Graduate Student Conduct Code & Policy
Department of Psychology
North Dakota State University

Overview

The mission of the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Department of Psychology is to educate students and advance research and professional service in psychology. As a Department, we value the psychological and physical well-being of all students, staff, and faculty. The Department has established professionalism and ethics as core values. Psychologists must live up to the high ideals of their profession. Their lives must be guided by the principles of honesty and integrity in order to ensure that the public can regard their words and actions as trustworthy.

To develop an understanding and respect for these principles, the Department has developed the Graduate Student Conduct Code and Policy, substantially informed by the American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. This policy is applicable to everyone enrolled as a graduate student in the Department, including individuals in the Psychological Clinical Science, Visual and Cognitive Neuroscience, and Health/Social graduate programs. Acceptance of this policy is required as a condition of admission and continued enrollment in the Department graduate programs. Violations of these standards can be grounds for dismissal from the program. Please visit the website for the full APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct here:


The Department takes a proactive stance toward problems of distress, impairment, or incompetence, because ignoring trainee problems risks endangering the public as well as the field of psychology. By the time our students graduate with a doctoral degree in psychology, they are expected to assume responsibility for the well-being of their own students, research participants, patients (in the case of Psychological Clinical Science students), and others. Thus, it is important for the Department to evaluate students in terms of their academic, ethical, and psychological fitness, with the aim of ensuring that students meet the highest standards in their research, teaching, clinical practice (as applicable), and other aspects of their work as psychology trainees. Accordingly, one aim of our semi-annual evaluation process is to ensure that our students have sufficient development of their academic knowledge, clinical skills (as applicable), research skills, ethics, and emotional stability to function in professional work settings. However, students may be evaluated whenever there is cause for concern.

Faculty may use a variety of sources of information in evaluating student performance and identifying potential problems. Sources of information may include, but are not limited to, graduate coursework, theses and dissertations, clinical or teaching placements, and interactions
with faculty supervisors and student peers. Any faculty who could be affected by a student’s problems will be notified and may potentially be involved in remediation procedures.

**Section 1: Graduate Student Conduct Standards**

Any student who fails to meet the University standards may be subject to sanctions imposed by the University (see the current NDSU policy on Student Conduct, Policy 601). In addition, the Department of Psychology has instituted standards and sanctions specific to psychology graduate students, as described in this document.

High standards of academic and professional conduct are expected from all students, both to facilitate the learning of all students and to promote professional values. Individuals are expected to represent the Department in a positive, professional manner. Students participating in off-campus experiences, including research, clinical practica, and internship, must also uphold the specific policies of the off-campus site.

All students are held responsible for exhibiting the following professional attributes: honesty, integrity, accountability, professional demeanor, respect toward others, and confidentiality for students, patients, and research participants. Academic dishonesty and professional misconduct are unacceptable. If there is doubt about whether or not academic or professional conduct is appropriate, students should ask their research advisor or the Department Chair.

Examples of unprofessional conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

**Academic Misconduct (from NDSU Policy 335, with Department additions):**

1) Plagiarizing, i.e., submitting work that is, in part or in whole, not entirely one’s own, without attributing such portions to their correct sources;
   a) Cases of apparently unintentional plagiarism or source misuse must be handled on a case-by-case basis and in the context of the instructor’s policies. Unintentional plagiarism may constitute academic misconduct.
   b) Improper attribution of sources may be a symptom of bad writing and not plagiarism. Instructors are encouraged to recognize that citation skills are developed over time and are contextual.
2) Receiving, possessing, distributing or using any material or assistance not authorized by the instructional staff member in the preparation of papers, reports, examinations or any class assignments to be submitted for credit as part of a course or to fulfill other academic requirements;
3) Unauthorized collaborating on individual assignments or representing work from unauthorized collaboration as independent work;
4) Having others take examinations or complete assignments (e.g., papers, reports, laboratory data, or products) for oneself;
5) Stealing or otherwise improperly obtaining copies of an examination or assignment before or after its administration, or passing it onto other students;
6) Unauthorized copying, in part or in whole, of exams or assignments kept by the instructional staff member, including those handed out in class for review purposes;
7) Altering or correcting a paper, report, presentation, examination, or any class assignment, in part or in whole, without the instructional staff member's permission, and submitting it for re-evaluation or re-grading;

