

OSU School Psychology Contract Master's Program

This contract outlines the expectations that all students must meet in order to successfully complete Master's Program in school psychology at The Ohio State University. Although legal issues, ethical guidelines, and standards of practice as set forth by the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists will be covered in select coursework, students are required to be familiar with these procedures whenever providing psychological services of any kind. In addition to the policies set forth by these professional organizations, students are also expected to meet additional program requirements as described in the program manual and this contract. Students who do not meet these requirements can be formally dismissed from the program. Although the material included in this contract may appear punitive, the purpose of this contract is to ensure that all students are informed of the program dismissal policies at the onset and also to inform students of their due process rights.

Students can be dismissed from the program based on two separate violations. Disciplinary action is taken when students violate institutional standards of conduct. These violations can include stealing, drug abuse, plagiarism, falsifying records, and cheating. Students are responsible for learning about all university, college, school, section, and program policies regarding disciplinary action. Academic dismissal occurs when students are lacking in growth in personal, professional, academic and/or skill-related areas. This type of dismissal is under the jurisdiction of the program. Although students are allowed due process, court decisions at the state and federal level have determined trained faculty have the right to evaluate students as they see fit as long as evaluation is not done in an arbitrary, unfair or capricious manner. When students choose to appeal any academic action taken by a faculty member or the program, the burden of proof is on the student.

Understanding Course Expectations and the Program Handbook. Students are expected to read in detail the program handbook and ask questions if necessary. Additionally, students are expected to completely review their course syllabi and refer to it when unsure about course expectations. Students are ultimately responsible for seeking answers to any questions or concerns they may have regarding a specific course or other component of the program. Finally, students are expected to be familiar with the information provided in the PAES Graduate Handbook that can be obtained from the Director's office or from the PAES web site, and the OSU Graduate School Handbook that can be obtained from the Graduate School web site.

Quality of Services Provided. Even though you are a student in training, the children, families, and teachers you will be working with still deserve high quality services. If your performance at any point in the program does not progress adequately or is severely lacking, you may be asked to retake coursework, leave a practicum site, and/or leave the program. The school psychology faculty must ensure that clients do not experience any harm while working with students in the program. Additionally, faculty also act as gatekeepers for the field of school psychology and in this role, we must guarantee the welfare of those individuals receiving services from graduates of this program. "Above all else, do no harm" is an ethical philosophy that all students must follow. Therefore, students should never practice beyond their level of training or outside of their scope of training. Additionally, students are always responsible for obtaining the necessary supervision

when providing psychological services. Students are encouraged to be intimately familiar with ethical guidelines and standards of practice, and are responsible for asking questions when unsure about these principles.

Professional Judgment. This document attempts to address the main professional issues that may arise while you are a student in the school psychology program; however, all possible professional issues cannot be specifically addressed in the coursework. If at any time you are unsure about how to respond professionally in a given situation, please obtain the appropriate supervision from your advisor, instructor for the course, or your site supervisor. You are ultimately responsible for obtaining necessary supervision in order to maintain all professional codes of ethics and standards of practice. Additionally, students should understand that professional behavior while in the program includes not only performance in practica and internship, but also performance (behavioral and academic) in course work and at other times while representing the school psychology program (e. g., Head Start, assistantships, contract work). Although the atmosphere in graduate school can appear relaxed at times, expectations at this level of training are very intense, and students are continually being observed regarding their professional behavior and potential for effective practice in the field.

Sensitivity to Diversity. While working with clients and colleagues, you must pay attention to the influence of various diversity dynamics on the services you will be providing. When conceptualizing cases, assessing clients, or providing interventions to clients, you must take diversity issues into consideration. Also, all of your interactions with others (other students, other professionals at your sites, and clients) should be respectful and sensitive to issues of diversity. Be sure to use non-sexist and non-racist language as outlined in the APA Publication Manual.

Confidentiality. One of the most important aspects of professionalism in human services is maintaining confidentiality. Different confidentiality issues will need to be observed during your work in the schools and community agencies. Your site supervisor will inform you of policies relevant to the work you will be doing. You may not discuss any aspect of your cases with individuals who are not at your site unless given permission to do so. Your site supervisor will inform you as to the appropriate procedures for handling case materials away from your site, and you are responsible for understanding and following these procedures.

Working with Other Professionals. One aspect of professional training involves developing appropriate skills in working with other professionals. Your interactions with others should be completely respectful and professional. You should become knowledgeable regarding the roles played by other professionals, and respect their job responsibilities and authority. If you feel that another individual is violating professional ethics or acting in inappropriate ways, please address this with your site supervisor or any faculty member before sharing this information elsewhere.

Thesis/Intervention Project: During the second year, master's students will complete either a research project (thesis) or an intervention project. These program requirements are very time intensive and require a positive working relationship between student and faculty. Students are encouraged to ask questions of their advisors regarding faculty expectations and the necessary tasks that must be completed in order to successfully defend a thesis or intervention project.

