The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
College of Education & P-16 Integration

Fitness to Practice Policy for Educational Diagnostician Program

Purpose

The purpose of this Fitness to Practice Policy is to ensure that students enrolled in the Educational Diagnostician Program demonstrate the requisite professional, ethical, and interpersonal competencies needed for successful practice in educational settings. This policy provides a framework for assessing and supporting student progress and addresses concerns about a student's ability to meet professional standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the Educational Diagnostician Program, including during coursework, fieldwork, and practicums. It is designed to protect the program's integrity, and support students' success, maintain public trust in the profession and support the success of students in their professional careers.

Fitness Standards

1. **Academic Competence**
    - Students must meet the academic standards of the program, including:
        - Mastery of program curriculum and state standards.
        - Application of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in assessments and diagnostics.
2. **Professional Conduct**
    - Students are expected to:
        - Comply with ethical codes, such as those outlined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) or equivalent organizations.
        - Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and responsibility.
        - Maintain confidentiality and respect for the diversity of students, families, and professionals they interact with.
3. **Interpersonal Skills**
    - Engage in effective communication with peers, faculty, and field professionals.
    - Exhibit empathy, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration in all settings.
    - Respond constructively to feedback and demonstrate self-awareness.
4. **Emotional and Physical Well-being**
    - Students must maintain the physical and emotional capacity necessary for performing the essential functions of an educational diagnostician, including managing stress and maintaining focus during challenging situations.

5. **Legal and Ethical Behavior**
    - Avoid conduct that violates laws or educational standards, such as plagiarism or discrimination.
    - Uphold all program and institutional policies regarding attendance, academic integrity, and fieldwork performance.

Assessment and Monitoring

1. **Ongoing Evaluation**
    - Faculty, field supervisors, and mentors will provide regular feedback on student performance and professional behavior.
    - Formal evaluations will occur at defined checkpoints, such as the completion of coursework or fieldwork placements.
2. **Reporting Concerns**
    - Concerns about a student's fitness to practice may be reported by:
        - Faculty members.
        - Peers or field supervisors.
        - The student themselves, as part of a reflective practice process.

Addressing Fitness Concerns

1. **Initial Review**
    - Upon receipt of a concern:
        - The program director will initiate a review to determine the validity and severity of the issue.
        - The student will be informed of the concern and invited to provide their perspective.
2. **Developmental Plan**
    - If the issue is substantiated but deemed remediable:
        - A developmental plan will be created to outline specific goals, timelines, and resources for improvement.
        - Regular follow-ups will monitor progress.
3. **Fitness to Practice Committee**
    - For unresolved or severe issues, the matter will be referred to a committee composed of faculty, administrators, and, if appropriate, a student representative. The committee may:
        - Recommend continuation in the program with conditions.
        - Suggest temporary leave or additional training.
        - Recommend dismissal from the program.
4. **Appeals**
    - Students have the right to appeal decisions within a specified timeframe. Appeals must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed by an independent panel.

General Dismissal Policies and Procedures

Dismissal of a candidate based on concerns relating to professional dispositions or abilities is typically the outcome of careful inquiry and collection of data from multiple sources, as well as communication with the candidate regarding dispositions concerns and a growth action plan as outlined in the Fitness to Teach, Fitness to Practice, or Fitness to Lead policies. Dismissal from the EPP is determined by the Educator Preparation Committee (EPC). More information can be found on the Educator Preparation Program Exit Policy located on the OEPA website.

Supporting Resources

- Access to counseling and mental health services.
- Opportunities for additional mentoring or academic support.
- Workshops on professional and interpersonal skill development.

This Fitness to Practice Policy underscores the program's commitment to developing competent, ethical, and professional educational diagnosticians prepared to serve diverse student populations effectively.