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Council on Social Work Education
Commission on Accreditation
Standards Review Committee

STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

1979

Introduction

Social work is a profession, the practice of which is in the public interest. This practice requires public confidence in the competence of the practitioners and in the quality of their professional education. The Council on Social Work Education has established the following standards to inform the Commission on Accreditation and all concerned. These standards establish requirements for the development and operation of programs of education for social work which warrant public and professional confidence, consistent with competent, ethical practice.

The standards comprise two categories: eligibility and evaluation. All standards are criterion measures or statements of necessity for a program of professional social work education to function at an acceptable level of quality. All standards must be met.

Eligibility standards are those which determine a program's eligibility for review for purposes of accreditation or reaffirmation of accredited status. Each eligibility standard must be met fully and explicitly for a program to be eligible for review.

Evaluative standards must be met, based upon judgment and interpretation in the context of the circumstances relevant to the program. Evaluative

standards usually are accompanied by comments which serve to explain, illustrate, clarify or elaborate the standards in order to facilitate interpretation and implementation of them.

When collaborative programs are submitted for review, each arrangement is evaluated on its own merits and the intent of the standards. Each institution which participates in the collaborative program carries individual responsibility for application for review.

In the standards and comments, "institution" and "educational institution" refer to the college, university or other institution of higher education of which the program is part.

Graduate standards of accreditation

Eligibility Standards

Standard	Comment
1. The program shall be an integral part of a regionally accredited educational institution.	
2. The program shall specify in any reference to accreditation the educational level for which accreditation has been received.	
3. The program shall have an executive officer who holds a graduate degree in social work, and a full-time appointment in social work education.	
4. The program shall have a stated policy against discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnic or national origin, age or sex, implemented through stated affirmative action procedures with respect to selection of students and all levels of personnel, and throughout the organization and implementation of the program.	
5. A graduate program of not less than two academic years of professional education leading to the master's degree shall be offered. At least one academic year shall be taken in full-time residence, as defined by the educational institution.	

Evaluative Standards

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1. The educational program shall have specified objectives.	Objectives are the goals which legitimate the program, guide its planning and activities, and define its relationships with the profession, community and region, and the educational institution. Program objectives are expected to be compatible with the objectives of the abovenamed, but with the specific focus of providing quality educational preparation for entry into the practice of social work. The expected educational outcomes should be explicated and should be in harmony with the values and ethics of the profession.
2. The program shall have autonomy similar to that of other professional programs within the educational institution.	The nature and character of program autonomy varies widely. Program autonomy should include: an independent budget; authority over personnel, with responsibility in recruitment, retention, promotion and tenure decisions; support staff assigned to the program; and other resources and authority for the achievement of specified program objectives.
3. The program content shall be consistent with the most recent curriculum policy statement adopted by the Board of Directors (cf. Appendix I) and shall support specified program objectives.	Program curriculum designs vary. Whatever the individual patterns, they should reflect a systematic approach to achievement of the program objectives. The content should clearly and specifically conform to the requirements of the curriculum policy currently in effect. Beyond that, an educational curriculum should have a recognizable theme or focus; clear identification as professional education; internal coherence and integrity; and opportunities for students to pursue special areas of appropriate professional interest. The plan for presentation of educational experiences should be apparent.

4. The program shall have full-time faculty adequate in number and range of expertise, based upon education and practice experience, to achieve its specified objectives.

The core of full-time faculty should be sufficient in number and configuration to achieve program objectives; to provide competent professional coverage of all major curricula, areas; and to provide professional identity to the program. Faculty from diverse disciplines which are related to social work can provide important enrichment. However, to insure quality professional education, the majority of the faculty, particularly those who teach practice courses or are responsible for the field component of the curriculum, should hold at least the master's degree from an accredited social work program, with significant experience in professional practice. Use of part-time faculty can provide flexibility and increased breadth to the program, but basic educational experiences should be vested in a core of full-time, experienced, knowledgeable faculty who are identified with the profession of social work.

