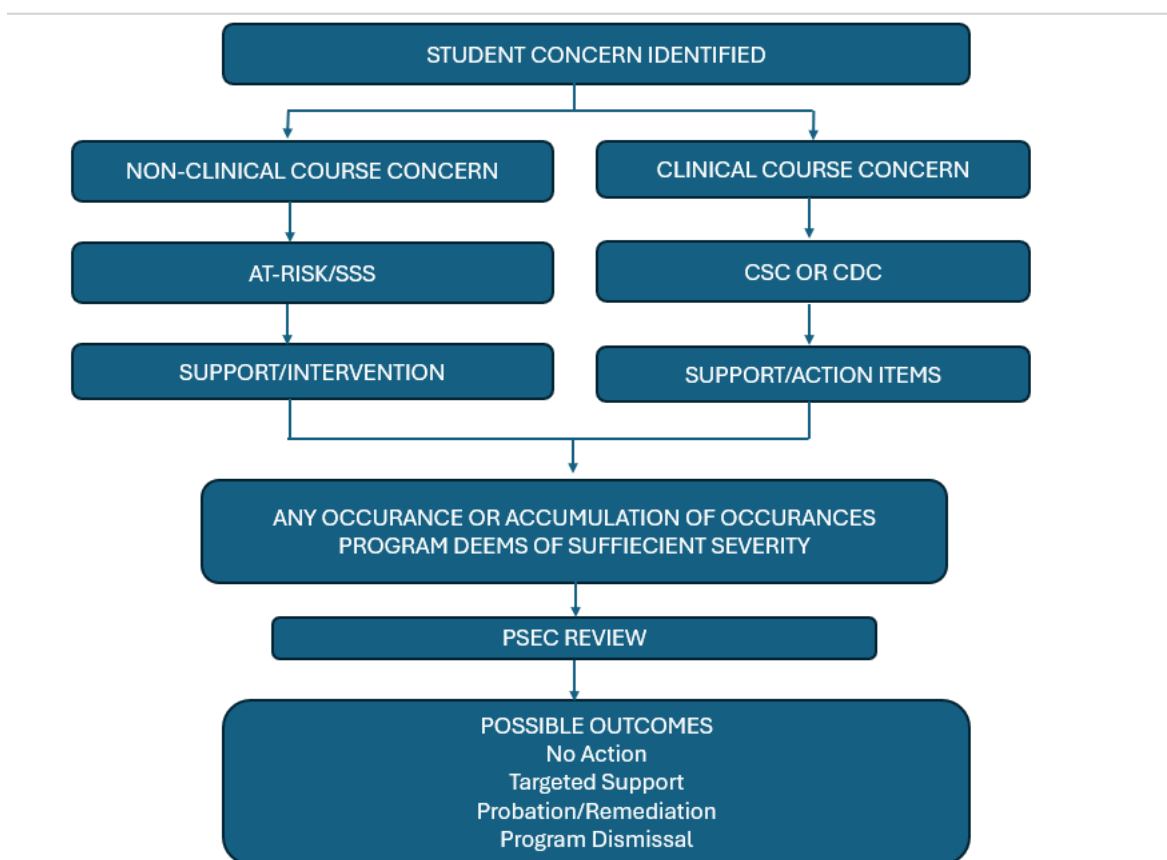
As noted above, issues may arise before or during the clinical elements of the program. In addition to the conduct issues discussed above, the following are examples of the types of issues that may warrant a professional standards review:

- Professionalism concerns (e.g., email or phone rudeness, demands around grades or response times), use of AI or plagiarism in assignments (can be handled as both an Academic Integrity Policy Violation [AIPV] and a professionalism issue)
- Harsh, disrespectful, accusatory, and reactive responses to faculty and staff
- Abusive or threatening language in any form
- Violation of the AAMFT Code of Ethics
- Overt racism, inclusivity slurs in written or verbal communication (in either academic or clinical contexts)

The flowchart below discusses the process by which such issues are addressed.

Program academic and clinical leaders communicate and collaborate in addressing these issues as warranted. For concerns that potentially violate NU Student Code of Conduct and/or pertain to the Office of Institutional Equity, referrals will be made using the process described in the Referrals section.

