

Professional Fitness Review Procedures

Professional fitness reviews occur during the Fall and Spring semesters for each student who is active in the School Psychology Program. During the Fall semester, each student who was enrolled in courses during the preceding Spring and/or Summer semester is reviewed and during the Spring semester, each student enrolled in courses the preceding Fall semester is reviewed. Professional fitness reviews are confidential discussions between all school psychology program faculty regarding each student's ongoing performance. These reviews are considered a part of formative assessment such that feedback from reviews must be incorporated into student behavior and skills in subsequent reviews. During these discussions, faculty utilize the Professional Fitness Student Evaluation Summary Form included in this Handbook. Five areas related to effective practice of the professional school psychologist are reviewed: Academic Progress and Courses/Grades; Legal and Ethical Behavior; Judgment and Decision-making; Commitment to Profession and Professional growth; and Interpersonal Relations.

The Professional Fitness Student Evaluation Summary Form includes behaviors illustrative of and relevant to each category noted above. The list of behaviors is not all inclusive; faculty may identify concerns in addition to those specific behaviors listed. Professional Fitness Evaluations are generally based on faculty observations of student classroom behaviors and interactions, review of work samples, report by field-based supervisors and/or school staff working with the student during field activities, and/or informal observations of students during interactions with faculty. Review of professional fitness of each student in the program takes place each semester (Fall and Spring). Faculty who observed noted behaviors are identified on the Professional Fitness Student Evaluation Summary; faculty who are present during review discussions may also be listed on the form. It should be noted that feedback to the student regarding behaviors of concern is not contingent on unanimous faculty agreement. That is, any and all concerns that any faculty member might have about a particular student are summarized in writing and feedback is provided to the student in writing.

A school psychology student receives a professional fitness review each semester s/he is active in the Program. The intent of this review is to discuss concerns noted by faculty as well as report to the student these concerns that may potentially impact effective functioning as a school psychologist. The review is internal and completed Professional Fitness Student Evaluation Summaries are maintained in each student's individual program folder. The folder also houses current admissions, advisement, and other programmatic information. The documents within the folder are collected for internal program purposes and are not shared with individuals outside of the program faculty. In compliance with The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the School Psychology Program at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga provides for the confidentiality of student records by maintaining files in a locked cabinet.

An exception to the sharing of information outside of the program would occur if the program faculty recommended any of the following as indicated on the Review form: recommend dismissal from the program, recommend against degree candidacy, recommend against enrollment in internship, and/or recommend against graduation/state licensure. In any of these circumstances, the Graduate School *may* require that relevant documentation be provided to support the faculty recommendation in the event that the student wishes to appeal a faculty

recommendation. These conditions would be interpretable under UTC Graduate school policies. UTC Graduate School policies and procedures related to program dismissal can be found at www.utc.edu in the 2013-2014 Graduate Catalog, under General University regulations. These are reproduced as follows:

Continuation Standards

A student admitted to graduate study must maintain a 3.0 grade point average on all courses taken for graduate credit. In the event the student fails to meet this standard, one of the following actions will be taken.

Probation — *A student will be placed on academic probation whenever the grade point average falls below a 3.0 on courses completed for graduate credit. (See discussion under Dismissal.)*

Dismissal (Academic) — *Decisions regarding continuation will be made by the dean of The Graduate School. Students admitted to graduate study must maintain a 3.0 institutional cumulative grade point average (GPA) in all courses taken for graduate credit.*

A graduate student may also be dismissed for a grade of U, D, or F in any course; more than two grades below a B; failure of the comprehensive/preliminary examination; an unsatisfactory evaluation of a thesis or dissertation; failure of a research defense; or any other failure of a required component pertaining to Graduate School academic requirements. Any, or a combination of these, constitutes sufficient basis for dismissal of a student at the discretion of the degree program and the Graduate School. Individual programs have the right to establish their own criteria; however, the preceding definition must be the minimum standard for continuing in graduate programs.

Graduate students will be placed on academic probation when their institutional cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0. By the end of the next two terms of enrollment (counting the entire summer session as one term), students must raise their institutional cumulative GPA to 3.0 or higher. Students will be academically dismissed if they fail to achieve this institutional cumulative GPA within the two semester probation OR if they fail to achieve a 3.0 or higher for either probationary semester.

Dismissed students may appeal to the Graduate Council for readmission. Upon readmission, students may resume graduate study on probation with the same continuation standards.

The Graduate School has adopted a Statement of Professional Fitness regarding a student's ethical and professional skills/behavior responsibilities. Individual programs may also adopt their own professional fitness standards appropriate to the discipline. If after an informal preliminary investigation it is determined that a student's conduct is in violation of the professional fitness code of The Graduate School or the specific program in which the student is enrolled, any of the following actions may be recommended by program faculty:

- *A formal reprimand*
- *Additional coursework*
- *Personal counseling*
- *Additional supervision*
- *Formal probation*
- *Dismissal from the program*

Program Dismissal for Reasons Other than Individual Course Grades

Institutional Cumulative GPA

A student will be dismissed if he or she earns a semester GPA below 3.0 while on academic probation for low institutional cumulative GPA.

