

What to do if you have issues or concerns in the BSW programs?

If the issues are academic or related to a course (e.g. you're struggling to understand an assignment, or have challenges grasping the content), **please reach out to your instructor first**. All BSW instructors are committed to meeting with students in their courses. They want you to succeed, so don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification.

If there is an overall issue with managing homework and deadlines or adjusting to the academic expectations, please consider getting connected to one of the student support resources available to you:

- The [Writing Center](#) is available to help review papers and provide feedback and support on writing
- [Academic Coaching](#) is a great program at no additional cost that is 100% about helping students succeed in their academic goals. You can refer to yourself easily, so why not check out these student services and what they offer.

Sometimes people have concerns with a course, instructor, fellow student or some other part of their undergraduate program that isn't related to the content of a course. If that happens, we want to make sure you are aware that there are processes to follow and people to talk with.

The SSW is committed to hearing student voices and feedback, but does not want to create a culture where student concerns are merely complaints. That isn't effective in addressing concerns, and it often becomes frustrating and can be harmful. That is not what we want in the SSW. We strive to teach and practice the processes of how to advocate effectively for having one's viewpoint heard and addressed, *and* to work **together** in resolving the issue(s)

So if you have a concern regarding a course, instructor, fellow student or some other part of the BSW program, **the best place to start is always your student handbook**. You probably read through it before starting your program, but it's a good idea to refer to it anytime a question, concern or issue arises. It's there for a reason.

Since all PSU students, by virtue of accepting one's enrollment in the university, opt in to abiding to the [PSU Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility](#). This is an extremely valuable resource/reference.

Additionally, in your program's handbook, you will find the policies that outline how to advocate for your concerns. You will also find suggestions on professional behavior expectations and how to handle conflict. It is important to become familiar with the

guiding policies and student grievance procedure in your academic program. We've listed some important ones below and encourage you to become familiar with them.

BSW Handbook

- Ground Rules for Respectful Dialogue and Professional Behavior Appendix E
- Student Grievance Procedure Pages 23-25
- Policy on Academic Performance and Professional Behavior Appendix B
- Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity Appendix C