5. The program shall have policies and practices that specify faculty rights and responsibilities.

Faculty rights should be consistent with the protections, privileges and expectations of other professional program faculty in the institution and in other educational institutions. Faculty should be free to organize in their own interests as faculty. They should have major authority and responsibility for the program of professional education, consistent with social work values and ethics. Full information, including grievance and appeal procedures, should be published and made freely available to all faculty in such a way that all faculty are fully informed of their rights and of their program obligations.

6. Responsibility for educational policy and curriculum shall be vested in the faculty of the program.

Program faculty should have the stated authority and responsibility for regularly designing, modifying, approving, executing and evaluating the curriculum and educational policies of the program, including: instructional content; student admission, retention and graduation; and advisement of students. Rules and procedures by which faculty exercise this authority should be consistent with those of the institution.

7. The program shall have the authority, consistent with the policies of the institution, to set requirements for admission of students and for granting of degrees.

Admission to the program and granting of the degree require the exercise of particular judgment and evaluation. Authority to set requirements for these critical decisions should be clearly stated and should rest with the program faculty, acting on behalf of the profession, with responsibility to the institution. In considering academic credit for prior education achievement, the program should develop criteria which help avoid undue duplication of academic content and to insure a student outcome consonant with program objectives.

8. The program's advisement system, including procedures for termination of student status, shall be clearly specified and known to program faculty and students.

The advisement system should assist students in assessment of their aptitude and motivation for a career in social work; allow for periodic evaluation of student performance; guide students in their selection of elective studies and areas of concentrated study; and make known the field settings used in the program. When it is necessary to terminate student status of individuals, procedures should be clear and the reasons for the action explained. Such a decision should be made at the earliest feasible time.

9. The program shall have policies and practices that specify student rights and responsibilities and make explicit the criteria for evaluation of student academic and field performance.

Student rights should be consistent with the protections, privileges and expectations of other graduate professional students in the institution. Students should be free to organize in their own interests as students and appropriate organization should be encouraged by the program. Students should be able to contribute to the formulation and modification of policy related to them as students. Full information, including grievance and appeal procedures, should be published and announced by the program in such a way as to assure each class and each student of being fully and regularly informed their rights and of their obligations, consistent with social work values and ethics.

10. The program shall be conducted without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnic or national origin, age or sex, with respect to selection of students, classroom and field instructors and other staff, and all other aspects of the organization and implementation of the program.

11. The program shall make special and continuous efforts to provide the enrichment of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in its student body, at all levels of personnel, and throughout the educational program.

The practice of professional social work requires broad knowledge of racial, ethnic and cultural aspects of life in American society. In the interests of a competent and complete program of quality professional education, social work students and faculty should study and experience the diversity of the American society which they purport to serve. This requires that diversity to be provided through special efforts to assure representation of diverse groups in the student body and at all levels of personnel. Social work values, sound professional education and social justice all require that this enriching diversity should be actively and continuously sought in all aspects of the program operation and throughout the educational curriculum.

12. The program shall demonstrate special efforts to assure equity in the recruitment of women students, faculty and staff; and in all aspects of program implementation, supported by appropriate curriculum content concerning women's issues; and in the encouragement of women in areas of practice in which they are not equitably represented.

The program should give special attention to the establishment of equity with respect to women. This effort should be apparent in recruitment, retention, promotion, tenure and remuneration decisions and in the assignment of administrative responsibilities and in the provision of administrative and other opportunities. Opportunities for advancement should aim to correct injustices and to provide future situations equitable with those enjoyed by men. Recognition of achievement by women should be equitable with such recognition accorded men. Equity with respect to women's matters should extend to students in their roles as students, including such areas as admissions, field placements and allocation of financial aid. The educational curriculum should reflect the importance of women's issues in American society. Women should be encouraged and supported in entering educational and professional practice areas in which they are not equitably represented in comparison with men.

