



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN SOCIAL WORK JUNE 2020

Current professional doctoral programs in social work are highly innovative, and the accreditation process and standards proposed will ensure these programs can differ in their goals, curricula, and in the competencies of their graduates. Thus, these draft standards recognize a diverse approach for the accreditation of professional doctoral programs that encompasses the broad scope of social work practice at the doctoral level as well as the required components for a quality professional doctoral program. The key features of program accreditation standards for social work professional doctoral programs, as described below, provide a framework for the institutions developing such programs and the required components for a quality professional doctoral program. 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.

Definition

Social work practice doctorates prepare graduates to advance practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels as well as in higher education and/or professional leadership.

Scope

Professional practice doctoral programs educate master's-level social work practitioners who are graduates of CSWE-accredited programs as doctoral level practitioner-scholars who will develop, translate, and advance social work practice knowledge; engage in systematic inquiry; and apply and disseminate research-informed knowledge, values, ethics, and skills in social work through practice, professional leadership, and teaching.

Core Expertise and Skills for Doctoral Practitioners

Social work education at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels shapes the profession's future through the education of competent professionals, the generation of knowledge, the promotion of research-informed practice through scientific inquiry, and the exercise of leadership within the professional community. Social work education is advanced by the scholarship of teaching and learning and scientific inquiry into its multifaceted dimensions, processes, and outcomes (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Professional doctoral programs, regardless of focus, should prepare doctoral practitioners to

- engage in systematic inquiry that adheres to scholarly conventions;
- use and evaluate research-informed practice critically and at an advanced level;
- develop and disseminate practice-relevant knowledge through a variety of channels, such as teaching, scholarship, professional presentations, mentoring, and administration;
- demonstrate leadership in social work practice and education; and
- develop and maintain substantive expertise in one or more areas of social work practice.

1. PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS

The mission and goals of a professional doctoral social work program address social work's purpose, are grounded in core professional values, and are informed by program context. The core values of the profession are service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, human rights, and scientific inquiry. These values underpin the explicit and implicit curricula and frame the profession's commitment to respect for all people and the quest for social and economic justice.

The program context encompasses the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting. Programs are further influenced by their practice communities, which are informed by their historical, political, economic, environmental, social, cultural, demographic, local, regional, and global contexts and by how they elect to engage these factors. Additional factors include new knowledge, technology, and ideas that may have a bearing on contemporary and future social work education, practice, and research.

Proposed Accreditation Standards (AS) for 1.0

- AS 1.0.1** The program submits its mission statement, which includes the program focus, and explains how it is consistent with the profession's purpose and values.

- AS 1.0.2** The program explains how its mission is consistent with the institutional mission and the program's context.

- AS 1.0.3** The program identifies its program goals and how they are derived from the program's mission. The program explains how program goals are consistent with the core expertise and skills for professional doctoral-level practitioners.

2. EXPLICIT CURRICULUM

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 doctorate curriculum that prepares students for substantive expertise beyond the baccalaureate and master's level in one or more areas of social work practice. 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.

Proposed Accreditation Standards for 2.0

- AS 2.0.1** The program identifies its curriculum content and required academic product(s) and provides a rationale for the logical structure, timeframe, and progression of the curriculum.
- AS 2.0.2** The program explains how its curriculum is consistent with the program's mission and goals.
- AS 2.0.3** The program defines its area(s) of focus in social work practice and scholarship and explains how the curriculum prepares students for substantive expertise in these area(s). The program describes how the program prepares doctoral level practitioner-scholars who demonstrate leadership in addressing diversity and difference;* scholarship; professional behavior and ethics; and human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
- AS 2.0.4** The program defines doctoral leadership in social work practice and explains how its curriculum prepares students to be doctoral leaders in the areas identified in AS 2.0.3.
- AS 2.0.5** The program explains how its curriculum content implements the core expertise and skills for professional doctoral level scholar-practitioners.