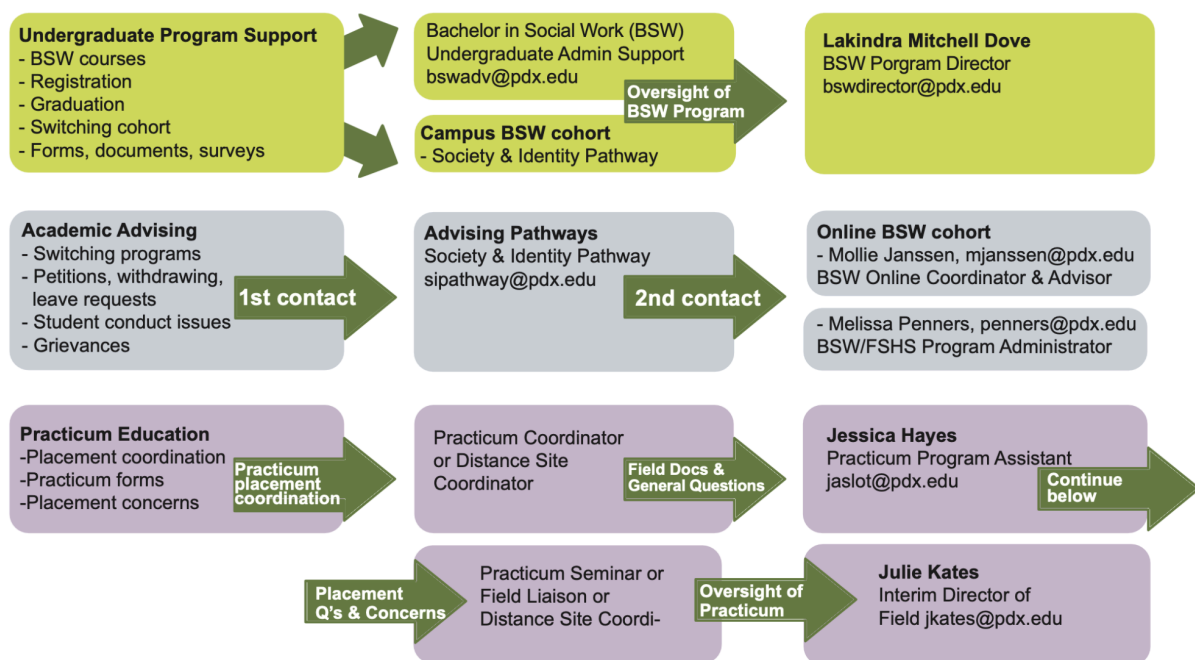
CYFS Handbook

- Ground Rules for Respectful Dialogue and Professional Behavior Page 28
- Student Grievance Procedure Pages 44-45
- Policy on Academic Performance and Professional Behavior Pages 29-37
- Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity Pages 38-43

Here are steps to consider and take if you have a concern: [[BSW Graph](#)]

HOW TO GET THE HELP YOU NEED:

This is a chart to guide students on who to see for resources in the School of Social Work within Portland State University. Many questions and concerns can be resolved by the first contact on the list, additional guidance can be accessed in the Student Handbook. (REV: 8/23/22)



Escalate your concerns appropriately. Start at the first step, it's the best way to get your problems addressed. Skipping steps and jumping to the end will actually take longer to be heard and could be frustrating.

- Example, from University of Ottawa, [here](#), or from Purdue University, [here](#).

First Step - Whenever possible, talk to the instructor, student, or staff member. You'd be surprised how often miscommunications or misunderstandings can occur and simply talking directly to the person often clears things up. We know it might feel a little nerve wracking to approach a SSW instructor, but they want you to succeed and are here to try and support you.

Second Step - If the first step is not possible or if you are truly uncomfortable doing this, then please reach out to the program director or coordinator. Program directors and coordinators support both students and faculty, so they are often the best person to discuss your concerns with. They can help look at possible options and discuss the procedures available in the SSW for students who have concerns.

The **BSW Program Director is Dr. Lakindra Mitchell Dove** (bswdirector@pdx.edu)
The **BSW Online Coordinator is Mollie Janssen** (mjanssen@pdx.edu)

Third Step - If the program director is not able to address the situation or if you wish to speak to someone else in the SSW, then you can contact ** the **SSW Director of Student Affairs** **. They can listen to your concern and help you understand the processes available to you in the SSW.

Lastly - Refer to the Student Grievance Procedure found in your program's student handbook. That procedure includes the above steps, but it also provides next steps for unresolved issues. At this point, the student grievance moves from an informal process (Step 1 of the procedure) to a more formal grievance process (Steps 3-5 of the procedure).

Through Global Diversity & Inclusion, [Equity and Compliance](#), a strategic plan initiates how to address the roots of inequities, provide proactive resources, support a safe and stimulating campus climate, and also promote equitable opportunities. They evaluate and investigate complaints of prohibited discrimination and harassment.

Before engaging in the the steps outlined above, we encourage you to:

- Clearly identify and define your concern
- Identify what you are hoping for as an outcome
- Determine what a meaningful change or address to your concern might be.

This will help us understand where you are coming from as well as help you be clear about what your issue or concern is.

[PSU Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility](#), students are responsible for their individual actions and by being accepted in PSU, you are accepting the [student conduct](#).

For *student to student grievance*, check IX. Procedures for complaints against individuals in the PSU Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility. Any person may submit a written complaint to the [Dean of Student Life Office](#) alleging that a Student(s) or Recognized Student Organization or group has engaged in conduct proscribed by this Code.

For *student grievances about grades* check section XI. “Course Instructors have the primary responsibility and purview for responding to and reporting academic misconduct by students enrolled in their respective courses. Course Instructors may issue a zero or a failing grade for the assignment for which the misconduct was found. Course Instructors may not issue a failing grade for the course unless a failing grade on the assignment in question results in a failing grade for the course, per the syllabus. Instructors may not administratively remove a student from a course... [\[read more\]](#)

Your voice is important. We hope this guidance is useful should you encounter an issue or have a concern you want to share.

Reference back to your BSW orientations modules on canvas.

Our team structure is evolving. Some staff roles and responsibilities may change throughout the academic year

REV: 6/20/25, Marilyn Shawe