13. Variations from an on-campus, full-time program shall meet the same standards herein presented.

Innovative and experimental variations in program, such as branch, part-time and continuing education are encouraged, but they should not detract from educational objectives or expected outcomes for students enrolled either in the variation or in the regular program. Such variations on program should be offered in such a manner that they do not divert resources necessary for maintaining the quality of the regular program. The program should document assurance of consistency of outcomes in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these variations in program offerings. Especially important in branch and part-time program variations is the guarantee of the equivalent of on-campus resources available to full-time students for professional socialization; peer contributions to learning; and faculty, field, classroom and library resources for achieving program objectives and specified outcomes.

14. The program shall have an annual budget allocation from the educational institution sufficient to carry out its specified educational objectives.

The allocation should assure such necessities as: a core of faculty on tenure-line appointments, adequate materials and supplies; opportunities for faculty to retain and to improve professional and teaching competence through travel, attendance at professional meetings and institutes, and to engage in institution-supported research; and the adequate exercise of administrative duties through informal activities. The allocation should be sufficiently stable to permit both short-term and long-range planning by faculty and administration.

15. The program shall have physical facilities adequate to achieve its specified objectives.

Adequate facilities should include sufficient office space and equipment to support study and research by faculty, and private advisory conferences between faculty and students; lecture and discussion/seminar rooms sufficient in number, size and location to provide for classes and conferences at convenient times and locations; sufficient space and equipment for support staff to fulfill its duties expeditiously; and space for meetings and study by faculty and students.

16. The program shall have library resources adequate to achieve its specified objectives.

Library resources include convenient location and easy access by social work faculty and students to books, periodicals, reference materials, reports, documents, fugitive material and other sources necessary and useful for study, instruction and research in social work. The resources should be assured by an annual budget adequate for replacement and for building the collection. Acquisition decisions with respect to social work should include participation by social work faculty. Sufficient space should be available and useage policies enforced to support optimal use of library resources by faculty and students. There should be adequate professional library staff to serve the needs of the social work program.

Undergraduate standards of accreditationEligibility Standards

Standard	Comment
<p>1. The program shall be part of an educational institution regionally accredited to award the baccalaureate degree. The institution shall indicate on its transcript or other permanent institutional record that a student has completed the program preparing for beginning social work practice, limiting such certification to students who have successfully completed the program in its entirety. The institution shall identify and describe the program in its catalog and in any reference to accreditation shall specify the educational level for which accreditation has been received.</p>	
<p>2. The program shall have its primary stated educational objective preparation for beginning professional social work practice.</p>	
<p>3. The program shall have a designated director who holds at least a master's degree in social work, with a full-time appointment in the educational institution.</p>	
<p>4. The program shall have a stated policy against discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnic or national origin, age or sex, implemented through stated affirmative action procedures with respect to selection of students and all levels of personnel, and throughout the organization and implementation of the program.</p>	
<p>5. The program shall have a core of at least three faculty assigned full-time to the program. These faculty each shall hold at least a master's degree from an accredited program of social work; one may be designated program director.</p>	
<p>6. The program faculty members who teach the content on social work practice and coordinate field instruction shall hold at least master's degrees from accredited programs of social work and shall have at least two years of full-time post-master's professional practice experience.</p>	

Evaluative Standards

Standard	Comment
1. The educational program shall have specified objectives.	<p>Objectives are the goals which legitimate the program, guide its planning and activities, and define its relationships with the profession, community and region, and the educational institution. Program objectives are expected to be compatible with the objectives of the abovenamed, but with the specific focus of providing equality educational preparation for entry into the beginning practice of social work. This practice should be viewed in relation to delivery of services with individuals, families, groups and communities. The expected educational outcomes of the program should be explicated and should be in harmony with the values and ethics of the profession. The various components of the program objectives should be conceptualized clearly as parts of the interrelated whole that contributes to the expected student outcomes rather than viewed as separate entities. The program objectives and those of the institution should be mutually supportive.</p>
2. The administrative auspices of the program shall insure and support the integrity of the program, and social work professional ethics and values.	<p>When a program is located within a department of an academic discipline or in a multi-discipline department or division of the institution, there should be assurance of fair and equitable allocation of faculty and other resources. There should be recognition of the unique requirements of professional education as distinct from those of an academic discipline. There should be clear acceptance of the need for program autonomy in curriculum matters and in those matters related to achievement of the program objectives. In instances in which the program is located in a school with a graduate program of social work, there should be equitable allocation of resources to permit achievement of undergraduate program objectives.</p>
3. The educational content shall be in harmony with the most recent curriculum policy statement adopted by the Board of Directors (cf. Appendix 1) and shall support the specified program objectives.	<p>To achieve the objectives of a social work program, the educational experience should be coherent and should offer the curriculum content through a stated rationale that provides the student the opportunity for integrated learning in the knowledge and skills development and learning, there should be emphasis throughout the curriculum on the profession as both art and science.</p>

