

## Victorian Heads of Schools and Programs of Social Work

### Submission to Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry

We make this submission as Heads of Victoria Schools and Programs of Social Work (VHSPSW). We focus our submission on issues relating to social work education including professional development qualifications and skills needed to undertake child protection work competently. This response relates to the terms of reference 7.1-7.1.3 viz: Measures to enhance the government's ability to plan for future demand for family services, statutory child protection services and out-of-home care; and ensure a workforce that delivers services of a high quality to children and families.

#### Response to 7.1.1-7.1.3

*7.1.1 Is there sufficient research into child protection matters to support the government's ability to plan for future child protection needs? If not, how might government encourage and support research in this area?*

*7.1.2 How might those providing home-based care and residential care for children be the most effectively recruited and supported?*

*7.1.3 What workforce development and retention strategies are required to meet the needs of the child and family welfare sector in the future?*

#### **Social work education and preparation for child protection and family sector work.**

We are aware that some child protection systems across Australia have reduced their expectations with respect to recruiting social work qualified staff. We are also aware that these states have struggled to provide strong services for children.

Victoria has largely maintained a commitment to employing social work qualified staff and now as a child protection system the State is seen internationally as progressive in this regard. It is important that this commitment continues to be supported. Social work education and training provides courses that prepare students for both generic and specialist fields of practice including child protection. Social work degree programs provide important content that facilitates critical reasoning and higher level professional judgement making that is considered essential to practice effectively in child protection. We have attached a copy of the AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS and draw your attention to Addendum Three (commencing page 57) 'Statement of specific child wellbeing and protection curriculum content for social work qualifying courses'. All accredited social work degrees are required to meet these standards. As far as we are

aware no other professional education provides such detailed requirements with respect to child protection.

In a recent collaborative meeting with DHS and VHSPSW it was reported that the recruitment of social work qualified staff results in higher rates of retention at entry level. In other words non social work qualified staff have been found to leave the service more quickly than do social work qualified staff. A high turnover of staff is costly for the organisation both financially and in terms of maintaining a skilled workforce and facilitating effective practice and achieving improved outcomes for children and families.

We appreciate that it is not always easy to recruit qualified staff. In situations when DHS employs non social work qualified staff it should be a requirement that those staff be formally engaged within a qualification pathway through social work. This needs to be an expectation of their appointment supported by DHS. The Schools of social work have a positive relationship with DHS and would be happy to work towards a qualification pathways systems.

#### Fieldwork placements availability in child protection for social work students

In recent years finding quality fieldwork placements for students to facilitate their integration of theory and practice and encourage work ready graduates has been challenging in all areas of social work and community practice. Health Workforce Australia (HWA) has responded to this crisis by investing significantly toward the financial support of student placements in the health area and encouraging partnerships between health organisations and universities. This has resulted in social work schools working closely with health sector to provide growth in high quality health placements. An unintended consequence may be that a focus on child protection and family support placements is compromised as the new health placement funding arrangements encourage higher quality placements in health and the partnerships developed with universities require filling the health placements available before other sector placements.

An investment similar to that of HWA made by DHS would enable the resourcing of quality student placements across child protection /family support sector. This would also have a positive impact on both recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

#### Support of ongoing professional development

Providing an effective child protection service depends on both the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. Whilst the focus is often on supporting early career child protection workers retaining experienced staff is imperative. Professional development includes training supervision and managing teams all of which are important for retention. Scaffolding is an integrated incentive for staff to remain in the organisation. An example of a targeted professional development program which provides a qualification and is funded by DHS is The Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice and the Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership which is conducted by a consortium of university schools of social work, a community service organisation and a community controlled Aboriginal organisation.