Failure to Make Timely Progress

A student may also be dismissed should the program faculty find that the student has failed to complete degree requirements in a timely manner, received an excessive number of I, NC or NP course evaluations, or failed to pass examinations required by a master's or doctoral program. The criteria for timely progress shall be defined by each graduate program.

Ethical Violations

A student may also be dismissed should the program faculty find that the student's behavior directly violates the ethical code of conduct governing members of the professional organization for the program's discipline, or whose personal conduct leads the faculty to conclude that the student is unfit to assume a role as a professional in the discipline. A majority vote of the program faculty will serve as basis for dismissal if the student violates the guidelines for ethical conduct.

A student may also be dismissed for cause if found to have violated UTC's code of conduct. Refer to the Student Handbook for a review of these expectations.

All students conducting research with human participants or animal subjects must comply with the policies and procedures of the University's Institutional Review Board or the Animal Review Board. Violation of these regulations shall be considered a violation of ethical behavior.

Failure to Achieve Professional Skills/Behavior

A student, regardless of academic performance, may be dismissed should he or she fail to demonstrate mastery of essential professional behaviors, which include those skills essential for work in the profession. These skills shall be defined by each graduate degree program. A majority vote of the program faculty will serve as basis for dismissal if the student fails to demonstrate proficiency of professional achievement.

Dismissal Procedure

A recommendation for dismissal can be made by a majority vote of the designated departmental committee (or, if no such committee exists, the graduate faculty of the program) if a student earns a semester GPA below 3.0 while on academic probation for low institutional cumulative GPA, fails to achieve professional skills/behavior/fitness, or violates the ethical code of conduct governing members of the professional organization for the program's discipline. Such recommendation shall be made in writing to the Department Head or Program Director. Before communicating with the student the Department Head or Program Director will consult with the academic dean of the college where the program resides and the dean of The Graduate School. Other university administrators may be consulted as necessary. Upon the concurrence of the academic dean and the dean of The Graduate School (and others if consulted) with the decision to dismiss, the head or director shall provide written notification of dismissal to the student. Notification must occur within five working days of the consultation with the academic dean and the dean of the Graduate School. Such notice shall inform the student of the right to appeal and specific procedures to be followed.

The student may continue to attend classes during the appeal process or register for subsequent semesters unless the student's presence poses a continuing threat to persons or property, an ongoing risk of disrupting the academic process, or health/safety concerns. This will be determined on a case by case basis. The program director and instructors will outline specifically what the student must do to be allowed to continue to attend classes, internships, and clinical rotations and may limit the student to an observer's role in clinical situations. Any such determination shall be included as part of the Department Head/Program Director's written notification to the student. If the student does not comply with the requirements outlined in this written notification, the student may be immediately removed and may not attend classes while his/her appeal is in process.

Student Appeal Procedure

Following written notification of dismissal from the program, the student has the right to appeal. Students who wish to appeal their dismissal should contact the UTC Graduate School office for the necessary forms and to review the procedures of the appeal. A written appeal, including a documented rationale for the basis of the appeal, must be submitted to the Department Head/Program Director within five working days. In all cases, the program faculty shall be presumed to have taken appropriate action and the student appealing shall have the burden of proof to the contrary.

Step 1. Within five working days of receipt of the student's written appeal, the Department Head/Program Director will meet with the student and review the student's written appeal with him/her in person. If the student declines such a meeting, the department head/director will proceed to Step 2.

Step 2. Within five working days of the meeting described in Step 1, the department head/program director (in consultation with the dean of the academic college) will notify and confirm in writing to the student the results of this appeal. The head/director will also notify the dean of The Graduate School regarding the results of this appeal. Copies of this notification will be sent to the program faculty.

Step 3. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Department Head/Program Director, he or she may appeal this decision to the Graduate Council Appeals Committee (the Chair of the Graduate Council and three members of the Council). Such appeal must be made within five working days of notification of the head/director's decision.

Step 4. Within five working days of receiving the student's written appeal, the Graduate Council Appeals Committee will meet to hear the student's appeal. The Chair of the Graduate Council shall preside over this hearing as a non-voting chair. The student may bring such materials and/or witnesses as necessary to support his or her position. The Department Head/Program Director and/or a representative(s) of the program faculty may also attend this hearing in order to explain the reason(s) for the dismissal and answer questions. After hearing, the dean of The Graduate School will notify and confirm in writing to the student the results of this appeal. The graduate dean will also notify the college dean and the department head/director, who will in turn notify the program faculty.