8) Misrepresenting one's attendance or the attendance of others (e.g., by PRS or an attendance sheet) in a course or practical experience where credit is given or a mandatory attendance policy is in effect;

9) Fabricating or falsifying information in research, papers, or reports;

10) Aiding or abetting academic misconduct (i.e., knowingly giving assistance not authorized by the instructional staff member to another in the preparation of papers, reports, presentations, examinations, or laboratory data and products);

11) Unauthorized copying of another student's work (e.g., data, results in a lab report, or exam);

12) Tampering with or destroying materials, (e.g., in order to impair another student's performance);

13) Using false or misleading information (e.g., illness or family emergency) to gain extension or exemption on an assignment or test;

14) Using a test manual acquired by virtue of the student’s employment as an instructor for unauthorized purposes.

Professional Misconduct

Electronic Communication. Some uses of social media and electronic communication may be considered violations of this policy. Examples include electronic communications (e.g., text messages, e-mail) or social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) posts that violate the guidelines for professionalism or NDSU’s Non-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Anti-Harassment policies (see below for policy details). In addition, students should be aware that unprofessional electronic communication (e.g., social media posts) can lead to negative consequences. For example, it is not uncommon for undergraduate students, prospective employers, research participants, and patients to search for a teacher, client, job applicant, or researcher on the internet. If they find inappropriate posts by a graduate student, it could negatively impact the student’s professional reputation and the student.

Professional misconduct includes, but is not limited to the following types of behavior, which may occur in person, via electronic communications, or other contexts:

1) Violating conduct described in course policies or articulated by the instructor;

2) Violating any code of ethics of the profession of psychology, as stated in the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct;

3) Contributing to, or engaging in, any activity which disrupts or obstructs the teaching, research, or outreach programs of the College or University, on campus or at off-campus training or research sites;

4) Entering the classroom, laboratory, or clinical experience habitually late or leaving early, arriving late to a professional activity, without prior permission from the instructor;

5) Approaching faculty, staff, or students in less than a professional manner and treating faculty, staff, peers, students, or patients in a disrespectful or inconsiderate manner (e.g., failing to show up for meeting, using disrespectful language, not addressing a faculty or
staff member as they wish to be addressed); this includes violation of NDSU’s Non-Discrimination Policy (http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/100.pdf), which states, “North Dakota State University does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a U.S. veteran.”;

7) Unprofessional dress (e.g., as required at off-campus training or research sites);
8) Bringing family members, guests, and pets to the classroom or any professional academic activities without prior consent of the instructor;
9) Falsifying applications, forms, documents, reports, or records of any kind or providing false information to Department personnel prior to admission to the Department, or while an active member of the Department’s academic programs;
10) Unauthorized accessing or revealing of confidential information about faculty, staff, peers, students, or patients;
11) Violating student or patient respect and confidentiality in any practice or learning setting;
12) Theft, damaging, defacing, or unauthorized use of any property of the Department, University, or off-campus training or research sites;
13) Electronic communications or computer usage that violates NDSU acceptable use policies according to NDSU Policy 158 (http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/158.pdf) or off-campus training or research sites usage guidelines;
14) Sexual harassment as described in NDSU Policy 162 (http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/162.pdf), the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, and other off-campus training or research site policies (as applicable);
15) Harassment defined as “unwelcome verbal or physical behavior which has the intent or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's employment or academic endeavors or creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment. Harassment may include (but is not limited to) jokes, derogatory comments, pictures, and/or direct physical advances,” as defined in NDSU Policy 163 (http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/163.pdf), the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, and other off-campus training or research site policies. Note: This includes violating NDSU’s Non-Discrimination policy and is also prohibited in electronic forms (e.g., social media, text messaging, e-mail);
16) Endangering patients, faculty, staff, students, or peers or damaging their property;
17) Intoxication, abuse, possession, use, or illegal sale of alcohol, drugs, chemicals, firearms, explosives, or weapons within the University campus, in any practice or off-campus setting, or when representing the Department;
18) Any violation or conviction of any federal, state, or municipal law as well as University rule or rules at an off-campus training or research site;
19) DUI & DWI (driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated) is considered by the Department as improper behavior, and any individual violating this law is referred to undergo an alcohol and drug abuse evaluation at the student’s expense;
20) A preponderance of evidence of participation in a felony crime will typically serve as reason for termination from the department’s graduate program.
21) Using a faculty or staff member’s name or signature without permission is forbidden;
22) Using data collected while at NDSU without explicit permission from the supervising faculty member (e.g., for a manuscript, poster, or presentation) is also forbidden;
23) No work should be submitted with the faculty member listed as a co-author without authorization by that faculty member.