### **Research, knowledge development and research staff training**

As part of the ongoing development of a child protection service will require commitment and investment of time and resources to research. This includes development of research minded practitioners who are able to utilise the latest research findings and contribute to the professional knowledge base. A requirement of a professional social worker is that they practice as a practitioner researcher , utilise up-to-date research findings and continually seek new knowledge to inform their practice and their discipline. Further development of advanced research skills could be enabled by child protection providing paid scholarships to selected staff to enable them to engage in higher degrees by research.

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Victorian Heads of Schools and Programs of Social Work

Professor Margaret Alston OAM, Monash University; Professor Marie Connolly, University of Melbourne; Associate Professor Beth Crisp ,Deakin University; Associate Professor Margarita Frederico, La Trobe University; Associate Professor Marty Grace ,Victoria University; Professor Catherine McDonald ,RMIT University

Encl.

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS; See page 57.  
ADDENDUM THREE Statement of specific child wellbeing and protection curriculum content for social work qualifying courses

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
SOCIAL WORKERS**



**AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK  
EDUCATION AND  
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS**

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	3
<b>PART I MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION ....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.0 Definition of Social Work .....	5
2.0 Principles for Social Work Education .....	6
3.0 Goal and Outcomes for Social Work Education .....	8
4.0 Content of Social Work Programs .....	10
4.1 Social Work Practice Knowledge Skills And Values .....	10
4.2 Knowledge from Other disciplines .....	12
4.3 Learning for Practice in Field Education .....	13
5.0 Structure of Programs of Social Work Education .....	18
6.0 The Articulation of Welfare, Social and Behavioural Science and Community Work programs with Social Work Degree Programs including Credit Transfer .....	20
7.0 Recognition of Prior Learning .....	21
8.0 Organisational Arrangements and Governance of Social Work Programs .....	22
8.1 Program Structure .....	22
8.2 Resources and Staffing .....	23
<b>PART II PROCESS FOR THE REVIEW OF EXISTING AND NEW SOCIAL WORK COURSES.....</b>	<b>24</b>
1.0 The AASW Accreditation Panel.....	24
2.0 The Process For Reviewing Existing Social Work Programs .....	27
3.0 CONSULTANCY TO UNIVERSITIES PLANNING NEW SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS.....	31
<b>PART 3 PROCESS FOR ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS ASSESSMENTS.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>PART IV PROCESS FOR ASSESSING OVERSEAS SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATIONS.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>ADDENDUM</b>	
1.0 Policy Regarding Field Education Assessment Criteria.....	47
2.0 Statement of specific mental health curriculum content.....	48
3.0 Statement of specific child wellbeing and protection curriculum content.....	56
4.0 Statement of specific cross-cultural curriculum content.....	65

# INTRODUCTION

In this document the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) outlines the Standards for Australian Social Work Education. Social work programs that meet these requirements can be accredited by the AASW as programs whose graduates will be eligible for membership of the AASW.

Eligibility for admission to membership of the AASW occurs after a person has successfully completed a program of professional social work education which must:

- meet the requirements set down in this document
- be according to knowledge, skill and values and AASW Practice Standards
- be formally approved by AASW.

The AASW Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards reflect the minimum requirements for social work education. Individual social work programs are encouraged to achieve higher standards of excellence by which to assess students.

Eligibility for membership of the AASW by Australian social workers results from the successful completion of Bachelor or Masters degree-level University study which has been accredited by the AASW. Currently this is known as a Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW degree), or a qualifying entry level Master of Social Work degree (MSW [qualifying] degree); although we recognise that other titles have been used in the past.

## PART I

Part I of this document specifies the **Minimum Standards for Social Work Education** and includes:

- (i) Definition of social work
- (ii) Principles for Social Work Education
- (iii) Goals and Outcomes for social work programs
- (iv) Content of social work programs
- (v) Social Work Practice Knowledge Skills and Values
- (vi) Knowledge from other Disciplines
- (vii) Learning for practice in field education
- (viii) Structure of Programs for Social Work education
- (ix) The Articulation of Welfare and Community work programs with Social Work degree programs including Credit Transfer
- (x) Organisational Arrangements and Governance of Social Work programs

## **PART II**

**Procedures for the review of social work programs**, offered by Australian universities, are detailed in Part 11 of this document. Social work programs undergoing review, and new social work programs, will be approved on the basis of meeting the standards set out in Part 1.

