



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE DOCTORAL PROGRAM
ACCREDITATION PILOT HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2020, CSWE's **Board of Accreditation (BOA)** voted to pilot the accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs in social work. The number of professional practice doctoral programs, commonly referred to as DSW programs, has been growing in recent years. In response to many questions in the field about where DSW graduates fit on the education continuum, the **BOA** partnered with programs, social work educators and leaders, and other constituents who worked together to create accreditation standards to set a minimum threshold for recognizing DSW programs as having a level of performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public the programs serve.

The [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#), approved and adopted in June 2020, will serve as the primary guiding document for the pilot review. Additional resources, including this *Pilot Handbook*, are being developed to support the review of programs participating in the pilot. However, the process will rely most heavily on the practices and resources currently used by the **BOA** and the Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA) staff in the accreditation of baccalaureate and master's in social work programs. A few key differences are as follows:

- The Professional Practice Doctorate Accreditation Pilot Manager (Pilot Manager), Stephanie McNally, with support from the Associate Director of Accreditation Operations & Associate Director of Accreditation Services, will serve as the staff liaison for programs undergoing review. The role is similar to the role accreditation specialists play during the candidacy and reaffirmation processes for baccalaureate and master's programs.
- All stakeholders involved in the pilot process will be asked to provide feedback at key intervals. Any issues or recommendations will be catalogued for review and consideration by the staff and the **BOA's** Professional Practice Doctorate Program Implementation Committee.
- **The BOA's** six-member Professional Practice Doctorate Program Implementation Committee will review program materials, and **BOA** members not on the committee will conduct the **candidacy** visits.
- DOSWA staff members provide advisory support for the process to identify areas of parity and divergence between the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral accreditation processes.

A limited number of programs are being included in this pilot so that the **BOA** can intentionally review each stage and adjust the accreditation process as needed. The **BOA** will evaluate the capacity to expand the initiative to include additional programs at the completion of the Benchmark 2 process for the initial set of programs (currently projected to occur in 2024).

A pilot is a required step before CSWE's **BOA** can request adjustment to its scope of accreditation from the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Programs participating in the pilot should know that **the BOA** intends to pursue a change in scope and proceed with accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs at the end of the pilot. CSWE's **BOA** cannot guarantee that CHEA will approve a request for change in scope.

PILOT HANDBOOK

In addition to providing information on [pilot program application and selection](#), [benchmark model and grid](#), [timetables](#), and [fees](#), this handbook also provides the [policies and procedures](#) and a [glossary](#) that apply to professional practice doctoral programs, specifically.

The information in this document is not intended to be exhaustive. Programs participating in the pilot are encouraged to review the existing [EPAS Handbook](#) for complete information on policies and procedures. When the [EPAS Handbook](#) refers to accreditation standards, the pilot programs will use the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#), and the Pilot Manager, Stephanie McNally, will serve as accreditation specialist.

Any questions about this handbook or the pilot process in general may be directed to the Pilot Manager, [Stephanie McNally](#), at: practicedoc@cswe.org.

PILOT APPLICATION AND SELECTION

Four programs will be selected in 2021 to participate in the professional practice doctoral program accreditation pilot. This number will allow the BOA to intentionally review each stage in the process and make necessary adjustments before additional programs may undergo review.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Only existing/active professional practice doctoral programs in which students complete the program by August 31, 2021, are eligible to participate in the pilot. However, the intent is to be able to use the same accreditation requirements for new and developing programs in the future.

Programs will be selected to emphasize diversity in the pilot. The following will be considered when evaluating program diversity:

- Institutional auspice
- Minority-Serving Institutions
- Region
- Program size (number of faculty members and students)
- Program focus
- [Program options](#)

The selection criteria were determined by the Professional Practice Doctoral Program Implementation Committee; the program selection will be made by the CSWE staff.