Overview of Professional Standards and Expectations (PSE) Review Process



The Program is not required to utilize every level of intervention, support, remediation, warning, or committee review prior to initiating a PSEC review.

Initial Identification of a Concern

When a concern regarding a student's academic, professional, interpersonal, or clinical conduct is identified, program personnel notify the appropriate program leadership and provide relevant information regarding the concern.

The responsible member of program leadership reviews the concern and determines the most appropriate next step. Non-clinical concerns are reviewed by the Academic Program Director (APD). Clinical concerns are reviewed by the Director of Clinical

Training (DCT) or designated clinical leadership.

At this stage, program leadership may determine that the concern can be addressed through discussion, support, coaching, or other informal intervention. If the concern is satisfactorily resolved, the matter is documented and the concern is closed.

Routing of Concerns

Concerns are addressed according to their nature:

Non-clinical course concerns are reviewed through existing student support processes, including At-Risk and Student Success Summit (SSS) procedures when appropriate. These processes are designed to provide support, resources, and intervention to promote student success and professional development. More information about these processes can be found in the Program Handbooks.

Clinical course concerns are typically reviewed through the Clinical Support Committee (CSC) and/or Clinical Development Committee (CDC) processes described in the Clinical Training Handbook. Depending on the nature and severity of the concern, clinical leadership may provide support, identify developmental action items, or recommend additional review. Clinical concerns are often resolved through support, developmental recommendations, and action items without requiring further committee review.

Escalation to the Professional Standards and Expectations Committee (PSEC)

Most concerns are addressed through supportive intervention and developmental processes. However, concerns may be referred to the Professional Standards and Expectations Committee (PSEC) when a student accumulates any single occurrence through the applicable review processes.

In some situations, a concern may be referred directly to PSEC without prior supportive intervention when the severity or nature of the concern warrants immediate review.

Student Notification and Response

When a matter is referred to PSEC, the student will receive written notification describing the concerns under review. The notification will include a summary of the alleged conduct, any relevant supporting information, and a deadline by which the student may provide a written response.

Committee Review

The PSEC reviews available documentation, considers the student's response when provided, and evaluates the concern within the context of the program's Professional

Standards and Expectations.

For clinical matters, the CSC and/or CDC may first review the concern and implement developmental action items or recommendations. Clinical concerns that also raise broader academic, professional, or ethical issues may subsequently be referred to PSEC for additional review.

Factors Considered During a PSEC Review

1. Nature and severity of the concern
2. Professionalism and responsiveness
3. Feedback from faculty, staff, site, and supervisor (as applicable)
4. Overall clinical performance (as applicable)
5. Academic performance
6. Remediation history and outcomes
7. Risk to client welfare and program integrity

Possible Outcomes

Following review, one or more of the following outcomes may occur:

- Determination that no Professional Standards and Expectations violation occurred and no further action is required.
- Identification of specific developmental goals, support measures, or educational interventions.
- Implementation of corrective action plans, probationary status, remediation requirements, or clinical action items.
- Referral to additional university processes when warranted, including Educational Conference procedures related to the National University Code of Conduct.
- Recommendation for dismissal from the program when concerns are determined to be sufficiently serious or when prior interventions have been unsuccessful.

All concerns, reviews, action plans, and outcomes are documented and maintained in accordance with the current program policies and procedures.

The Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences has a unified and limited appeals process pertaining to outcomes of the Professional Standards and Expectations process. That document can be reviewed in the next section of this document. The appeals policy relates specifically to program-level decisions and is separate for the broader University appeals process, which can be located in the current University catalog.

REFERRALS

Referral to the Office of Community Standards (OCS)

The program may submit an Incident Report at <https://www.nu.edu/reportit/> to OCS for documentation purposes for minimum incidents that fall under the Student Code of Conduct. OCS will keep record in the event of reoccurrence and will be addressed accordingly. Depending on the severity of the incident, the offenses may be considered as Significant under the Student Conduct Resolution Process (SCRIP).

For any incidents that are considered Significant under the Student Code of Conduct, the committee will submit an Incident Report at <https://www.nu.edu/reportit/> to OCS for further review and resolution as per the Student Code of Conduct.

Depending on the timing of such incident(s), both the program and OCS may work concurrently but independently, each following each perspective process and resolution, including but not limited to any applicable sanction(s).