Multiple Relationships. The APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (section 3.05) states that, “a multiple relationship occurs when a psychologist is in a professional role with a person and (1) at the same time is in another role with the same person, (2) at the same time is in a relationship with a person closely associated with or related to the person with whom the psychologist has the professional relationship, or (3) promises to enter into another relationship in the future with the person or a person closely associated with or related to the person. A psychologist refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the psychologist’s objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a psychologist, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.”

The potential for an inappropriate multiple relationship exists when a graduate student serves as a teaching assistant, because the teaching assistant is in a position of authority over the students in the class. The Department considers it inappropriate conduct for teaching assistants or course instructors to have a dating or sexual relationship with one of their students. This also applies to a graduate research assistant working in a lab with undergraduate research assistants, since the graduate student is in a position of authority in such a setting. All graduate assistants are also expected to respect the rights and opinions of students and uphold the academic standards of the University. Another clear violation is a Psychological Clinical Science student having a romantic, sexual, or otherwise nonprofessional relationship with a patient that they are treating or have treated.

If you are unsure whether a relationship would be appropriate in light of the guidelines above, it is best to seek advice from your advisor or the Department Chair.

Reporting Process

It has been the longstanding policy that all full-time faculty in the Department of Psychology have a legitimate educational interest in the academic and professional progress, as well as the behavioral conduct, of our graduate students, as it affects the educational and work environment of the Department. Therefore, all faculty may potentially be informed of reported graduate student misconduct situations.

Academic Misconduct

1) Students are encouraged to report academic misconduct promptly to the Department Chair or their advisor (who will then report the misconduct to the Department Chair).
2) The course instructor who suspects that academic misconduct has occurred in their course or other instructional context has an initial responsibility to: a) inform the student(s) involved of the suspicion and the grounds for the suspicion, b) allow a fair opportunity
for the student to respond, and c) make a fair and reasonable judgment as to whether any academic misconduct occurred.

3) The course instructor will report academic misconduct violations to the Department Chair as soon as possible.

Professional Misconduct

1) Students are encouraged to promptly report any professional misconduct to the Department Chair or their advisor (who will then report the misconduct to the Department Chair) as soon as possible. If the misconduct occurs at a clinical training site, the student should report it to the Director of Clinical Training, and the Director of Clinical Training will report it to the Chair and on-site practicum supervisor. With regard to confidentiality regarding the reported situation, the Department will follow NDSU policy guidelines (e.g., Title IX policy) as appropriate.

2) Faculty members and other department personnel who become aware of a professional misconduct violation should report it to the Department Chair as soon as possible.

Disciplinary Sanctions

Academic Misconduct

1) The course instructor is responsible for determining the sanction(s) for academic misconduct in the course. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, failure for a particular assignment, test, or course.

2) The course instructor will inform the student of the sanction(s) in writing by completing the Student Academic Misconduct Tracking Form per University Policy 335 and submitting it to the student and the Department Chair.