TIMELINE

Activity or Document	Date
Call for pilot participation goes out to all existing professional practice doctoral programs	June 2021 (following the BOA meeting)
Programs applying to be selected to participate in the pilot submit <i>Pilot Application</i> (including the <i>Letter of Institutional Intent</i> and <i>Candidacy Eligibility Application</i>)	By August 31, 2021
Programs will be notified whether they were selected (only four programs will be selected)	October 2021 (following the BOA meeting)
For Selected Programs	
The selected programs are invoiced for the candidacy eligibility fee (\$10,000)	October 2021

Candidacy eligibility fee is due	December 1, 2021
Draft Benchmark 1 and Draft <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i> submitted by program	February 1, 2022

When considering whether to submit a pilot application, think about the following:

- Is the program already an existing/active program? Have students graduated from the program by August 31, 2021?
- Is the program prepared to complete and submit the *Pilot Application* (including the *Letter of Institutional Intent* and *Candidacy Eligibility Application*) between June and August 31, 2021?
- Is the program prepared to pay the candidacy eligibility fee (\$10,000) by December 1, 2021?
- Is the program prepared to complete and submit Draft Benchmark 1 by February 1, 2022?
- Is the program prepared to document its compliance plan to meet the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#)? Alternatively, is the program prepared to make changes to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards?
- Is the program committed to a 3–4 year process including crafting three benchmark documents, hosting three **candidacy** visits, and paying all fees associated with each benchmark?

BENCHMARK MODEL AND GRID

Completing the candidacy process is a 3–4 year undertaking that concludes with an initial accreditation decision. The candidacy process is focused on a benchmarking model of program development.

The benchmark model is a systematic incremental approach to developing a social work program and writing a comprehensive initial accreditation self-study. There are three benchmarks; the benchmark grid below explains the compliance and draft framework. Program development is also guided by three consultative and feedback-driven visits from **BOA members**.

Programs progress through several stages of program development: applying for candidacy status, completing candidacy, and receiving initial accreditation status. There are several products, timetables, forms, and accreditation fees associated with each phase. Information on each stage is detailed on following pages.

By the time a program is reviewed by the **BOA** for initial accreditation, the self-study will be completed, ideally at least one class graduated, and assessment data collected from program graduates.

Benchmark Grid: The three benchmarks incorporate all [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#) (i.e., AS 1.0.1 through AS 4.0.4) as in the following table. The grid illustrates which features of the standards the program is working on during each **candidacy** visit. The “standards that must be met” columns list which accreditation standards the program must demonstrate compliance with during each review to proceed to the next benchmark and **candidacy** visit. The “standards for which responses are being drafted” column, shaded in gray, lists which accreditation standards must be addressed in draft form during the **candidacy** visit. The visitor(s) gives the program feedback and consultation on how to improve the draft portion, which is reviewed for approval in the next benchmark(s). Once the **BOA** deems the program as being in compliance with the listed accreditation standards at Benchmark 1 and

Benchmark 2, the program will proceed to the next benchmark. The column at Benchmark 3 indicates that the program must demonstrate compliance with all accreditation standards.