### **Implementation**

This policy will be implemented from January 2008. Social work programs approved under the previous policy (Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of AASW July 2000, revisions 2003, 2006) will have until the date of their next review to meet the requirements of this policy if their next review is due after January 2009. If a social work program has a review in 2008 they may choose to use the newly adopted policy, or the previous policy.

### **Review**

The principles and policies presented in this document will next be reviewed in accordance with AASW policy in 2010.

## **PART III**

### **Process for Assessing International Qualifications Assessments**

*In 2008 the Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of AASW (AASW, 2000 amended in 2004 and 2006), Parts III and IV will remain in place to be used for the determination of qualifications of international applicants” (AASW Board Meeting Minutes, 16 November 2007).*

*An extract from the Policy which includes all of part III appears at this point in this document until the review of those parts is completed.*

## **PART IV**

### **Process for Assessing Overseas Social Work Qualifications**

*In 2008 the Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of AASW (AASW, 2000 amended in 2004 and 2006), Parts III and IV will remain in place to be used for the determination of qualifications of international applicants” (AASW Board Meeting Minutes, 16 November 2007).*

*An extract from the Policy which includes all of part III appears at this point in this document until the review of those parts is completed.*

## **ADDENDUM**

- Policy regarding Field Education Assessment Criteria
- Statement of specific Mental Health Curriculum Content
- Statement of specific Child Wellbeing and Protection Curriculum Content

**Additional Specific curriculum statements should also be consulted as they become available.**

# **PART I**

## ***MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION***

### **1.0 Definition of Social Work**

The social work program must demonstrate how it assists student to develop an analysis, understanding and commitment to this definition of social work.

The social work profession is committed to the pursuit of social justice, the enhancement of the quality of life and the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society. Social workers work at the interface between people and their environments, utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems.

Social workers pursue these goals by working to address the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society and by active involvement in situations of personal distress and crisis. This is done by working with individuals towards the realization of their intellectual, physical and emotional potential, and by working with individuals, groups and communities in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic and political resources. Social workers also pursue their goals through involvement in research, policy development and analysis and consultancy. Social workers promote respect for traditions, cultures, ideologies, beliefs and religions amongst different ethnic groups and societies, insofar as they do not conflict with the fundamental human rights of people.

Social workers:

- 1.1 work with individuals groups and communities to shape and change the conditions in which they live;
- 1.2 advocate for disadvantaged members of society;
- 1.3 work towards the elimination of social inequalities in society to facilitate a more equitable distribution of resources;
- 1.4 engage in research to build the social work knowledge base and understanding of society; and
- 1.5 analyse, challenge and develop social policies.

Social work practice is informed by professional education based on an analysis and understanding of human behaviour and of complex social processes. It accepts a commitment to working within a stated value position and code of ethics. An integral part of the education of each social worker is the demonstration in practice settings of this analysis, understanding and commitment.

## **2.0 Principles for Social Work Education**

### **Goals and Outcomes of Social Work Education**

- 2.1. Social work education prepares students for practice in the work place in local, national and international contexts, according to the AASW Practice Standards; Achieving Outcomes (2003)
- 2.2. The AASW Practice Standards reflect the minimum requirements for Social Work education. Individual social work programs will determine the standard for higher levels of excellence.
- 2.3. The complexities of practice within a constantly changing society demand well developed skills. The AASW Practice Standards and Code of Ethics will be used as the guide for developing:
  - reflective and reflexive practice;
  - structural analysis;
  - critical thinking; and
  - ethical professional behaviour.