4. The program shall have full-time faculty adequate in number and range of expertise, based upon education and practice experience, to achieve its specified objectives.

5. The program shall have policies and practices that specify faculty rights and responsibilities.

The program is required to have a minimum of three full-time faculty (cf. evaluative standard #5), but beyond this absolute minimum, the core of full-time faculty should be sufficient in number and configuration to achieve program objectives; to provide competent professional coverage of all major curriculum areas; and to provide professional identity to the program. When part-time or adjunct faculty are used, it is the program's responsibility to insure that these faculty are oriented to the program objectives, content and approach.

Program faculty should have the authority and responsibility for regularly designing, modifying, approving, executing and evaluating the curriculum and educational policies of the program. Rules and procedures by which faculty exercise this authority should be consistent with those of the department or institutional division of which the program is part.

Faculty rights should be consistent with the protections, privileges and expectations of other professional program faculty in the institution and in other educational institutions. Faculty should be free to organize in their own interests as faculty. Full information, including grievance and appeal procedures, should be published and made freely available to all faculty in such a way as to assure that all are fully informed of their rights and of their program responsibilities.

In assigning faculty workloads, due recognition should be given to the necessity for assigned time to discharge community obligations related to the purposes of the program; to participate in activities of professional organizations; to engage in student advising; and to perform administrative tasks, such as selection and evaluation of field instruction settings.

In hiring, retention, promotion and tenure decisions, the program administrative officer should make special efforts to secure adequate weight for the professional social work degree, and for professional practice experience and expert contributions to the field.

6. The program director shall be responsible for educational leadership of the program and shall have administration of the program as primary assigned responsibility.

7. The program shall have procedures, compatible with those of the institution, that clearly identify its criteria and processes for admission.

8. The program's advisement system, including procedures for termination of student status, shall be clearly specified and known to program faculty and students.

Leadership of the educational program should be vested in the director of the social work program in order to assure the program integrity and to insure the proper exercise of faculty authority in these matters. The program director may have a number of responsibilities to the institution, but the primary responsibility, with appropriate time and resources to fulfill it competently, should be the administrative demands of the social work program.

Selective admission to a social work program may not be possible under the policies of the institution. In such cases, efforts should be made as early as possible to inform entering students about social work education and to consider with them their suitability for careers in social work. Such orientation begins the continuing advisement process. Since the program usually exists within a four-year curriculum, early identification of students is important to them in acquiring the necessary foundation content in a planned and systematic way. When early identification is not feasible, the program should have clearly defined procedures for assuring acquisition of foundation content before students enter social work courses for which such content is prerequisite.

The advisement system should assist students in their assessment of their aptitude and motivation for a career in social work; allow for periodic evaluation of student performance; guide students in their selection of courses; and make known the field settings used by the program and the types of learning experiences available in these situations. In the event that it is necessary to terminate the student status of individuals, procedures should be clear and should insure a decision as early as feasible to insure protection of student rights, and to avoid unnecessary delay in the students' schedules for completion of studies. This decision should precede, whenever possible, assignment to field placement.

9. The program shall have policies and practices that specify student rights and responsibilities and make explicit the criteria for evaluation of student academic and field instruction performance.

Student rights should be consistent with the protections, privileges and expectations of other students in the institution. Students should be free to organize in their own interest as students, and appropriate organization should be encouraged by the program. Students should be able to contribute to the formulation and modification of policy relating to them as students. Full information, including grievance and appeal procedures, should be published and announced by the program in such a way as to assure each class and each student of being fully and regularly informed of their rights and of their obligations, consistent with social work values and ethics.