	Candidacy Visit 1 Benchmark 1		Candidacy Visit 2 Benchmark 2		Candidacy Visit 3 Benchmark 3
	Standards that must be met to be approved to proceed to BMK 2	Standards that are addressed in draft (not considered in the decision-making process)	Standards that must be met to be approved to proceed to BMK 3	Standards that are addressed in draft (not considered in the decision-making process)	All standards must be met; program creates a comprehensive initial accreditation self-study
Program Mission and Goals	AS 1.0.1 AS 1.0.2 AS 1.0.3				AS 1.0.1 AS 1.0.2 AS 1.0.3
Explicit Curriculum	AS 2.0.1 AS 2.0.2	AS 2.0.3 AS 2.0.4 AS 2.0.5 Syllabi	AS 2.0.3 AS 2.0.4 AS 2.0.5 Syllabi		AS 2.0.1 AS 2.0.2 AS 2.0.3 AS 2.0.4 AS 2.0.5 Syllabi
Implicit Curriculum (Diversity)		AS 3.0.1	AS 3.0.1		AS 3.0.1
Implicit Curriculum (Admissions Policies and Procedures)	AS 3.0.2 AS 3.0.3				AS 3.0.2 AS 3.0.3
Implicit Curriculum (Advisement and Mentoring)		AS 3.0.4	AS 3.0.4		AS 3.0.4
Implicit Curriculum (Student Participation and Governance)		AS 3.0.5 AS 3.0.6 Student Handbook	AS 3.0.5 AS 3.0.6 Student Handbook		AS 3.0.5 AS 3.0.6 Student Handbook
Implicit Curriculum (Faculty)	AS 3.0.7 AS 3.0.8	AS 3.0.9 AS 3.10	AS 3.0.7 AS 3.0.8 AS 3.0.9 AS 3.10		AS 3.0.7 AS 3.0.8 AS 3.0.9 AS 3.10
Implicit Curriculum (Administrative Structure)	AS 3.11 AS 3.12		AS 3.11 AS 3.12		AS 3.11 AS 3.12
Implicit Curriculum (Resources)	AS 3.13 AS 3.14				AS 3.13 AS 3.14
Assessment		AS 4.0.1 AS 4.0.2 AS 4.0.3 AS 4.0.4	AS 4.0.1 AS 4.0.3 (plan only)	AS 4.0.2 AS 4.0.3 (complete) AS 4.0.4	AS 4.0.1 AS 4.0.2 AS 4.0.3 AS 4.0.4

Note: BMK 2=Benchmark 2; BMK 3=Benchmark 3; AS=accreditation standard and refers to the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#).

DRAFT BENCHMARK 1

For programs participating in the pilot, Draft Benchmark 1 must be submitted no later than February 1, 2022.

The program's draft document will be jointly reviewed by the pilot manager and Associate Director of Accreditation Operations, who will also provide consultation to the program.

Draft Benchmark 1 consist of

- Volume 1: Compliance standards, followed by draft of all standards;
- Volume 2: Draft Syllabi; and
- Volume 3: Draft Student Handbook.

All accreditation standards are presented in draft at Benchmark 1 to increase opportunities for feedback before compliance review. It is important to make draft responses as final as possible to ensure the best quality feedback and consultation from staff members and the visitor(s). Detailed feedback and consultation are only provided in writing by DOSWA staff members during the Draft Benchmark 1 process. After the Benchmark 1 document is approved, programs are welcome and encouraged to consult with the pilot manager; however, written feedback on documents will not be provided. Continued feedback and consultation are provided by visitors at each of the three visits.

After Draft Benchmark 1 is approved by the staff, the program is formally considered to be in pre-candidacy status and is placed on a **BOA** agenda for candidacy review.

BENCHMARK 1

The submission due date for Benchmark 1 is based on the **BOA** agenda to which the program has been assigned. For details, please see [Timetables](#).

Benchmark 1 is reviewed by the visitor(s). A full review is done of the program's responses to standards that must be met in Benchmark 1, and consultation is provided on the draft responses.

The first **candidacy** visit is to be conducted virtually by two visitors for all programs participating in the pilot.

Following **Candidacy** Visit 1, the visitor(s) submits a **Candidacy** Visit 1 report to the pilot manager. The pilot manager will then provide the report to the program for a formal written response. The **BOA** will review the program for a candidacy status decision based on the Benchmark 1 Volumes 1–3, **Candidacy** Visit 1 report, and the program's response to the **Candidacy** Visit 1 report.

It is important to note that although visitors provide feedback and consultation, they do not have the authority to determine compliance or to recommend a decision type. The **BOA** readers reviewing all Benchmark 1 materials have the sole and complete authority to determine compliance and issue a decision. Thus, **BOA** readers may identify additional areas of concern or citations not previously identified by the visitors.

BENCHMARK 2

After the program is granted candidacy, it submits Benchmark 2. The submission due date is based on the BOA agenda to which the program has been assigned. For details, please see [Timetables](#).