### **Content of Social Work Education**

- 2.4. Social work relies on knowledge, skills and commitment of core values, ideals and beliefs. These values derive from the profession's commitment to the pursuit of social justice, the enhancement of the quality of life and the development of the full potential of each individual, family, group and community in society. This means that social work education encourages students to become committed to these values and ideals.
- 2.5. The content of social work education must be based on the following five basic values set out in the Code of Ethics and integral to the AASW Practice Standards:
  - human dignity and worth;
  - social justice;
  - service to humanity;
  - integrity; and
  - competence.
- 2.6. It is expected that social work programs will:
  - promote sensitivity to, and incorporate content on culture, ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation;
  - identify and select curricula determined by local, national and/or regional/international needs and priorities;
  - incorporate knowledge on history, culture, the strengths of, and disadvantage suffered by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities;
  - incorporate knowledge from other disciplines, in particular, the social and behavioural sciences.

### **Process of Social Work Education**

- 2.7. The academic unit that offers the social work program must have a clearly articulated educational philosophy.
- 2.8. Principles of adult learning, where students are self directed and goal oriented, are fundamental to social work education.
- 2.9. Social work education fosters a commitment to life long learning and continuing professional education.
- 2.10. Social work education aims to maximise opportunities for mutual learning by both student and educator.
- 2.11. The teaching and assessment of a social work program must integrate and balance knowledge and skills as learning outcomes, preparing a student for practice by including skill based teaching, practice teaching, and small group teaching.
- 2.12. Social work education requires the integration of theory and practice.

### **Learning for Practice in Field Education**

- 2.13. Field education is a core component of social work education and the following considerations must be incorporated in field education programs:
  - Programs must be consistent with the general principles identified for social work education;
  - Programs must have the status of a full academic subject;
  - Field education is to be a cooperative endeavour between the university, the student and field educators (practitioners supervising students in agencies);
  - Programs must employ strategies to ensure that students integrate theory and practice.
- 2.14. In order to successfully complete the final field education subject in the field education program, students must meet the entry level requirements as outlined in the AASW Practice Standards.

### **Planning and Delivery of Social Work Programs**

- 2.15. Social work education must be provided in a manner that acknowledges the partnership between university and human service provider, with evidence of scholarship informing policy and practice.
- 2.16. Wherever possible, there should be involvement of clients and service users in the planning and delivery of social work education programs.
- 2.17. Social workers engaged in education and supervision will undertake specific ethical responsibilities as outlined in the AASW Code of Ethics.

### 3. Goal and Outcomes for Social Work Education

The goal of social work education is to provide a rigorous program that result in graduates who are competent, effective, skilled, knowledge-based, ethically aware and confident practitioners.

Universities must show that graduating students have demonstrated that they can integrate social work knowledge, skills and values and are able to meet the profession's entry level standards as set out in:

- (i) The *AASW Practice Standards: Achieving Outcomes*; and
- (ii) Particular professional standards that are endorsed by the AASW including
  - Basic mental health competencies;
  - Standards for practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities;
  - Cross cultural practice; and
  - Child Protection

Curriculum statements for Mental Health and Child Protection are attached as Addendums.

Individual social work programs may determine the standard for higher levels of excellence by which to assess student

The *AASW Practice Standards: Achieving Outcomes* establish benchmarks that students are required to demonstrate at graduation and entry to professional practice. The *Standards* provide a:

- guide to practice;
- measure of accountability for members;
- basis for standardisation of practice across Australia;
- basis for quality guarantee, expectations and accountability for clients, employers and other professionals;
- benchmark for assessment of practice; and
- guide for ongoing professional development.

It is therefore expected that social work education programs reflect the main areas of practice and outcomes in the *AASW Practice Standards: Achieving Outcomes*:

- 3.1 Direct Practice (including work with individuals, groups and communities);
- 3.2 Service Management;
- 3.3 Organisational Development and System Change;
- 3.4 Policy Development, Implementation and Change;
- 3.5 Research and Knowledge Generation; and
- 3.6 Education and Professional Development.

