

**St. Cloud State University**  
**Department Of Teacher Development**

**COMMUNICATION OF CONCERNS PROCESS**

The Communication of Concerns (COC) process has been set up to assist in the evaluation and assessment of SCSU students in elementary and secondary education who are having difficulty negotiating the program. The impetus for setting up the process comes from the need to identify, at an early stage, dispositions (defined by NCATE in 2000 as “the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educators’ own professional growth”) in teacher candidates (SCSU students) that are a cause of concern, so that prompt and substantial remedial action can be take. It is, therefore, an attempt to introduce a process that will keep in mind the best interests of all persons concerned: SCSU students (teacher candidates), SCSU faculty and staff, public and private school cooperating teachers, and children in the schools, K-12, as well as help maintain the quality of the programs. (amended October 13, 2008)

**Definition of Terms:**

The following terms in this document are used as defined below:

Cooperating Teachers, Teachers:	K-12 Teachers, Public and Private Schools
Faculty	SCSU Faculty
Student, Teacher Candidate, Student Teacher:	SCSU Student
Children	Students, K-12, Public and Private Schools

**Process:**

The Communication of Concerns process will be facilitated by a committee known as the Communication of Concerns (COC) Committee. This committee comprises three faculty elected by the Department of Teacher Development. (amended October 13, 2008)

Any SCSU faculty member(s) or staff member(s) who has a concern with a student should first check with the chair of the COC Committee to find out if there is any record of an earlier concern with that student. If the chair of the Committee finds an earlier record of a concern with the same student he or she may share the information about the concern with the person requesting it.

At this point, the person with the concern has three options: to move directly to the formal process of dealing with such concerns as outlined in Steps 2 onward, to follow an informal process as outlined in Step 1, or drop the concern. The person with the concern should let the Chair of the COC Committee know, in writing, which option he or she has chosen.

If the chair of the Committee reports that there is no earlier concern filed, depending upon the seriousness of the concern, the person with the concern may follow the formal process (Step 2 onwards), or may use the informal process outlined in Step 1.

**Step 1.** Step 1 will constitute the attached Appendix 1 Action Plan process. It will be used at any time during the student’s program before student teaching including all major courses. During student teaching, the Action Plan process described in the Student Teaching Handbook will be implemented.

**Step 2.** Any SCSU faculty member(s) or SCSU staff member(s) may file a concern with the COC Committee in writing, giving information regarding an SCSU student and his/her behavior. The

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information must be submitted to the COC Committee in the enclosed proforma (See appendix one). The concern may be filed at any point during the student's program: from initial enrollment in the major to student teaching. The concern must be filed within three weeks of the identification of a behavior as one that is causing concern. In case of a student teacher, the SCSU faculty supervisor must fill out the form with specific input from the cooperating teacher.

**Step 3.** The SCSU student will then be sent a letter by the chair of the COC Committee informing him/her of the complaint. The COC Committee may request clarification, and/or further information from the person(s) filing the complaint, before sending the letter. The chair of the COC Committee may, at this point, share any earlier concerns about the same student that were filed with the committee and other persons involved with the concern.

**Step 4.** The chair of the COC Committee will then set a date for an initial meeting. This meeting date should be within three weeks of the receipt of the complaint. The meeting will involve the COC Committee, the faculty or staff member(s) who voiced the complaint and the SCSU student concerned. In case of a student teacher, the school cooperating teacher and/or the principal may be present at the meeting.

The SCSU student may be accompanied by an advocate to the meeting. This advocate may speak through the SCSU student, but may not address the COC Committee directly. If the advocate is an attorney, the COC Committee needs to know this in advance and reserves the right to bring an attorney on its behalf. The chair of the Department of Teacher Development or a designee may be present at the meeting as an observer.

The COC Committee reserves the right to proceed with this COC process irrespective of what other legal or academic processes are taking place.

**Step 5a.** If the COC Committee decides that the behavior, "more likely than not," did not occur, then no further action may be taken against the SCSU student. The complaint, along with the conclusions of the COC Committee, will be filed in a file accessed in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

**Step 5b.** If the COC Committee concludes that the behavior "more likely than not" did occur:

### Scenario 1:

A remedial plan will be formulated for the SCSU student to follow. The COC Committee, the SCSU student, the faculty or staff member(s) will work together to formulate the plan. This plan must consist of specific objectives, procedures for assessment of progress, and a clear timeline for assessment of progress. The plan could range from informal activities that are expected of the student, to formal counseling recommended for a period of time, or until the counselor certifies that the basis for the concern has been eliminated or addressed satisfactorily.

The COC Committee recommends that if professionals, such as counselors, are being used as part of the remedial plan, that those professionals be certified. Also, the remedial plan must state specifically whether the SCSU student may be allowed to undertake a field experience or go on for student teaching when the plan is in progress.