Benchmark 2 should consist of

- Volume 1: Compliance standards, followed by draft standards;
- Volume 2: Syllabi; and
- Volume 3: Student Handbook.

Benchmark 2 is reviewed by the visitor. A full review is done of the program's responses to standards that must be met in Benchmark 2, and consultation is provided on the draft responses.

The second candidacy visit is to be conducted virtually for all programs. Programs have an option of requesting an in-person visit in lieu of a virtual visit. This request must be made in writing one week after receiving the notification of candidacy status.

Following Candidacy Visit 2, the visitor submits a report to the pilot manager. The pilot manager will then provide the report to the program for a formal written response. The BOA will review the program for a second-year candidacy status decision based on the Benchmark 2 Volumes 1–3, Candidacy Visit 2 report, and the program's response to the Candidacy Visit 2 report.

It is important to note that although visitors provide feedback and consultation, they do not have the authority to determine compliance or to recommend a decision type. The BOA readers reviewing all Benchmark 2 materials have the sole and complete authority to determine compliance and issue a decision. Thus, BOA readers may identify additional areas of concern or citations not previously identified by the visitor.

BENCHMARK 3

After the program is granted second-year candidacy status, it submits an *Initial Accreditation Eligibility Application*. The program uses the application to demonstrate that its host institution can and will support and sustain the program.

After the program's *Initial Accreditation Eligibility Application* is approved, the program submits an initial accreditation self-study. The submission due date is based on the BOA agenda to which the program has been assigned. For details, please see [Timetables](#).

The initial accreditation self-study should consist of

- Volume 1: Responses to all standards,
- Volume 2: Syllabi, and
- Volume 3: Student Handbook.

Benchmark 3 is reviewed by the visitor, and all accreditation standards must be met in this final phase.

The third candidacy visit is to be conducted in-person for all programs, with the exception of online-only programs. The third candidacy visit is to be conducted virtually for online-only programs. Online-only programs are those that offer a sole online program option. Online program option is defined in policy [1.2.4 Program Changes](#) as a majority (51% or more) of the social work curriculum delivered online. Online-only programs may request an in-person visit in lieu of a virtual visit.

Following **Candidacy** Visit 3, the visitor submits a report to the pilot manager. The pilot manager will then provide the report to the program for a formal written response. The **BOA** will review the program for an initial accreditation decision based on Benchmark 3 Volumes 1–3, the **Candidacy** Visit 3 report, and the program’s response to the **Candidacy** Visit 3 report.

It is important to note that although visitors provide feedback and consultation, they do not have the authority to determine compliance or to recommend a decision type. The **BOA** readers reviewing all Benchmark 3 materials have the sole and complete authority to determine compliance and issue a decision. Thus, **BOA** readers may identify additional areas of concern or citations not previously identified by the visitor.

TIMETABLES

All programs participating in the pilot must submit Draft Benchmark 1 no later than February 1, 2022. Based on current practices in the accreditation of baccalaureate and master’s programs, it takes staff about 4 months from receiving a draft to when it is approved. However, this timeframe may vary depending on the completeness and clarity of Draft Benchmark 1. Based on this assumption, timetables for programs for which Draft Benchmark 1 is approved by [June 1, 2022](#) (February 2025 **BOA** agenda for initial accreditation) and by [September 1, 2022](#) (June 2025 **BOA** agenda for initial accreditation) are outlined in the sections below.

Once a program is assigned to a **BOA** agenda, it generally remains on that same agenda date throughout the candidacy process. Even if the program is deferred by the **BOA** at any point due to concerns or insufficient information, the program will remain on the assigned agenda date as long as the concerns are addressed sufficiently and promptly.

However, programs are moved to a later agenda if either of the following occurs:

- The program is deferred, and the concerns are not addressed sufficiently and promptly, resulting in a second deferral. In this case the program will be permanently moved one agenda later.
- The program requests an adjustment. In this case the program will be permanently moved one agenda later.