Step 5. If the student remains unsatisfied with this decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the Chancellor of the University. Such request must be made within five working days of notification from the dean of The Graduate School. The dean of The Graduate School shall forward all pertinent information to the Chancellor with a recommendation. The Chancellor's decision shall be made within ten working days and shall be considered final.

Faculty Appeal

The faculty member of record for the appeal may appeal an overturn of his/her recommendation to the next higher administrative official in the chain of command or to the Chancellor if the appeal was overturned at the Chancellor level.

Note: *A student who is dismissed from his or her program of study for reasons other than grades, and whose appeal for readmission to that program is denied through the above process but who is in good academic standing, may apply for admission to another graduate program(s) at the University. Admission to such other graduate program is not guaranteed and is subject to that program's specific procedures and requirements.*

School Psychology Program
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Student Evaluation Summary Form

Student Name _____

Faculty present for review _____ Date _____

Based on the student's performance during the: fall _____ spring _____ summer term of _____.

Professional fitness reviews for each student in the Program are completed twice yearly for continuously enrolled students and involve confidential discussions between all school psychology program faculty regarding each student's ongoing performance. These reviews are considered a part of performance-based, formative assessment such that any constructive feedback from reviews must be incorporated into student behavior and skills in subsequent reviews in that identified behaviors are considered by faculty as critical professional work characteristics expected of a school psychologist. For additional information, please refer to the School Psychology Program Handbook.

Ratings: Satisfactory (S); Needs Improvement (I); Unsatisfactory (U); Not able to Rate (NR)
(see back for description of example behaviors in each category)

I. Academic Progress and Courses/Grades: Rating _____

Comments (An explanation of a rating of "I" or "U" is required)

II. Legal and ethical behavior: Rating _____

Comments (An explanation of a rating of "I" or "U" is required)

III. Judgment and decision-making: Rating _____

Comments (An explanation of a rating of "I" or "U" is required)

IV. Commitment to profession and professional growth: Rating _____

Comments (An explanation of a rating of "I" or "U" is required)

V. Interpersonal relations/Other Professional Work Characteristics: Rating _____

Comments (An explanation of a rating of "I" or "U" is required)

VI. Other Personal, work-related characteristics

Recommendations (may check more than one):

- ☐ None
- ☐ Designate faculty member to discuss concern with student _____
- ☐ Joint conference involving student and primary faculty
- ☐ Develop student performance improvement plan (developed by faculty in conferencing with student and attached to review form)
- ☐ Consider recommending dismissal from program
- ☐ Consider recommending against degree candidacy
- ☐ Consider recommending against enrollment in internship
- ☐ Consider recommending against graduation/state licensure
- ☐ Other (please describe below)

Behaviors listed below for each category are provided for illustration purposes; listings are examples and they are not intended to be all inclusive definitions of each category.

I. Academic Progress and Courses/Grades

consistency of performance on tests, projects, etc.; participates actively, cooperatively, and productively in group projects; demonstrates ability not only to memorize but to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate; shows understanding of and ability to think from a scientist-practitioner perspective; shows evidence of retention and application of information and skills acquired in earlier courses in subsequent courses.

II. Legal and ethical behavior

abides by all behavioral and academic expectations in the UTC Student Handbook and UTC Graduate School catalog including adherence to confidentiality guidelines required by the Program; demonstrates awareness of and compliance with the requirements of federal laws (such as IDEA, FERPA, etc.), particularly in practicum and internship courses; demonstrates awareness of and compliance with the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics, particularly in practicum and internship courses

III. Judgment and decision-making

demonstrates reflective rather than impulsive decision making; demonstrates ability to use nuanced rather than simplistic thinking; comes to reasonable conclusions; shows ability to look at a situation from a variety of perspectives before deciding on a course of action; understands that behavior is multifaceted; considers alternative viewpoints from one's own in making decisions

IV. Commitment to profession and professional growth

membership in professional organizations, participation in training opportunities provided by professional organizations, seeks opportunities to develop professional skills through volunteer activities, seeks opportunities to increase understanding of principles of professional practice governing school psychology

V. Interpersonal relations

appropriate communication in classes with peers and faculty and in classes, field experiences, practica, and internship settings, behavior that reflects respect for differences in ideas, opinions, and perspectives with peers, faculty, and all individuals in classes, field, practica, and internship settings, responds appropriately to constructive feedback from faculty or other supervisors, follows time schedules by arriving on time and being prepared, recognizes the importance of working collaboratively with others and refrains from unprofessional discussions regarding peers and others in class, field experiences, practica, and internship settings.

VI. Other Personal, work-related characteristics

any behavior(s) demonstrated by a student that may not be consistent with expectations in an educational work setting such as dress, hygiene, work habits, etc.