10. The program shall be conducted without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnic or national origin, age or sex, with respect to selection of students, classroom and field instructors and other staff, and in all aspects of the organization and implementation of the program.

11. The program shall make special and continuous efforts to provide the enrichment of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in its student body, at all levels of personnel, and throughout the educational program.

The practice of professional social work requires broad knowledge of racial, ethnic and cultural aspects of life in American society. In the interests of a competent and complete program of quality professional education, social work students and faculty should study and experience the diversity of the American society which they purport to serve. This requires that diversity be provided through special efforts to assure representation of diverse groups in the student body and at all levels of personnel. Social work values, sound professional education, and social justice all require that this enriching diversity should be actively and continuously sought in all aspects of the program operation and throughout the educational curriculum.

12. The program shall demonstrate special efforts to assure equity in the recruitment of women students, faculty and staff; and in all aspects of program implementation, supported by appropriate curriculum content concerning women's issues; and in the encouragement of women in areas of practice in which they are not equitably represented.

13. Variations from an on-campus, full-time program shall meet the same standards herein presented.

The program should give special attention to the establishment of equity with respect to women. This effort should be apparent in the recruitment, retention, promotion, tenure and remuneration decisions and in the assignment of administrative responsibilities and in the provision of administrative and other opportunities. Opportunities for advancement should aim to correct injustices and to provide future situations equitable with those enjoyed by men. Recognition of achievement of women should be equitable with such recognition accorded men. Equity with respect to women's matters should extend to students in their roles as students, including areas such as admissions, field placements and allocation of financial aid. The educational curriculum should reflect the importance of women's issues in American society. Women should be encouraged and supported in entering educational and professional practice areas in which they are not equitably represented in comparison with men.

Innovation and experimental variations in program, such as branch, part-time and continuing education are encouraged, but they should not detract from educational objectives or expected outcomes for students enrolled either in the variation or in the regular program. Such variations on program should be offered in such a manner that they do not divert resources necessary for maintaining the quality of the regular program. The program should document assurance of consistency of outcomes in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these variations in program offerings. Especially important in branch and part-time program variations is the guarantee of the equivalent of on-campus resources available to full-time students for professional socialization; peer contributions to learning; and faculty, field, classroom and library resources for achieving program objectives and specified outcomes.

14. The administration of the program shall assure adequate, continuous budgetary support for the maintenance of the program, and provide physical facilities, equipment and library holdings necessary for the attainment of program objectives.

The source, continuity and amount of the support should be indicators of the stability of the program. Adequate facilities should include sufficient office space and equipment to support study and research by the faculty, and private advisory conferences between faculty and students; lecture and seminar rooms sufficient in number, size and location to provide for classes and conferences at convenient times and locations; sufficient space and equipment for support staff to fulfill its duties expeditiously; and space for meetings and study by faculty and students. Library resources should include convenient location and easy access by social work faculty and students to books, periodicals, reference materials, reports, documents, fugitive materials and other sources useful and necessary for student instruction and research in social work. These resources should be assured by an annual budget adequate for replacement and for building the collection. Acquisition decisions with respect to social work material and related topics should include participation by the social work faculty. Sufficient space should be available and usage policies enforced to support optimal use of library resources by faculty and students. There should be adequate professional library staff to serve the needs of the social work program.

15. A program which allows academic credit for prior educational achievement shall have criteria which avoid undue duplication of academic content and insure student outcomes consonant with program objectives.

The evaluation of prior educational achievement should inform foundation content as well as social work content. Care should be exercised to assure that students moving into any part of the social work program have acquired the knowledge, values and skills requisite to the level at which they enter. Since social work baccalaureate programs usually exist within four-year institutional curricula, planned and educationally sound relationships should exist with other institutions in the area which offer associate arts and baccalaureate degrees. The social work program should assess the need for linkages with these other programs. Special concern should be exercised with non-traditional student populations. The social work program should establish procedures to accommodate transfer students in such a way as to protect the educational integrity of the program and to avoid undue duplication of academic content.