3) The Department Chair will submit a copy of the form to the Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean of the College, and the Registrar and Provost/VPAA, in accordance with University Policy 335.

4) A copy of the Student Academic Misconduct Tracking Form will be placed in the student’s academic file.

5) The College Dean may recommend University suspension or expulsion in addition to the sanctions listed above.

Professional Misconduct

1) Professional misconduct issues may happen outside of the classroom and have broad implications for the well-being of students, faculty, and staff in the Department. The Department Chair has the initial and primary responsibility for administering and enforcing professional misconduct issues.

2) Consistent with SB 2150, all non-academic misconduct complaints that may result in suspension or expulsion include the right of the accused and complainant to be represented by an attorney or nonattorney advocate, at the student’s expense, and the right to be informed of this right before the proceeding takes place. All processes will follow the law outlined in SB 2150, which can be viewed in its entirety at this link:
3) The Department Chair will work in collaboration with a three-member ad hoc faculty committee to determine the consequences for professional misconduct. The faculty committee will include representation from each of the three graduate programs within the Department and will be approved by the Department full-time faculty.

4) The committee will determine if additional reporting of the misconduct should take place per NDSU policy and will report the incident to other offices, as appropriate (e.g., Equity and Diversity Office, Student Affairs, the Graduate Dean, the Registrar, the Behavioral Intervention Team).

Department-Related Sanctions

In addition to any sanctions imposed by the College or University, the Department Chair (informed by the ad hoc faculty committee) may assign further sanctions, depending upon the circumstances and nature of the misconduct. The Department Chair will notify the student in writing of the sanction(s) and rights to due process and forward a copy to the Graduate School Dean and other offices, as appropriate per NDSU policy (e.g., Diversity and Equity Office, Student Affairs, the Registrar, etc.). If there is a complainant(s) involved in the incident, the complainant(s) will also be informed, in writing, of the sanctions and the right to appeal if allowable according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (FERPA; e.g., if the conduct involves crimes of violence and/or Title IX actions). For more information on the FERPA, see 99.31 (14) and (15): https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/ferparegs.pdf. For more information on Title IX, see https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/603.pdf.

Disciplinary action for academic and professional misconduct will depend on the severity of the misconduct. In general, sanctions may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

1) Probation
2) Supervised probation
3) Suspension or Termination from the Graduate Program*
4) Recommendation to the Graduate School Dean that the student be expelled from the University (in cases of particularly egregious or multiple instances of academic/professional misconduct)*

*Consistent with SB 2150, all non-academic misconduct complaints that may result in suspension or expulsion include the right of the accused and complainant to be represented by an attorney or nonattorney advocate, at the student’s expense, and the right to be informed of this right before the proceeding takes place.

Academic Probation, Suspension, and Separation

Probation, suspension, and separation from a program in which a student is enrolled are rare events. The semi-annual review of progress is designed to help both students and faculty identify potential problem areas early so that appropriate interventions may be made. The faculty
consider it a primary responsibility to assist students in their professional development. As discussed below in the Remediation section, faculty may require students to successfully complete additional academic, teaching, research, and/or clinical training activities (e.g., courses, written work, practicum training, or supervision) before allowing students to progress through the program (e.g., advancement to doctoral candidacy; approval of a Master’s thesis or dissertation; approval to apply for clinical internship).

Dismissal from the Department will be explored for graduate students who pose a threat to the safety and well-being of others and/or in the case of extreme misbehavior or failed efforts at remediation. Often, dismissal will center on guiding the student to pursue other options for their education and career. As mentioned previously, if suspension or dismissal of a student is being considered, the student has the right to an attorney or nonattorney advocate, at the student’s expense, and the right to be made aware of this right per SB 2150. A student who is separated from the Psychological Clinical Science program is not permitted to participate in clinical activities or clinical courses and will not be recommended for internship.

Right to Appeal

Students sanctioned for violations have the right to appeal. If there is a complainant(s) involved the incident(s), then the complainant(s) may also have the right to appeal depending on the nature of the violation per University policy (e.g., the complainant may appeal if it is a violation of Title IX policy). Student appeals must follow the appeal procedure outlined below.