A permanent adjustment to a later agenda may affect the program’s retroactive accreditation date (including which students are covered under accreditation) and will affect when the program is granted initial accreditation. Programs are encouraged to review [1.2.3 Agenda Adjustments in the EPAS Handbook](#) for further details and discuss implications of an agenda adjustment on their program with the pilot manager, if applicable.

FEBRUARY 2025 **BOA** AGENDA

If a pilot program’s Draft Benchmark 1 is approved by June 1, 2022, the program is placed on the February 2025 **BOA** agenda. The timetable, which includes steps, deadlines, and brief instructions, is as shown in the following table.

Candidacy Visit 1		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
Candidacy Visit 1 fee (\$5,000) invoiced	By June 1, 2022 (invoiced when Draft Benchmark 1 is approved)	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor(s)	June 2022 (finalized by July 1, 2022)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor(s).
Candidacy Visit 1 fee due	July 1, 2022	The program remits payment to CSWE.

Program submits Benchmark 1	1 month before Candidacy Visit 1	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor, in three separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 1	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 1 occurs (virtual)	September 1, 2022–November 15, 2022	-----
Visitors(s) submits the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor(s) e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program response to the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for candidacy	February 2023 meeting	-----

Candidacy Visit 2		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
Candidacy Visit 2 fee (\$5,000) invoiced	May 1, 2023	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Candidacy Visit 2 fee due	July 1, 2023	The program remits payment to CSWE.
Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor	June 2023 (finalized by July 1, 2023)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor
Program submits Benchmark 2	1 month before Candidacy Visit 2	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor in three separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 2	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 2 occurs	September 1, 2023–November 15, 2023	-----
Visitor submits the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program's response to the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for second year of candidacy status	February 2024 meeting	-----

Candidacy Visit 3		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
<i>Initial Accreditation Eligibility Application</i> due	March 1, 2024	The program e-mails form to pilot manager.

Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor	June 2024 (finalized by July 1, 2024)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor.
Initial accreditation fee (\$5,000) invoiced	July 1, 2024	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Candidacy Visit 3 fee due	August 1, 2024	The program remits payment to CSWE.
Program submits initial accreditation self-study	1 month before Candidacy Visit 3	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor, in three separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 3	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 3 occurs	September 1, 2024–November 15, 2024	-----
Visitor submits the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program response to the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 3 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for initial accreditation	February 2025 meeting	-----

Note: Accreditation for programs on this agenda is retroactively effective and covers the students who started the program beginning in fall 2022 (academic year during which candidacy is granted) and beyond. See Policy 3.1.1 in [EPAS Handbook](#).

JUNE 2025 **BOA** AGENDA

If a pilot program’s Draft Benchmark 1 is approved by September 1, 2022, the program is placed on the June 2025 **BOA** agenda. The timetable, which includes steps, deadlines, and brief instructions, is shown in the following table.

Candidacy Visit 1		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
Candidacy Visit 1 fee (\$5,000) invoiced	By September 1, 2022 (invoiced when Draft Benchmark 1 is approved)	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor(s)	September 2022 (finalized by October 1, 2022)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor(s)
Candidacy Visit 1 fee due	October 1, 2022	The program remits payment to CSWE.
Program submits Benchmark 1	One month before Candidacy Visit 1	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor, in three separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 1	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 1 occurs (virtual)	December 1, 2022–February 28, 2023	-----

Visitor(s) submits the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor(s) e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program response to the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 1 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for candidacy	June 2023 Meeting	-----

Candidacy Visit 2		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
Candidacy Visit 2 fee (\$5,000) invoiced	July 1, 2023	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Candidacy Visit 2 fee due	September 1, 2023	The program remits payment to CSWE.
Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor	September 2023 (finalized by October 1, 2023)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor.
Program submits Benchmark 2	1 month before Candidacy Visit 2	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor in three separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 2	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 2 occurs	December 1, 2023–February 28, 2024	-----
Visitor submits the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program response to the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 2 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for second year of candidacy status	June 2024 meeting	-----