Each outcome in the *AASW Practice Standards: Achieving Outcomes* is stated in the form of an objective in relation to client outcome. These objectives for practice outcomes, along with a corresponding statement of a learning outcome, are shown below. By the end of the social work education program, the student is expected to be able to meet the learning outcome and the practice objectives.

### **3.1 Direct Practice work with Individuals, Groups and Communities**

#### *Practice Objective*

The outcome of direct social work practice is that:

- needs of clients and service users are met;
- their potential is developed; and
- their control over their lives is fostered;

This will be achieved through mutual engagement and the application of the social worker's knowledge and skills.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The ability to engage with individuals, groups and communities in society and apply social work knowledge and skills to meet needs, to enable them to develop their potential and to foster their greater control over their lives.

### **3.2 Service Management**

#### *Practice Objective*

Client needs, organisational goals and community expectations of the service are met in the most appropriate manner, as far as possible, using social work knowledge, skills and resources.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The ability to appropriately manage service provision and practice in ways that meet the needs of individuals, groups and communities in society, as well as organisational goals and community expectations of the service.

### **3.3 Organisational Development and System Change**

#### *Practice Objective*

The social worker's knowledge of organisational systems and processes and societal systems is applied in such a way that inequalities are identified and appropriate action is taken, with the result that social barriers, inequality and injustice are reduced.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The ability to apply knowledge of organisational systems and processes and societal systems, to identify inequalities, and to act to reduce social barriers, inequality and injustice.

### **3.4 Policy Development, Implementation and Change**

#### *Practice Objective*

The well-being of clients, especially those who are neglected, vulnerable, disadvantaged or who have exceptional needs, is improved through the social worker's:

- promotion and implementation of policies and practices which would achieve a fair, equitable and effective allocation of social resources; and
- identification of inappropriate or inequitable policy goals and outcomes.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The ability to apply social work knowledge and skills to identify inappropriate or inequitable policy goals and outcomes, and to promote and implement policy which achieves equity and effective distribution of social resources.

### **3.5 Research and Knowledge Generation**

#### *Practice Objective*

Client needs, organisational goals and social policy are addressed through the application of the social worker's values, knowledge and skills in the research process.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The ability to apply research knowledge and skills to undertake ethical research and disseminate findings, and to utilise research in practice to address the needs and aspirations of individuals, groups and communities in society, and to further organisational goals and social policy

### **3.6 Education and Professional Development**

#### *Practice Objective*

The social worker recognises the importance of continually increasing their knowledge and skills and is committed to, and actively engages in, a process of continuing education.

#### *Learning Outcome*

The recognition of the importance of, and a demonstrated commitment to continually increasing knowledge and skills through processes of continuing education.

## **4.0 Content of Social Work Programs**

### **4.1 Social Work Practice Knowledge Skills and Values**

Essential to social work is the recognition that individual need is influenced by socio-political and economic factors. This interactive dual focus of analysis (individual and systemic, private pain and public issues) distinguishes the theory and practice of social work from other helping professions. The acquisition of practice knowledge and skills will take place over at least two years of the educational program.

#### **4.1.1 Knowledge of social work ethics**

The ability to think through and recognise ethical issues. This is a core component of social work practice that relies on the ability to think critically within a framework of commitment to ethical practice, and needs to be developed throughout the social work program with reference to the AASW Code of Ethics.

#### **4.1.2 *Content of education for social work practice:***

The content for social work education practice must include specific curriculum content in each of the following areas; mental health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, cross cultural practice and child protection.

- (i) In the case of mental health the specific curriculum content must include at least the introductory knowledge, practice skills and attitudes which would enable an entry level social worker in any field of practice to identify and respond appropriately to people with mental health problems and mental disorders. The specific mental health curriculum statement attached to this document at Addendum 2.0.
- (ii) In the case of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, cross cultural practice and child protection, specific curriculum content outlining introductory knowledge, practice skills and attitudes to be demonstrated by an entry level social worker will be developed and available in 2009.