The plan should be signed by the Chair of the COC Committee and the student in the attached proforma. The student will also have to sign a release form so that information pertaining to the plan can be shared with people outside the University who are affected by the plan, such as cooperating teachers, or principals. These signatures will be obtained in a Remedial Plan Form (See appendix two).

A copy of the original complaint, and this plan will be placed in a confidential file placed and accessed in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and ***the student will be considered flagged.*** A

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copy of the letter and the plan will also be sent to all faculty members who are and will be affected by the plan. In other words, all faculty who work with the student during the duration of the plan will be informed of its existence. In case of a student teacher, the school cooperating teacher and principal will also be apprised of the plan.

### Scenario 2:

If the COC Committee finds that the behavior "more likely than not" did occur, and a remedial plan is to be implemented, but the SCSU student refuses to agree to its implementation, the student will be suspended from the program, and be referred for University discipline.

**Step 6.** At the end of the timeline or upon completion of the plan, whichever occurs earlier, an assessment meeting will be conducted. This meeting will again include the faculty or staff member(s) who made the complaint, the COC Committee, the SCSU student, an advocate (if so desired by the student), and the department chair or designee as an observer. In case of a student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and/or the principal may attend the meeting. At this meeting, the behavior of the student will be reviewed, and the student will be required to present documentation on how the remedial plan was implemented successfully.

**Step 7a.** Successful completion of the plan (accomplishment of the objectives of the plan), as determined by the unanimous approval of the COC Committee, will result in the student being allowed to continue the program.

**Step 7b.** Unsatisfactory completion of the plan may result in redoing or extending the plan. This decision will be made by the COC Committee at the assessment meeting by unanimous vote. Unsuccessful completion of the plan also may result in a recommendation by the COC Committee not to allow the student continue the program. At this point the student may choose to withdraw from the program. If the student chooses not to withdraw, the student may be suspended from the program, and be referred for University discipline.

**Step 8.** If a second concern is brought in front of the committee regarding a student who has already been "flagged" once, and found valid, the same process as above (Steps 1 through 6) will follow.

**Step 9.** If a third concern is brought before the COC Committee, and the student has already been "flagged" twice, the first three steps of the process will be followed. If the complaint is found valid, the student will be suspended and be referred for University discipline.

**Note:** All legal consequences and other related department policies will continue to apply at all points.

### **Summary of criteria for suspension:**

Suspension of a student will result:

1. If the student is flagged three times (and this includes flagging in any of the related departments), or
2. If remedial plan is not complied with or completed any time during the process.

### **Behaviors of Concern**

#### Behaviors Of Concern On Campus:

1. Pattern of unprofessional behavior including tardiness, absences without notification, and/or consistently late submission of assignments without giving reasons.

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2. Pattern of non-cooperation with faculty, staff, and/or college students in cooperative groups, discussions and/or similar on campus activities.
3. Pattern of negative and/or disrespectful comments/attitudes directed at faculty, staff, and/or college students.
4. Specific incidents of physical and/or verbal intimidation or discrimination towards faculty, staff, and/or college students. (includes harassment as defined in official SCSU policy)
5. Specific incidents of assault/sexual assault as defined in official SCSU policy.

## **Behaviors of Concern in Schools**

1. Pattern of unprofessional behavior including tardiness, absences without notification, and/or consistently late submission of assignments without giving reasons.
2. Pattern of inappropriate verbal communications with children, faculty, teachers and staff in schools.
3. Pattern of inappropriate use of physical contact with children, faculty, teachers and staff in schools.
4. Pattern of negative and/or disrespectful comments/attitudes towards children, faculty, teachers and staff in schools.
5. Pattern of non-cooperation with faculty, staff, teachers, and/or college students in cooperative groups, discussions, and/or similar activities
6. Specific incidents of physical and/or verbal intimidation or discrimination towards faculty, teachers, staff, and/or children. (Includes harassment as defined in official SCSU policy)
7. Specific incidents of assault/sexual assault as defined in official SCSU policy.

## **Dissemination of Information on the Policy:**

Faculty teaching the Introduction to Education courses (ED 200 and ED 300) will explain the policy to all students and refer them to the Department website for the complete document. Students will need to sign off stating the policy has been reviewed in their class. These sign offs are to be given to the CoC Committee Chair.

**Originally Approved October 17, 1996**  
**Amended per Department Minutes January 17, 2007**  
**Amended October 13, 2008**

## **Appendix 1**

### **STEP 1: Action Plan Process for Students Experiencing Difficulties Prior to Student Teaching**

This Action Plan, which will form Step 1 of the Teacher Development Communication of Concerns Process, is intended to be part of the continuous assessment of students in their respective programs. The purpose of the Action Plan is to:

- ✧ Alert students to concerns regarding knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions,
- ✧ Support students in addressing those concerns,
- ✧ Hold students accountable for dealing with concerns during the course of their program, and
- ✧ Inform faculty and advisors about concerns so they can provide guidance and assistance to students.