Candidacy Visit 3		
Activity or Document	Date	Copies Sent to
Initial accreditation eligibility application due	July 1, 2024	The program e-mails form to pilot manager.
Associate Director of Accreditation Operations selects visitor	September 2024 (finalized by October 1, 2024)	Pilot manager e-mails program and copies assigned visitor.
Initial accreditation fee (\$5,000) invoiced	November 1, 2024	Invoice sent by DOSWA department manager via e-mail
Candidacy Visit 3 fee due	November 15, 2024	The program remits payment to CSWE.
Program submits initial accreditation self-study	1 month before Candidacy Visit 3	Program e-mails to the pilot manager and visitor in three

		separate documents: Volumes 1, 2, and 3.
Program submits the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief</i>	1 month before Candidacy Visit 3	The program e-mails brief to the visitor.
Candidacy Visit 3 occurs	December 1, 2024–February 28, 2025	-----
Visitor submits the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief</i>	Within 2 weeks of the last day of the candidacy visit	The visitor e-mails brief to the pilot manager, who processes it and forwards it to the program.
Program response to the <i>Initial Accreditation Review Brief Form</i> due	Within 2 weeks of receiving the <i>Benchmark 3 Review Brief</i> (file complete)	The program e-mails as one file to the pilot manager.
Board of Accreditation review for initial accreditation	June 2025 Meeting	-----

Note: Accreditation for programs on this agenda is retroactively effective and covers the students who started the program beginning in fall 2022 (academic year during which candidacy is granted) and beyond. See Policy 1.1.3 in [EPAS Handbook](#).

FEES

The required accreditation fees for professional practice doctoral programs are the same as those for baccalaureate and master’s programs. For details, please see [Candidacy Fees and Related Expenses](#).

Please note the following exceptions:

- The candidacy workshop mentioned in the Candidacy Fees and Related Expenses document pertains to baccalaureate and master’s programs only. There are currently no workshops for professional practice doctoral programs because the initiative is in its pilot stages. However, these programs will be provided the related information via correspondence and consultation.
- Because the *Pilot Application* (including the *Letter of Institutional Intent* and *Candidacy Eligibility Application*) is being used by programs to apply for selection, only those four programs that are selected will need to submit the eligibility fee (to be invoiced once selected).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The BOA and DOSWA will apply existing baccalaureate and master’s program accreditation policies and procedures as contained in the [EPAS Handbook](#) to the piloting of the accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs. When the [EPAS Handbook](#) refers to accreditation standards, the pilot programs will use the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#) and the pilot manager will serve as accreditation specialist.

Any variances or clarifications on policy application for the piloting of professional practice doctoral accreditation are outlined below. Please note that policies and pilot applicability exceptions are subject to change.

1.1 OVERVIEW: SOCIAL WORK ACCREDITATION

1.1.1. Accredited Status Language

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: A pilot is a required step before CSWE’s BOA can request adjustment to its scope of accreditation from CHEA. Programs participating in the pilot should know that the BOA intends to pursue change in scope and proceed with accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs at the end of the pilot. CSWE cannot guarantee that CHEA will approve a request of change in scope.

1.1.2. Conditional Accreditation Status Language

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: Conditional accreditation may not be granted to programs seeking initial accreditation. BOA initial accreditation decision options are outlined in Policy 4.6 of the [EPAS Handbook](#).

1.1.3. Candidacy Status Language

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Provision: The accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs is currently being piloted, and accreditation is not guaranteed. Therefore, the BOA will not release candidacy decisions for the pilot programs to the public, and the programs participating in the pilot are discouraged from disclosing their participation status, including candidacy status, until the pilot is complete, or an accreditation decision is made.

1.1.4 Pre-candidacy Status Language

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Provision: The accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs is currently being piloted and accreditation is not guaranteed. Therefore, the BOA will not release candidacy decisions for the pilot programs to the public, and the programs participating in the pilot are discouraged from disclosing their participation status, including pre-candidacy status, until the pilot is complete or an initial accreditation decision is made.