#### **4.1.3. *The methods of social work practice:***

All methods of social work intervention are required learning, including community work, casework, group work, social planning and social action, research, social policy analysis and development, and management.

#### **4.1.4. *The skills for social work practice***

Practice skills, including interpersonal skills; communication skills both oral skills for counselling, and written skills for case noting and report writing; plus skills of reflective and critical thinking and analysis; data collection and management; advocacy, negotiation and mediation.

Skills of making assessments and deciding on the most appropriate intervention, along with skills required in the process of making judgments and recommendations, need to be developed throughout the social work program.

#### **4.1.5. *Understanding the Context of Social Work Practice***

Social workers need to be able to critically analyse the structure of society, with particular attention being paid to dimensions of power and disadvantage and the influence of class, gender, age, intellectual and physical ability, sexuality, race and ethnicity. The ability to understand the context of social work practice at local, national and international levels, and the institutional context of social work practice, is required. This understanding requires knowledge of, and the ability to, critically analyse social, political, economic, historical, cultural and ecological systems as well as the important considerations of governance with respect to these.

The processes that facilitate and constrain change and the evolution of systems needs to be understood. There must be a focus on empowering and non-oppressive practice that is cognisant of the institutional context in which practice occurs.

#### **4.1.6 *Fields of Practice***

Students should have the opportunity to gain an understanding and appreciation of the experience of individuals, groups and communities within a range of different fields of practice, settings, client groups and geographical locations. It is expected the following areas will be addressed; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; mental health; child care and child safety; ageing; income security; health; disability; cultural and linguistic diversity; rural and remote locations; correctional services and justice; and education.

## **4.2 Knowledge from Other disciplines**

Knowledge from other disciplines is an integral component of social work education. This material has traditionally been covered in subjects variously named sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, history, social theory, psychology, and human development and behaviour. In a two-plus- two degree, this essential knowledge may be acquired through university study undertaken prior to the final two years of social work study. In a four-year program, it will usually be completed in the first two years of the social work degree. Each university will exercise its discretion in the organisation and presentation of material related to the following content areas:

### **4.2.1. *Understanding of Society***

An understanding of society and how it has developed and is organized is fundamental to social work. This includes an understanding of the major insights provided by sociology, anthropology, social theory, history economics and political *science*, and an awareness of how these contribute to the understanding of the politico economic distribution of resources. In addition, students should be encouraged to think about the implications and effects of the globalisation of society.

### **4.2.2 *Knowledge of the individual***

This includes:

- human behaviour and development,
- personality development,
- life-cycle stages,
- family and social networks,
- physical health and ill-health, mental health problems and mental disorder,
- disability, vulnerability and resilience.

An understanding of the social construction of these concepts should also be developed.

## 4.3 Learning for Practice in Field Education

### 4.3.1 *Structure of a program for learning in field education*

- (i) Field education subjects must demonstrate a developmental approach to learning that complies with the ‘principles for social work education’ in this document.
- (ii) Field education subjects must be taken over two years within the professional social work program of study.
- (iii) Students must successfully complete a minimum of 140 seven-hour working days (at least 980 hours) in at least two field education subjects as above.
- (iv) No placement will be shorter than 40 days.
- (v) No placement will be an observational placement.
- (vi) Placements must be structured in a way that is educationally viable (so that educational goals can be achieved). Patterns of placement days may vary from 5 days per week, to a minimum of 2 days per week. Placements that are 2 days per week must include at least two full time (5 day) block periods.
- (vii) All placements are carried out in a host organisation that provides human service/social work services and meets the educational requirements of the field education program.
- (viii) Each student is allocated a field educator who is a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner meeting the requirements specified in this document. The field educator guides the student’s learning during the placement.
- (ix) Clear expectations for learning goals and performance outcomes, based on *AASW Practice Standards* and *Code of Ethics* are established through a consultative process between the university, field educator and student, and documented in a learning plan
- (ix) At least one placement will be in direct practice.