Graduate Student Appeal Review Process

1. A graduate student may appeal a committee and Department Chair decision about sanctions by requesting a review of the case by the full Department of Psychology faculty. Complainant(s) may also have the right to appeal a decision about sanctions following this process. Complainant(s) may only be lawfully informed of actions and have the right to appeal in instances involving crimes of violence and/or Title IX actions.
2. A written letter of appeal must be written and delivered within 15 days of the decision.
3. After reviewing these materials, the faculty, as a whole, may vote to change the recommended consequences for the misconduct. The decision of the Department will generally be issued within 15 working days of the receipt of the appeal letter, but may take longer during University recesses, or in the event of complex cases.
4. All other involved parties (e.g., Registrar, Student Affairs, etc.) will be notified of the results of the appeal, as appropriate.
5. The appeal process for sanctions imposed by the College or University is described in NDSU Policy 335.
6. As mentioned above, per ND SB 2150, any student enrolled at NDSU has the right to be represented by an attorney or nonattorney advocate, at the student’s expense during any disciplinary proceeding or process used to address an alleged violation. This is not applicable for allegations related to academic dishonesty. In addition, a student suspended for more than ten days or expelled from NDSU has the right to seek a review of the institution’s decision in the district court. The student must file a petition for review with the appropriate district court no later than one year after the day that the

Unresolved Appeals

After the Department appeals process has been completed, involved persons who are not satisfied with the appeal decision may have the right to appeal the decision to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will make the final decision on any appeals. In cases where the complainant is not provided with information about the outcome, per FERPA policy, the complainant may not have a right to appeal.

Incomplete Disciplinary Process

Students with pending disciplinary or legal actions, with sanctions for which an appeal has been submitted but not resolved, or whose sanctions have not been successfully fulfilled, will not be allowed to graduate from NDSU with a degree, major, or program of study offered by the Department of Psychology. In such cases, the Department reserves the right to place a hold on a student’s graduation until the case has been successfully resolved and the sanctions have been successfully fulfilled.

Section 2: Other Problems that Interfere with Research, Teaching, Clinical Work, or Program Progress

Examples of problems not severe enough to warrant dismissal or other penalties named in Section 1, but that require remediation, include (but are not limited to) the following:

1) Poor academic performance, as shown through poor grades (C or below) in one or more graduate classes, incomplete work, or persistent difficulties completing coursework on time. This also includes deficiencies in research skills, as seen in difficulties conceptualizing research methodology, understanding statistical analyses, or writing an empirical report or integrative literature review. A persistent lack of progress or a failure to pass a major milestone project such as the thesis, area paper, or dissertation will be cause for particular concern.

2) Deficits in the clinical skills of Psychological Clinical Science students, as shown by performance in practicum courses, field placements, or role-played simulations. Causes for concern may include interpersonal skills deficits, persistent problems in forming or maintaining therapeutic relationships, a lack of responsiveness to supervision, inadequate or late clinical report writing, or serious errors in assessment procedures or psychological reports.

3) A pattern of problematic interpersonal behavior as evidenced by signs of recurrent emotional instability, problems with personal boundaries, persistent disturbances in interpersonal relationships, acts of dishonesty, poor judgment, consistently immature or unprofessional behavior, or a lack of sensitivity toward others.

4) A significant psychiatric disorder, such as a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, or substance use disorder, if it interferes with the ability to meet professional and academic expectations. According to the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of
Conduct (section 2.06b): “When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties.”

Students share the responsibility to take action if they believe that another student’s personal problems may be harmful to peers, students, patients (as applicable), or research participants. Typically, students should bring their concerns to the attention of the person who they perceive as potentially causing harm. If that action is not appropriate (e.g., in the case of a peer not feeling comfortable doing so) or does not result in a corrective response, they should consult with a faculty member. Students should also try to recognize whether personal problems might be interfering with their own teaching, research, or clinical activities. Students who believe they have personal problems which are impacting their ability to fulfill their responsibilities should discuss this with their primary research advisor or the Department Chair.

