

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON**  
**GRADUATE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**PERSONNEL POLICY**

**JULY 2015**

**GENERAL STATEMENT**

All employees of the Graduate College of Social Work are responsible for complying with the policies and procedures described below. Failure to adhere to these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. This Personnel Policy is not all encompassing. For information regarding circumstances not discussed here, the policies contained in the current University of Houston Staff and Faculty handbooks and the Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures (MAPP) will be followed.

**I. HOURS OF WORK**

All staff employees who are paid on a full-time basis are required to work a minimum of forty (40) hours per week unless on approved leave status. Exempt employees are required to work whatever hours are necessary to satisfactorily accomplish the job. The acceptance of such a requirement is a condition of employment.

The standard office hours of the Graduate College of Social Work shall be from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (one hour lunch break).

**1. Flex-Time**

As long as offices of operation are open from 8:00-5:00, flex-time may be allowed with permission from supervisors and authorized through the College Business Office and the Dean. Flex-time is any working schedule that deviates from the standard hours of work.

**2. Lunch Hour**

Employees are encouraged to schedule one hour per day for lunch. Lunch breaks are not to be included in an employees' 40 hour work week and may not be negotiated as part of flex-time.

**3. Breaks**

All full-time employees are entitled to two 15 minute paid breaks during the workday. Employees are encouraged to take a fifteen-minute break for every four hours of work.

**II. TIME REPORTING**

All GCSW employees are required to account for 100 percent of their time during regularly scheduled workdays. All biweekly staff are required to clock in actual hours worked in the Time Reporting and Absence

Management (TRAM) web clock in PASS. Time must depict the actual hours worked and leave taken for periods not at work during regularly schedule workdays. Supervisors shall approve all time in TRAM on a daily basis. **Reporting or approving time incorrectly may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and possible criminal prosecution.**

**Instructions for accessing and utilizing the web clock can found be here: [TRAM Employee Online Guide](#)**

**Procedures:**

**A. Biweekly /Non-Exempt Employee:** An employee who is in a position deemed non-exempt by the Fair Labor Standards Act and, therefore, subject to the overtime provisions of the FLSA. A non-exempt employee reports time worked and is paid on a biweekly basis at an hourly rate.

**Absence Management**

All non-exempt staff in the Graduate College of Social Work must report leave through Absence Management. Absence Management is used to request planned leave and to report variances in the normal work schedule due to unplanned absences, flex time needed to attend to personal/family matters, emergencies, etc. Absence Management is intended to eliminate questions arising from GCSW Administration, to serve as additional documentation to reconcile payroll and PS reports, and to comply with Internal Audit requirements.

Vacation Leave - Absence Management is to be prepared, submitted to and approved by the supervisor prior to requested vacation. Once the supervisor approves or denies a leave request in Absence Management the employee will be notified of the approval or denial.

Sick Leave - Immediately upon return from absence, sick leave should be reported through Absence Management and submitted to the supervisor. Once the supervisor approves or denies a leave request in Absence Management the employee will be notified of the approval or denial.

**Instructions for Absence Management can be found here: [Absence Management](#)**

**B. Monthly/Exempt Employee:** An employee in a position that is not subject to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Exempt employees include professionals, administrators, executives, and faculty and are paid on a monthly basis. An exempt employee reports time and effort and is paid on a monthly basis.

**Absence Management**

All non-exempt staff in the Graduate College of Social Work must report leave through Absence Management. Absence Management

is used to request planned leave and to report variances in the normal work schedule due to unplanned absences, flex time needed to attend to personal/family matters, emergencies, etc. Absence Management is intended to eliminate questions arising from GCSW Administration, to serve as additional documentation to reconcile payroll and PS reports, and to comply with Internal Audit requirements.

Vacation and Leave Request –

Absence Management is to be prepared by the employee, submitted to and approved by the supervisor prior to requested vacation. Once the supervisor approves or denies a leave request in Absence Management the employee will be notified of the approval or denial.

It is not necessary for an exempt employee to record an absence of less than a day due to illness or for personal reasons if the employee works at least 40 hours in that workweek. If the employee does not work 40 hours in that workweek, absences must be recorded as to the type of leave to comply with State law.