### 4.3.2 *Assessment in field education*

- (i) Performance outcomes based on the *AASW Practice Standards* and *Code of Ethics* will be used to assess students in each of their field placements. It is expected that different performance outcomes will assess novice students (first placement students) and graduating students (final placement students). Policy regarding field education assessment criteria for accredited social work programs can be found in Addendum 1.0.
- (ii) A range of learning activities and methods of assessment are used to assess the student’s level of achievement and whether they have met the performance outcomes specified.

- (ii) Assessment strategies require the student to demonstrate performance at the same standards of academic rigour as is expected in any academic subject.
- (iii) The assessment process includes contributions from all parties involved in the placement and is carried out in an equitable and collaborative manner.
- (iv) The final decision about whether the student has achieved the identified learning goals and performance outcomes, and has passed the field education subject is made by the university after consideration of material submitted by all parties.

#### **4.3.3 Roles and Responsibilities**

Roles and responsibilities for the student, the agency based field educator, the university based field education coordinator, university field liaison staff and where required the professional external field educator, must be clearly outlined in the field education policies of the social work program.

##### **(a) Field educator responsibilities and qualifications**

- (i) Field educators are qualified social workers (eligible for full membership of the AASW) with a minimum of two years' full-time practice experience, or its part time equivalent, who demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional education and an interest in developing social work knowledge and skills.
- (ii) Field educators must be able to provide a minimum of 1.5 hours supervision per student (including formal and informal) for each five days of placement. This may be provided individually or in group formats.
- (iii) It is desirable that field educators have undergone or will undergo during the placement, some further education in student supervision.
- (iv) The social work field educator will be able to observe the student's practice.

##### **(b) Social Work program responsibilities**

- (i) There must be a clearly identifiable field education unit including administrative support dedicated to organising field education.
- (ii) Staffing of field education programs should reflect the university's commitment to the centrality of field education in the social work curriculum. For example, there may be clear connections between the academic and research interests of university staff and the field education experiences offered by the academic unit.
- (iii) All members of staff will either teach in field education or have a field education liaison role.

- (iv) The social work program will assign a field education coordinator and field education liaison staff to each placement.
- (v) University based field education coordinators and field liaison staff must be social workers with a minimum of five years post qualifying practice experience.
- (vi) Responsibilities of field education coordinators will include:
  - Developing placements and engaging field educators
  - Running field education integration workshops
  - Running workshops for field educators
  - Performing a field education liaison role.
- (vii) The responsibilities of the field education liaison staff will include:
  - Involving the organisation, the field educator and the student in a consultative process about the goals, learning processes, structure and assessment of the placement;
  - Maintaining regular contact with the student, with a minimum of 3 contacts including at least one face to face visit, to clarify educational issues, monitor the progress of the placement, mediate any difficulties and assess student progress. These may include group meetings and tutorials. Telecommunications and video conferences may be used to supplement site visits but will not entirely replace them.
- (viii) The university must ensure that policies and processes are in place to meet duty of care, risk management and occupational health and safety requirements for students undertaking field education. These include:
  - recommending a maximum number of hours of placement and travel to be undertaken in one day.
  - recommending a maximum number of paid hours and practicum hours to be undertaken in a week.
  - notifying host organisations of occupational health and safety requirements, university insurance arrangements and the limits of university cover.
- (ix) Universities must offer adequate support to field educators in recognition of their contribution to the social work education program. This support should include:
  - access to university resources such as the library
  - consultation with university staff as required
  - training and support in student supervision
  - other professional development activities as appropriate