Remediation Procedures

Engaging in psychotherapy is a common way of dealing with personal problems, managing stress, and clarifying expectations for oneself during graduate school. We encourage students to enter psychotherapy whenever it can be useful for professional development or personal growth, at their own expense. NDSU’s Counseling Center offers free psychotherapy services to students on a confidential basis. However, seeking therapy at Counseling Center may create some issues with multiple roles, because some Psychological Clinical Science students may have practicum placements there. Alternatively, students may seek a referral to a therapist in the community. Students are encouraged to review their individual insurance policies for information on psychotherapy service options. Department faculty can help students identify treatment venue options.

Problems that do not involve academic or professional misconduct are typically resolved through informal mechanisms developed through meetings with faculty or supervisors. The remediation plan for these problems should describe specific goals or changes and should provide guidance for possible strategies for reaching the goals. Ideally, the plan will include criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the remediation plan and will establish a timeframe for the remediation process. Remediation options can include any mixture of the following strategies:

1) **Training options** may include: (a) a plan for the student to independently study an issue and write a review paper on a topic directly related to the student’s problems, (b) an additional course, even if a course must be repeated, (c) longer or more frequent meetings with clinical or teaching supervisors, (d) longer or more frequent meetings with faculty mentors, and/or (e) additional supervised clinical, teaching, or research experience.

2) **Treatment options** may include personal psychotherapy. The faculty may be able to provide referrals to local counselors. All details of the therapy sessions will remain confidential.

3) **Administrative options** may include: (a) restricted clinical, teaching, or research activities, (b) probation from the program, (c) a formal leave of absence, whereby the student does not register for any courses for a period of one or two semesters, or (d)
counseling out of the program. In order to return to the program after a formal leave of absence, the student will be expected to provide a written summary describing how the problems have been resolved. This must be approved by the involved faculty before the student is allowed to resume his or her program of study.

Remediation plans should be written according to the sample format on the next page. During the formulation of remediation plans, students should have the opportunity to review the concerns about their performance and be able to discuss the proposed plan for remediation. Students should be allowed to contribute to the written plan, with the approval of faculty or supervisors working with them.

The student’s progress will be reviewed at a designated follow-up time point to ensure that the remediation plan has been helpful and that the student has made adequate progress to continue his or her program of study. Failure to comply with a remediation plan indicates the existence of a major academic, personal, or professional problem. In such a case, the student's behavior will be addressed in the manner described in Section 1 of this policy.
Sample Remediation Plan for Continued Graduate Training in Psychology

The following problems have been observed:

These problems are related to deficiencies in these expected competency benchmarks:

In order to remedy these deficiencies, the student will perform the following activities:

The following date is set for completion of the plan and re-evaluation of the situation:

If the remediation plan is deemed unsuccessful, the following consequences may occur:

I have reviewed the concerns about my performance, and I have had an opportunity to discuss and have input into the proposed plan for remediation. My signature indicates that I understand the nature of the concerns, and I agree to the plan.

___________________  ___________________  _________
Student (printed name)  signature  date

___________________  ___________________  _________
Primary Research Advisor (printed name)  signature  date

___________________  ___________________  _________
Department Chair (printed name)  signature  date
Annual Pledge and Signature

I, ______________________________(print name), have read and understand the above policy, and I agree to accept and abide by the Graduate Student Conduct Code & Policy of the Department of Psychology. I understand that violations of this policy and sanctions imposed, as well as information used to substantiate violations, may be shared with Department-affiliated clinical training or research sites.

______________________________  __________________
Signature                           Date
NOTE: This policy includes components modeled after other student code of conduct policies, including:

2) Case Western Reserve University’s Department of Psychological Sciences Handbook for the Graduate Training Program in Clinical Psychology (http://psychsciences.case.edu/files/2014/12/Clin_Handbook.pdf)