Referral to the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

The program will submit an Incident Report to the OIE at <https://www.nu.edu/reportit/> if the situation involves any allegations related to discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on protected category.

UNIFIED PROGRAM APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURES JFK SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT

Purpose

This outlines the Unified Program Appeals Policy and Procedures process for students requesting an appeal related to academic performance, program standards, and programmatic dismissal decisions. This policy and procedure ensure consistency and fairness in processing appeals within the Social and Behavioral Sciences Division of the JFK School of Psychology and Social Sciences (JFKSOPSS).

Scope

This applies to all students requesting an appeal of a decision reached by a program level review committee, including:

- Program dismissal
- Academic performance standards
- Sanctions imposed by faculty or committees

This does NOT apply to grade appeals or appeals to decisions made on behalf of [General Catalog](#), [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Equal Opportunity, Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy and Procedures](#) or other university-wide policies.

Key Terms

- **Academic Program Director (APD):** Faculty member responsible for directing a particular academic program (e.g., MAMFT, CMHC)
- **Appeals Coordinator:** The person who will coordinate the appeals process. In most cases, this will be the JFKSOPSS Associate Dean of Students or Dean's designee.
- **Program Level Review Committee:** A meeting conducted by the specific program level review committee to review potential violations of the program's Standards of Professional and Ethical Behavior, determine responsibility and impose consequences (if warranted).

Appeals Process

A student may request an appeal to the decision by submitting a written request to JFKSOPSS'S Appeals Coordinator at ssbs@nu.edu. All requests to appeal must be accompanied by documentation that demonstrates the **"Grounds for Appeal"** have been met.

Grounds for Appeal

Appeals may be submitted based on one or more of the following grounds:

1. Procedural error that significantly impacted the decision
2. New documentation not available at the time of the original decision
3. Evidence of bias or conflict of interest in the original decision-making process
4. Consequences that are disproportionate or outside established precedent

Caveats

- Appeals are not full reviews of the original decision
- Dissatisfaction with the outcome alone is not an acceptable ground for appeal.
- Disagreement with a professional judgment regarding clinical readiness, professional standards, or suitability for clinical training, by itself, does not constitute grounds for appeal on the programmatic level.

Submission Requirements

Students must submit a written appeal within ten (10) business days of the final decision to ssbs@nu.edu.

The appeal must include:

- Student name and ID
- Copy of the final decision letter
- Detailed explanation of the grounds for appeal (see above)
- Supporting documentation
- Desired outcome or resolution

Review Process

The Program Appeal Panel

All appeals will be reviewed by the Appeals Panel. There will be a minimum of three persons on the Appeal Panel. The Program Appeal Panel will be chaired by the Program Appeals Coordinator. The other two members are drawn from program faculty, with the following requirements to serve.

1. They do not have any conflicts of interest.
2. They were not involved in the original review and decision.
3. One member will be from the student's academic program; the second will be from another program in the Division.

Other Guidelines for Program Appeals

1. Program Appeals are not intended to be full reviews of the complaint. Program Appeals are confined to a review of the written documentation or record, and pertinent documentation regarding the grounds for program appeal; witnesses may be called if necessary.
2. Program Appeals are not an opportunity to substitute opinions or judgment for that of the original decision-maker merely because they disagree with the finding and/or sanctions. Program Appeals decisions are to be deferential to the original decision-maker, making changes to the finding only where there is clear error and to the sanction only if there is a compelling justification to do so.

The Program Appeal Process

1. Within ten (10) business days of receipt of the appeal, the Program Appeals Coordinator will make a determination as to the eligibility of the submitted appeal. This decision will be shared with the student in writing and only those with a legitimate need to know.
2. If a request for appeal is **not** granted, the decision and any consequences imposed by the original decision-maker(s) will remain in effect.
3. If a request for appeal **is** granted, within ten additional (10) business days, the program appeal panel will convene for review of the appeal request. The results of the appeal will be shared with the student and any involved parties.

Outcomes

The final decision, after appeal may:

- Uphold the original decision
- Reverse the decision
- Modify the decision and/or sanction

If an appeal is granted, only one appeal will be heard. All decisions made at the conclusion of the appeal process are final. Further requests for a program appeal will not be considered.

Policy Review

This Unified Program Appeals Policy and Procedures will be reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with institutional standards and best practices.