*Diversity and difference: the intersectionality of multiple factors including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.

3. IMPLICIT CURRICULUM

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.

Proposed Accreditation Standards for 3.0

Diversity

AS 3.0.1 The program describes how it creates a diverse and inclusive environment that promotes respectful discourse.

Admissions Policies and Procedures

AS 3.0.2 The program identifies the criteria it uses for admission to the professional doctoral program. The criteria for admission to the program must include an earned master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and a minimum of 3 years of practice experience beyond the master's degree in social work.

AS 3.0.3 The program describes the policies and procedures for evaluating applications and notifying applicants about decisions and any contingent conditions associated with admission.

Advisement and Mentoring

AS 3.0.4 The program describes its academic advising and mentoring policies and procedures and demonstrates they are sufficient.

Student Participation in Governance

AS 3.0.5 The program submits its policies and procedures specifying students' rights and opportunities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and professional doctoral student affairs.

AS 3.0.6 The program describes how it provides opportunities for and encourages professional doctoral students to organize in their interests.

Faculty

AS 3.0.7 The program identifies each full- and part-time faculty member and discusses the qualifications, scholarship, expertise in social work education and practice experience, and years of service to the professional doctoral program of each.

AS 3.0.8 The program identifies no fewer than two full-time social work faculty members with principal assignment to the professional doctoral program. The program documents that all faculty members who teach in the program have doctoral degrees and the majority have master's degrees in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with a minimum of 3 years of practice experience beyond the master's degree in social work.

AS 3.0.9 The professional doctoral program explains how faculty size is sufficient in number for the type of curricular offerings, class size, program options, number of students, advising and

supervising of students' academic products, and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities.

AS 3.10 The program describes how the professional doctoral-level social work faculty has responsibility for defining the program's mission, goals, and curriculum consistent with the institution's policies.

Administrative Structure

AS 3.11 The program describes the professional doctoral program director's leadership ability through teaching, scholarship, curriculum development, administrative experience, and other academic and professional activities in social work. The program documents that the professional doctoral program director has a doctoral degree, preferably in social work, and a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with a minimum of 3 years of practice experience beyond the master's degree in social work.

AS 3.12 The program describes the procedures for determining the professional doctoral program director's minimum assigned time of 50% to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient to provide core supports for students: mentorship, advising, recruitment, admissions, administration, and program evaluation and renewal.

Resources

AS 3.13 The program describes the procedures for budget development and administration it uses to achieve its mission and goals. The program submits a completed budget and explains how its financial resources are stable and sufficient to achieve its mission/goals and continuously improve the program.

AS 3.14 The program describes and demonstrates that it has sufficient office and classroom space and/or computer-mediated access to achieve its professional doctoral program mission and goals.

4. ASSESSMENT

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 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.

Proposed Accreditation Standards for 4.0

- AS 4.0.1** The program presents its plan and rationale for the assessment of the core expertise, knowledge base, and skills of its professional doctoral graduates as defined in AS 2.0.3. At a minimum, the plan should include
- procedures and benchmarks related to when, where, and how each core expertise, knowledge base, and skill are assessed, including assessment measures; and
 - a description of how the program uses these data for continuous quality improvement.
- AS 4.0.2** The program provides data on retention and graduation rates, time to completion of degree, and employment and demonstrates how these data are used for continuous quality program improvement.
- AS 4.0.3** The program provides its plan and summary data for the assessment of the implicit curriculum as defined in Educational Policy 3.0 from program-defined stakeholders. The program discusses implications for program renewal and specific changes it has made based on these assessment outcomes.
- AS 4.0.4** The professional doctoral program reports its most recent assessment outcomes to constituents and the public on its website and routinely updates its findings (minimally every 2 years).

REFERENCE

Council on Social Work Education. (2015). Educational policy and accreditation standards. <https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS/2015EPASandGlossary.pdf.aspx>