Additionally, students are expected to be aware of all university or college deadlines related to their project/thesis. Students and faculty are also highly encouraged to complete a written contract that clearly spells out the responsibilities of both parties and a tentative timeline for completion of the project. Ultimately, the student must take ownership over their project/thesis and is responsible for completion of the project. However, if a student feels that she/he is not receiving the guidance they need from their faculty member, they are encouraged to speak with another school psychology faculty to create options for handling the conflict.

Internship: Students are expected to be aware of all deadlines and administrative tasks related to the master's internship. These procedures will be provided in writing for students; however, if a student has any question or concern, she/he should address this with the internship coordinator. Students can be withheld from internship if they have not successfully completed all procedures related to internship.

Program Procedures:

- Grievance Procedures. When experiencing difficulty with another student, faculty, or university employee, students are encouraged strongly to address these conflicts with that individual directly. In the event that this approach is not effective or a serious fear of retribution exists, students are expected to follow the formal grievance policies outlined in the program handbook. Depending on the nature of the conflict and the nature of the relationship of the individuals involved in the conflict, different procedures may need to be implemented.
- Grade Appeals: The School of Physical Activity and Educational Services has clear procedures regarding grade appeals. These procedures can be found in the program handbook and the PAES Pattern of Administration (located on the web). Students are expected to be familiar with these procedures in order to exercise their due process rights.
- Violations of Ethics or Professional Standards. If professional ethics or standards are violated or if any part of this contract is violated, consequences will be given depending on the severity, nature, and frequency of the violation. These consequences may include, but are not limited to, a reduction of points in a class, additional supervision or other preparatory assignments, being removed from a practicum or internship site and failing the class, and/or removal from the program.
- Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct relates to behavior on the part of students and faculty. Violations of academic misconduct will be dealt with using the procedures set forth by the School of Physical Activity and Educational Services. These procedures can be found in the program handbook. All students are expected to be familiar with these procedures and what constitutes academic misconduct.
- Evaluation. Students will receive written feedback annually regarding their performance in the program. Please refer to your program manual regarding the annual evaluation procedures. This evaluation process has been created in order to meet the right of each student for due process. Due process only obligates the faculty to inform the student of her/his difficulties in the program and have the student respond to this feedback before any official decision is made.

- Termination Procedures: Formal termination procedures have been developed for the program and can be found in the program handbook. Students are expected to be aware of these procedures. Students can be terminated from the program for three different reasons. First, as gatekeepers for the field, the school psychology faculty is required to restrict the practice of school psychology to any individual who has demonstrated unprofessional and/or unethical behavior. Second, students who do not maintain an appropriate GPA or who are unable to demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge on program requirements will be asked to leave the program. Third, in accordance with the Graduate Student Handbook, “a student who does not maintain reasonable progress toward a degree or who does not fulfill other graduate program requirements may be denied further registration by the Graduate School on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee.” In the school of PAES, reasonable progress for a master’s student “typically requires four to eight quarters of full-time enrollment. An approved program of study must be filed in the Graduate Studies Office by the end of the first 15 hours of graduate credit or by the end of the second quarter of enrollment.” Students who are denied further registration or who have been dismissed from a program must complete specific procedures for reinstatement. These procedures can be found in the Graduate Student Handbook.

Policies related to Field-Based Experience:

- Following Site Policies. Students need to especially aware of and sensitive to the policies of each site so that you do not violate the expectations of the organization. If you are unclear about the relevant policies, please check with your site supervisor. Each site has different policies regarding meeting client’s off site (e.g., in their home). Do not meet with clients off site unless you have permission from the site supervisor or instructor for the course.
- Release Forms. Before beginning any service, you must be sure to complete the appropriate paperwork. In particular, be sure that you are clear regarding the necessary permission forms that must be completed. Your site supervisors will provide you with release forms and explain how each is to be completed; however, you are expected to have these forms in hand before meeting with clients. Ultimately, students are responsible for obtaining the appropriate release forms when working directly with clients.
- Making Appointments. Students are also expected to be punctual for all meetings including supervision. A pattern of tardiness to meetings or other obligations such as completion of reports can result in a reduction of points in a grade or dismissal from a class. Only under extreme circumstances should you miss appointments of any kind, and if you do need to miss an appointment, it becomes your responsibility to reschedule the appointment in a timely manner.
- Problems with Site Supervisor. If you have a problem with any site supervisor or graduate assistant supervisor, please address these problems directly with that supervisor. Developing conflict management skills with persons in authority is an essential professional skill. However, if you do not feel that the conflict can be resolved, please see the appropriate faculty member in order to discuss options.

- Appropriate dress. You are expected to be aware of the expectations of dress for each site. Please discuss appropriate dress with each site supervisor and when unsure about the expectations, please err on the side of dressing conservatively and professionally.

This four-page document addresses a number of professional issues, and by signing this document, you are stating that you have read and fully understand the professional and academic responsibilities outlined here.

Student's Signature **Date**

Student's Printed Name

Witness' Signature **Date**

Witness' Printed Name