#### **Procedure**

This Action Plan may be used at any time during the student's program before student teaching including all major courses. During student teaching, the Action Plan process described in the Student Teaching Handbook will be implemented. Completing an Action Plan does not necessarily indicate overall lack of progress.

The following process will be used:

- ✧ When a pattern of concern is identified by an instructor or group of instructors, practicum supervisors, and/or cooperating teachers, the instructor(s), along with the cooperating teacher (if applicable) will meet with the student to alert her/him to the problem and give a first warning.
- ✧ If the pattern continues, an Action Plan will be created for the student with all parties (including the student) as signatories. Copies of the Plan will be provided to the student, instructor, Chair of the Teacher Development Communication of Concerns Committee, and the cooperating teacher (as applicable). A copy of the Plan, along with all accompanying documents will also be placed in a special file in a secure location in the office of the Department of Teacher Development.
- ✧ The Plan will list the following:
  - Description of identified concerns.
  - Deadline for completing the Plan. This may be in the same semester, or in a later semester, depending upon the concern.
  - Persons who must be notified of the plan. This would be if the deadline for the completion of the plan straddles two or more semesters.
  - Person or persons responsible for signing off that the plan has been completed. If the concern is fixed during the same semester, the instructor(s) and/or cooperating teacher who created the plan may sign that the Plan has been completed. If the concern straddles more than one semester, the creators must list the name or names of persons responsible for subsequently implementing and signing off on completion of the Plan.
- ✧ The Chair of the Teacher Development Communication of Concerns Committee will notify all persons—instructors, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, Office of Clinical Experience, etc.—listed in the Action Plan so that they are aware of the Action Plan and help the student, if necessary.
- ✧ All Action Plans must be in process (if appropriate) or satisfactorily completed for the student to proceed to the next stage of the program.

**Amended per Department Minutes January 17, 2007**

**Appendix 2**

**Department of Teacher Development  
Action Plan Process for Students Experiencing Difficulties Prior to Student Teaching**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Concern (s):

Actions to be taken:

Deadlines

Final deadline for completing Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

Persons to be notified of Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Person (s) responsible for completion of Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature (s) of person(s) creating Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s) of persons(s) certifying completion: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3

**DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**  
**COMMUNICATION OF CONCERNS FORM**

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FACULTY/STAFF REGISTERING CONCERN: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

COURSE AND/OR SCHOOL SETTING: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**BEHAVIORS OF CONCERN**

(Check appropriate concern and attach written explanation)

BEHAVIORS ON CAMPUS

- \_\_\_ 1 . Pattern of unprofessional behavior including tardiness, absences without notification, and/or consistently late submission of assignments without giving reasons.
- \_\_\_ 2. Pattern of non-cooperation with faculty, staff, and /or college students in cooperative groups, discussions, and similar course activities.
- \_\_\_ 3. Pattern of negative and/disrespectful comments directed at faculty, staff, and/or other college students.
- \_\_\_ 4. Specific incidents of physical and/or verbal intimidation towards faculty, staff and/or college students.
- \_\_\_ 5. Specific incidents of assault/sexual assault as defined in official SCSU policy.
- \_\_\_ 6. Other (Please describe).

**DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**  
**COMMUNICATION OF CONCERNS FORM**  
(contd.)

BEHAVIORS IN SCHOOLS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Pattern of unprofessional behavior including tardiness, absences without notification, and/or consistently late submission of assignments without giving reasons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Pattern of inappropriate verbal communication with faculty, teachers, staff, and children in schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Pattern of inappropriate use of physical contact with faculty, teachers, staff, and children in schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Pattern of negative and /or disrespectful comments towards faculty, teachers, staff, and children in schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Pattern of non-cooperation with faculty, staff, teachers, and/or college students in cooperative groups, discussions, and/or similar activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Specific incidents of physical and/or verbal intimidation or discrimination towards faculty, teachers, staff, and/or children. (includes harassment as defined in official SCSU policy)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Specific incidents of assault/sexual assault as defined in official SCSU policy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Other (Please describe)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Faculty/Staff \_\_\_\_\_

October 1996

**Appendix 4**

**COC Remedial Plan**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
Major: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan for Action (be specific, add more sheets if necessary):

Time Needed:

Date to be Accomplished:

Resources Needed:

SCSU Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair, COC Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Release of information:

I understand that the above plan will be shared with faculty, cooperating teachers, and administrators with whom I will be working during the plan implementation period, and I have no objection to the release of the above information to the people concerned.

SCSU Student: \_\_\_\_\_