1.1.5. Board of Accreditation

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.1.6 Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work

CSWE uses the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#), approved and adopted in June 2020, to accredit professional practice doctoral programs. The standards support academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. The standards permit programs to use traditional and emerging models of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparability across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate.

The accreditation standards focus on four features of an integrated curriculum design: (1) program mission and goals, (2) explicit curriculum, (3) implicit curriculum, and (4) assessment.

1. The mission and goals of a professional practice doctoral program address [social work’s purpose](#), are grounded in core professional values, and are informed by program context.
2. The explicit curriculum constitutes the program’s formal educational structure and includes the courses and academic product(s) required for the program. Programs identify a specific focus for the professional practice doctorate curriculum that prepares students to advance practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels as well as in higher education and/or professional leadership. The academic product(s) should be defined by the program and use a form that best incorporates the requirements of the program focus and the institution

that is awarding the degree. Whatever form the final academic product(s) takes, it will serve as a foundation for future scholarly practice.

3. The implicit curriculum refers to the learning environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented and includes areas such as the program's commitment to diversity, admissions policies and procedures, advisement and mentoring policies, student participation in governance, faculty, administrative structure, and resources.
4. Assessment is an integral component of any quality educational social work program. Assessment involves the systematic gathering of data about student performance and other quality benchmarks. Assessment information is used to guide student learning, measure student outcomes, evaluate and improve effectiveness of the curriculum, and strengthen the assessment methods used. Given that social work practice and scholarship are complex and multidimensional, the assessment methods used by professional practice doctoral programs and the data collected may vary by context.

Assessment also involves gathering data regarding implicit curriculum areas such as the program's commitment to diversity, admissions policies and procedures, advisement and mentoring policies, student participation in governance, faculty, administrative structure, and resources. Data from assessment continuously inform and promote change in the explicit and implicit curricula of the professional doctoral program.

1.1.7 Compliance, Concern, and Noncompliance Statements

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: An interpretation guide for the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#) does not yet exist and will be developed as the pilot is conducted. In the meantime, the process will rely heavily on the existing [2015 EPAS Interpretation Guide](#) and additional resources currently in development.

1.1.8. Candidacy Benchmarks

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: The benchmark grid that corresponds with the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#) is outlined [here](#).

1.1.9. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Provision: Reaffirmation materials, policies, procedures, and resources will be reevaluated at the conclusion of the pilot.

1.1.10. BOA Decision Making

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: For the pilot, the pilot manager, with support from the Associate Director of Accreditation Operations & Associate Director of Accreditation Services, will serve as the accreditation specialist for workgroup purposes.

1.1.11 The BOA Executive Committee

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.1.12. Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA)

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: The pilot manager, with support from the Associate Director of Accreditation Operations & Associate Director of Accreditation Services, will accomplish each of the accreditation specialist duties listed. DOSWA staff members provide advisory support to the process to identify areas of parity and divergence between the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral accreditation processes.

1.1.13. Whom to Contact About What

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot clarification: Any questions related to the pilot may be directed to the Professional Practice Doctorate Accreditation Pilot Manager (Pilot Manager), Stephanie McNally, at practicedoc@cswe.org

1.1.14. Mailing Instructions for Programs

All program documents should be sent by e-mail to the Pilot Manager, Stephanie McNally, at: practicedoc@cswe.org. The BOA is paperless!

Accreditation fees can be mailed to the following address along with a copy of the invoice:
Council on Social Work Education
Attn: Finance and Administration
333 John Carlyle Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

1.1.15 Integrity Policy

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2 OVERVIEW: BOA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1.2.1. Complaints Regarding Program Compliance

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.2 Postponement of Reaffirmation Review

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarifications:

Postponement Policies: Programs in any stage of the candidacy process cannot request a postponement. However, the program can request an agenda adjustment (see Policy 1.2.3). Programs considering requesting an agenda adjustment are encouraged to discuss implications with the pilot manager.

Permanent Alignment: Although this may be granted for baccalaureate and master's programs, permanent alignment for review of professional practice doctoral programs is not permissible at this time.