### III. OVERTIME/COMPENSATORY TIME

The Graduate College of Social Work's policy is that units must plan, organize and schedule activities so that work may be accomplished within the standard 40-hour workweek. Overtime is limited to that which is absolutely necessary and must be authorized in advance by the supervisor. In unavoidable circumstances, such as emergencies or peak load periods, **non-exempt** employees will be given compensatory time off in lieu of monetary compensation.

**Non-exempt employees may not make unauthorized decisions to work overtime or extra hours. Working unauthorized time may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

Similarly, compensation for overtime or extra hours may not be waived by the non-exempt employee.

Supervisors will be responsible for monitoring and documenting all overtime worked by employees under their supervision and ensuring that information reported on time and effort report is complete and accurate. This responsibility includes scheduling use of compensatory time by the employee.

**Compensatory time/overtime may not be worked as an option to accumulate hours in order to avoid using vacation or sick leave.**

**A. Non-exempt employees** are subject to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and must be compensated according to FLSA guidelines for all hours actually worked in excess of 40 hours in the standard workweek. In compliance with established policies mandated by the University of Houston System, and in keeping with the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, all non-exempt employees in GCSW must be compensated at time and one-half for all hours worked in excess of forty within the standard work week. The standard work week is defined as 12:01 a.m. Wednesday and extending through the seven-day period ending at midnight the following Tuesday.

1. Compensatory hours will be calculated as follows:
  - a. Hours in excess of forty hours actually worked within the standard workweek will be compensated at time and one half. Paid leave (vacation, sick, holidays) taken is not counted as hours worked in determining compensatory time computation.
  - b. In situations where a non-exempt employee has not worked more than forty hours in a workweek, but the total hours worked plus hours of paid leave exceeds forty, the employee will be compensated for the excess hours by computation of compensatory hours at straight time.

Time actually worked, paid leave and/or paid holidays, in addition to compensatory time earned and/or taken need to be reflected on the respective Time and Effort Report.

2. Limits and requirements of compensatory time
  - a. An employee may not accrue more than 240 total hours of compensatory time for overtime hours worked.
  - b. Accrued compensatory time must be taken during the 12-month period following the end of the workweek in which the overtime was worked.
  - c. Any FLSA compensatory time not taken within the 12 months or such compensatory time in excess of the applicable 240 hour limits will be forfeited, as it will if not taken within the 12-month period, or upon termination.

**B. Exempt employees** are not eligible to receive overtime payments or compensatory time for hours worked in excess of the standard workday.

#### **IV. LEAVE BALANCES**

Each employee is responsible for tracking his/her leave balances and ensuring that the requested leave is available. If the type of leave reported is not available, leave will be charged as follows:

- If sick leave is unavailable, time will be charged to vacation
- For non-exempt employees:

- If vacation is unavailable, time will be charged to compensatory time 1.5
- If compensatory time 1.5 is unavailable, time will be charged to compensatory time 1.0
- If compensatory time 1.0 is unavailable, time will be charged to unpaid leave.
- For exempt employees
  - If vacation is unavailable, absences of one full day or more must be reported as and charged to unpaid leave.

## **V. EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

University employees are required to satisfy their financial obligations to the university in a timely manner. Failure of an employee to pay for services provided, or fines assessed by the due date noted on any billing statement will constitute debt delinquency and may result in loss of these services, loss of certain university opportunities, assessment of a collection charge, disciplinary action up to and including termination from employment, referral to a collection agency, and reporting to a credit bureau.

## **VI. DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL**

The Graduate College of Social Work encourages fair, efficient, and equitable solutions for problems arising out of the employment relationship and adherence to the requirements of state and federal laws. The GCSW follows the Progressive Discipline and Dismissal Policy. The Progressive Discipline and Dismissal Policy is provided:

- a. to guide management, through effective discipline, to maintain order and enforce University rules.
- b. to help employees overcome work-related shortcomings, and where practicable, to strengthen performance.
- c. to help management identify and terminate an employee who is not performing adequately after appropriate counseling.

Under no circumstance may an employee be subjected to formal disciplinary action or dismissal without:

- showing adequate cause for the necessity of the discipline or dismissal;
- providing the employee due process to respond and appeal
- adhering to the other provisions outlined in the University of Houston Staff Handbook, and MAPP; and
- in the cases of suspension and dismissal, obtaining full prior review by the appropriate representative of the Human Resources Department.

The steps of progressive discipline will be followed when dealing with employment problems, when possible and practical. Exceptions may be appropriate, subject to full prior review by the Human Resource Department.

## **A. General Responsibilities:**

1. Supervisory personnel are required to inform employees of policies and procedures to be followed, standards of conduct to be met, and work performance to be achieved.
2. Employees are required to learn and abide by the policies, procedures, and standards of the university and its departments.
3. Supervisors are required to administer progressive disciplinary action and/or termination action to employees who fail to abide by the established policies, procedures, and standards.
4. The College Business Administrator shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this policy and procedure. Therefore, the College Business Administrator is to be included in each step in the disciplinary action.

## **B. Responsibilities in Imposing Discipline**

1. The supervisor is responsible for showing adequate cause why an employee should be disciplined or dismissed. Since the purpose of the disciplinary process is to provide remedial action whenever possible, no disciplinary measures may be taken without the employee's knowledge.
2. Any disciplinary action must, at the minimum, include all of the following components:
  - Clear identification of the problem to be corrected or the standard to be met
  - Identification of the remedial action expected
  - Statement of results for failure to take the specific remedial action
  - An opportunity to respond to any formal disciplinary action in writing
  - A written record of the disciplinary action.
3. In cases where it becomes necessary to formally discipline an employee who has received a positive performance evaluation within the past year, the change in performance or behavior shall be taken into consideration when determining the appropriate level of discipline and will be documented for the personnel file.
4. Any written reprimand or letter of suspension will be signed by the supervisory authority and the employee. The employee's signature will acknowledge receipt of the document but may not necessarily indicate agreement with the action.
5. At each stage in the formal disciplinary process, the employee will be allowed an opportunity to register a response to the supervisory authority in writing. A copy of any written response will be placed in the appropriate employee personnel file. Additionally, at each stage, the employee may respond under the University of Houston policy and procedure on Employee Grievances (MAPP 2.04.01).

6. A copy of any written reprimand, letter of suspension, or notice of termination will be placed in the employee's official personnel file in the College Business Office and in the Office of Human Resources.
7. Any recommendation for suspension or dismissal must be sent through administrative channels, including the College Business Administrator, the supervisor, and the Dean. The Dean or supervisor may authorize suspension or dismissal following review by the Human Resources Department.
8. For disciplinary purposes, the level of discipline must be appropriate to the offense and must follow the offense it is intended to correct closely in time. Suspensions without pay may not exceed 10 working days.

## C. Progressive Discipline

### 1. Rationale

The purpose of progressive discipline is to inform the employee of performance deficiencies and to provide the employee with a reasonable opportunity to correct the identified deficiencies.

- Progressive discipline is a corrective process to help employees overcome work-related shortcomings, strengthen work performance, and achieve success. The process also allows for the termination of employees who will not or cannot change unacceptable behavior or performance.
- Progressive discipline sets clear standards and warns of consequences for noncompliance. It assures predictable, progressive, and equitable treatment and promotes fair decisions.

### 2. Procedures

The normal sequence of progressive discipline is:

- a. **Personal conference** between supervisor and employee (oral counseling) to clearly identify the problems to be corrected or the standard to be met. Outcomes of the conference are to:
  - Identify the remedial action required to meet supervisor's expectations and time frame to complete them; and
  - Identify the consequence(s) of failure to take the specific remedial action within the stated time frame. The employee must be given an explicit time frame in which to improve in the specified areas.
- b. **Written reprimand** and record of disciplinary action must be provided by the supervisor if the employee is not successful in improving after the oral counseling. Both the employee and the supervisor need to sign the reprimand.
- c. Allow the employee to respond to any formal disciplinary action in writing.