1.2.3 Agenda Adjustments

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: For the purposes of the pilot, the pilot manager will take the place of the accreditation specialist. Pilot programs considering requesting an agenda adjustment are encouraged to discuss implications with the pilot manager. Agenda adjustment request forms will be submitted to the pilot manager.

1.2.4. Program Changes

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: Pilot programs, like all other programs in the candidacy process, should refrain from establishing a new program option, such as a physical location or online delivery method, while undergoing the 3–4 year candidacy review. The candidacy review process begins with the submission of Draft Benchmark 1 and ends with an initial accreditation decision. Any questions regarding program changes may be directed to the pilot manager.

1.2.5. Waivers to Accreditation Standards

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: As indicated in the policy, only accredited programs may request waivers. Therefore, programs undergoing pilot review for accreditation cannot request a waiver.

1.2.6. Appeals of BOA Decisions

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.7. Information Sharing and Release of BOA Decision Letter

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Provision: The accreditation of professional practice doctoral programs is currently being piloted, and accreditation is not guaranteed. Therefore, the BOA will not release candidacy decisions for the pilot programs to the public, and the programs participating in the pilot are discouraged from disclosing their participation status, including pre-candidacy status, until the pilot is complete or an accreditation decision is made.

1.2.8. Accreditation Fees and Related Policies

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.9. Program Closure and Withdrawal of Accredited Status

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.10. Dissolution of Collaborative Programs

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

Pilot Clarification: For the purposes of the pilot, the pilot manager will take the place of the accreditation specialist, and any questions regarding dissolution of collaborative programs may be directed to the pilot manager.

1.2.11. Document Submission Policy

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.12. Programs Found Out-of-Compliance Between Reviews

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

1.2.13. Use of Consultants

[See full [EPAS Handbook](#)]

GLOSSARY

The glossary included here is an aid to understanding the [Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#). Programs participating in the pilot are also encouraged to review the glossary found in the [2015 EPAS](#). The list of terms here is not exhaustive, and definitions may be subject to change.

Curriculum: all planned educational experiences under the direction of the social work program that facilitate student attainment of core expertise and skills for doctoral practitioners. The explicit curriculum constitutes the program's formal educational structure and includes the courses and academic product(s) required for the program. The implicit curriculum refers to the learning environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented.

Full-time faculty (AS 3.0.8): The requirement that there be two full-time faculty members does not preclude allowing faculty members from other disciplines to teach in the program. It also does not prevent program faculty members from cross-teaching, as long as 51% or more of their assignment is to the professional practice doctoral program.

Practice experience (AS 3.0.2, AS 3.0.8, AS 3.11):

- The minimum requirement of 3 years of practice experience beyond the master's degree in social work is calculated in relation to the total number of hours of full-time and equivalent professional practice experience.
- Social work practice experience is defined as providing social work services to individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities.
- Social work services can include work in professional social work auspices under the supervision of professional social work supervisors, volunteer practice experience in a social service agency, and paid experience as a consultant in the areas of the individual's practice expertise.

Profession's Purpose (AS 1.0.1): The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally. (pg. 5, [2015 EPAS](#))

Program Options: These are the various structured pathways to degree completion by which social work programs are delivered, including specific methods and locations such as on campus, off campus, and virtual instruction. The types of program options include

- In-person/face-to-face/traditional and
- distance education (including online, broadcast site, and correspondence).

Please refer to Policy 1.2.4 in the [EPAS Handbook](#) for complete definitions.

When submitting Draft Benchmark 1, the program's narrative response for each standard must address all program options. A statement in the narrative must indicate that the response applies to all program options or provide a description of how each program option complies with the standard.

After candidacy has been granted, programs cannot add new program options. Thus, all program options for which accreditation is sought must be identified in the Draft Benchmark 1 document. New program options can be added through the substantive change process only after a program is granted initial accreditation. Please see Policy [1.2.4 in the EPAS Handbook for details](#).