- d. **Suspension without pay** (not to exceed 10 working days). If the employee has still not improved as specified in the personal conference, the result could be:
  - suspension without pay (not to exceed ten working days); and/or
  - dismissal from employment.
- f. **Dismissal from employment** will be the final action taken if the employee does not improve to the satisfaction of the supervisor. The supervisor must provide a written record of the disciplinary action taken up to and including point of dismissal. A copy will be given to Human Resources for placement in the employee's official personnel file.
- g. At any stage in the disciplinary process, the employee may respond under the University of Houston policy and procedure on Employee Grievances (MAPP 2.04.01).

### 3. **Deviations from Sequence Of Progressive Discipline**

Supervisory and management personnel may omit any stage of the process if, in their opinion and with the concurrence of Human Resources, the problem cannot be corrected by a less severe form of disciplinary action.

## D. **Exemptions from the Discipline and Dismissal Policy and Procedures**

1. The president may designate specific executive and senior administrative positions as exempt. Faculty positions are subject to university faculty policies and procedures. Please refer to the University of Houston Faculty Handbook.
2. Probationary Period. A regular staff employee is probationary and serves at the pleasure of the hiring department during the first six months (non-exempt employees) or twelve months (exempt employees) of continuous employment at the University of Houston or during the first 6 months (non-exempt employees) or 12 months (exempt employees) of re-employment following a break in service for any reason other than a recall to work after an approved reduction in force. At any time during this initial probationary period an employee may be terminated without application of the discipline and dismissal procedure. If the probationary period is interrupted by any authorized leave other than earned sick leave, the probationary period will be extended by the amount of time the employee is absent from work. Exempt employees serve a probationary period of twelve months.
3. Reduction in force. Termination due to a formal reduction in force is covered under a separate policy (System Administration Memorandum 02.A.06), and is not subject to discipline and dismissal rules and regulations.
4. Inability to perform. An employee who, after all available leave has been exhausted, is unable to return to work to perform job functions for medical reasons, may be terminated without



application of the discipline and dismissal policy and procedures. Terminations under this provision are not disciplinary in nature. The Human Resource Department must approve all such terminations before this action is taken.

5. **Job Abandonment.** An employee who fails to report to work and fails to follow the Graduate College of Social Work's procedures for notification of absence for more than three continuous workdays may be considered to have abandoned the job. Job abandonment is a form of resignation, and the employee may be released without application of the policy and procedures on discipline and dismissal. An employee may contest the termination and may be reinstated if she/he submits a written statement to the supervisor outlining explicitly the reason(s) for failing to report for duty and for failing to provide notification of absence. This written statement must be submitted (a) within a reasonable period of time, and (b) prior to the employment of another individual in the vacant position. Additionally, the reason noted in the statement must be considered sufficient to excuse the failure to report to duty.

The purpose of progressive discipline is to inform the employee of performance deficiencies and to provide the employee with a reasonable opportunity to correct the identified deficiencies. However, the supervisor and the College Business Administrator, may omit upon approval by the Dean, any stage or the above process if, in their opinion and with the concurrence of Human Resources, the problem cannot be corrected by a less severe form of disciplinary action.

#### **E. Discipline versus Discharge**

The Graduate College of Social Work will determine whether to discipline or to discharge a regular staff employee. Each case is evaluated on its own set of circumstances. The following are examples of infractions that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. This list is in no way inclusive.

- a. Repeated or flagrant act(s) of inefficiency, incompetence, or negligence in the performance of duties.
- b. Continued tardiness or excessive absenteeism, including absence without approved leave, improper use of sick leave, or repeated failure to report for duty at the assigned time and place.
- c. Improper use of university property or equipment, including waste of materials, supplies, or technology resources and/or carelessness resulting in damage to the University's tools, equipment, supplies or other property.
- d. Dishonest actions, theft, misappropriations or unauthorized use of University funds or property, or failure to report knowledge thereof.
- e. Falsification of information to secure a University position or falsification of any other University record.

- f. Failure to obtain or properly maintain a current license or certificate required by law or policy as a condition of performing the job.
- g. Possession of illegal and/or unauthorized drugs on the University campus or while on University business; the abuse of other drugs and/or alcohol while on University business; or reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs. [The same applies to any habit-forming or disabling substance not prescribed for the employee by a physician.]
- h. Possession of unauthorized firearms or other dangerous weapons on University premises.
- i. Insubordination, willful disobedience, and/or refusal to, or failure to, follow directives or perform work properly assigned by a supervisor.
- j. Unauthorized release of confidential information from University records.
- k. Engaging in incompatible employment or in employment that represents a conflict of interest.
- l. Accepting gifts, monies, or other things of value intended as an inducement to perform or to refrain from performing an official act.
- m. Criminal conduct other than minor traffic violation, or employee's failure to report his or her criminal conduct, that would adversely affect an employee's work performance, impact the work environment, or cause major discredit or embarrassment to the university.
- n. Commission of an act of moral turpitude including sexual harassment or sexual assault of another employee, student, or visitor.
- o. Failure to pay monies owed or satisfy other personal financial indebtedness to the University of Houston System.

#### **F. Suspension with Pay**

An employee may be suspended from employment with pay pending further investigation of a matter, including possible official actions by outside legal agencies.

#### **VII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Employees are prohibited from using their positions to influence the university's business, academic, administrative, or other decisions in a way that could lead to personal financial gain or advantage for that employee or that employee's family business.

Similarly, employees are prohibited from assuming obligations outside the university or elsewhere within the university which interfere with or prevent them from adequately discharging their primary obligations and commitments to the university. Therefore, employees should not engage in activities which create a conflict of interest or commitment.

Should such conflict arise, disclosure and resolution of conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment must be made in writing through appropriate administrative channels. Specific procedures may be obtained from College Business Office/Dean's Office.

The existence of a conflict of interest, failure of an employee to disclose a conflict of interest, or failure to eliminate a conflict when so directed, may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **VIII. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

Reasonable accommodations refer to modification or adjustment of a job, the work environment, or the way things usually are done that would enable a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy an equal employment opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal and state laws require reasonable accommodation in three aspects of employment. They (1) ensure equal opportunity in the application process, (2) enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job, and (3) enable an employee with a disability to enjoy benefits and privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities.

In order for an accommodation to be considered, a university employee or applicant must inform their supervisor or interviewer they have a disability and request an accommodation. In most cases, a physician's statement including diagnosis, prognosis, work-related restrictions or limitations, and recommended accommodations will be required to document the disability and to assist with accommodations. Medical records are confidential and will be kept separate from personnel files.

The university is not required to provide employment accommodations that are unduly burdensome (financially and/or administratively). Otherwise qualified employees must be able to meet the essential functions of a job, either with or without accommodations.

## **IX. PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

Performance appraisals provide a means for informing employees of the quality of their work. Appraisals are designed to assess the staff member's ability to perform tasks, to fulfill responsibilities, to meet behavioral and conduct standards, and to achieve other job requirements or desired levels of competence. Performance appraisals help supervisors make the most effective use of their staff resources. Further, performance appraisals provide a supportable basis for making personnel decisions including, but not limited to, training needs, merit pay adjustments, promotions, transfers, continued employment, or terminations.

The Graduate College of Social Work conducts Annual Staff Performance Appraisals each calendar year. Regular staff employees who have completed their probationary period will receive a formal performance appraisal annually. Performance appraisals may also be conducted at other times for valid business reasons.

## **X. PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

At the University of Houston, the initial six months of employment and six months of re-employment, following a break in service, for all non-exempt staff employees is probationary. The initial twelve months of employment and twelve months of re-employment following a break in service, for all exempt employees is probationary. At any time during this initial probationary period, the employee may be terminated without application of the discipline and dismissal policy and procedure. During the probationary period, the supervisor will monitor the employee's performance to determine whether employment should continue beyond the probationary period.

The supervisor is not required to conduct a performance appraisal prior to the end of the probationary period, although this is highly recommended. By conducting a formal performance appraisal, and assuming the employee's performance is acceptable, the basis for continued employment is thereby documented. However, in the absence of a decision to terminate employment, whether an appraisal has been conducted or not, once the probationary period is complete, the employee is no longer on probation. [Employees approved for leave without pay during the probationary period will have the probationary period extended by the amount of time taken for the leave.]