- (x) In situations where the host organisation has no suitable social work field educator, arrangements must be made to ensure that appropriate professional formation and supervision takes place by a qualified social work field educator. The university will:
  - negotiate with the host organisation to engage an external social worker to undertake the professional supervision requirements; and will
  - negotiate with the agency for a suitably qualified co-field educator to be appointed to supervise the student's day to day learning in conjunction with the external social work field educator.
- (xi) It is preferable that only one placement has an external field educator.
- (xii) Where field educators undertake student supervision roles that are not included in their usual paid employment, in particular where they are employed as external field educators to the host organisation, it is expected that universities will negotiate payment as part of their contractual agreement with the field educator.
- (xiii) Universities will liaise with host organizations so that the student has access to appropriate learning opportunities, and an educational environment that enables a student to meet the requirements for social work education. This includes arrangements for:
  - adequate space and resources for the student as required, including use of desks, office space, computers, telephones and cars. If the resources that a student requires to meet their learning needs are not available, it is expected that alternate arrangements will be negotiated.
  - reasonable access to organisational records
  - accommodation of students' learning needs including adequate time; for supervision, completion of field education assessment requirements, reading and reflection.

#### **4.3.4 *Location of placements***

##### **(a) *Minimum Requirements***

It is essential that students have the opportunity to participate in a broad range of learning experiences in field education. In particular students must undertake field placements in at least two different fields of practice and organisations, with different client groups, using different methods of social work practice and with a different field educator for each placement.

**(b) Placements in the student's place of employment**

- i) In order to provide a breadth of experience and to prevent conflicts of interest between employment and education roles, field education placements will be undertaken in a different context, organization and field of practice to the student's place of employment.
- ii) This requirement may be waived if the university is satisfied that all other principles and policies set out in this document can be met.
- iii) If a placement is undertaken in a student's place of work, a written agreement signed by the organisation, university and student will be completed. This will include:
  - agreement that the employee is in a student role whilst on placement and that they are able to meet the educational requirements, principles and policies set out in this document.
  - allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities.
  - protected time whilst on placement that is separate from the duties carried out at work and includes time to complete reading, reflective learning and assessment activities related to the placement
  - wherever practicable, provision of a field educator who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor.
- iv) In exceptional circumstances the student may undertake two field placements in their place of employment. If the university approves this arrangement it must guarantee that all of the principles and policies of this document are met. *Exceptional circumstances* must be defined by the university and be documented in the field education handbook.

**(c) Placements undertaken overseas**

- (i) When a student is enrolled in a university based in Australia, fifty per cent (70 days/ 490 hours) of the field education program must be undertaken in Australia. It is preferable that the student undertake their first placement in Australia.
- (ii) When a student is enrolled in an accredited social work program in an Australian university off shore campus, students can do both placements overseas as long as the principles and policies of this document are met.
- (iii) Field educators must have at least 2 years' experience and be eligible for membership of either the professional social work association in the country where the placement is undertaken, or the AASW.

- (iv) University based field education coordinators must be staff members of accredited social work educational programs in the country where the placement is undertaken, or members of accredited Australian social work programs.

#### **4.3.5 Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning in Field Education**

The AASW recognizes that students may enter their social work degree study program with a breadth of prior learning and experience in the human services sector. The AASW policy for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning is detailed in Part 1, section 7 and 8 of this document. The policy as it relates to field education is outlined further below:

- (i) Credit for the first field education placement or part thereof, may be possible on the basis of recognition of prior work experience or the successful completion of field education placements completed prior to entry into the social work program.
- (ii) Performance outcomes for first placement based on the *AASW Practice Standards* and *Code of Ethics* must be used to assess students for RPL.
- (iii) In accordance with the policies in this document credit for the first field education placement or part thereof, will take account of:
  - the currency of the work experience (minimum 5FTE in last 10 years), with a minimum of 3 years practice in a relevant context;
  - use of social work practice skills such as assessment and counselling;
  - familiarity and use of a range of methods such as case work and community work;
  - verification of student's claims by a qualified social worker who can attest to its accuracy.
- (iv) Recognition of Prior learning for field education must be thoroughly assessed.
- (v) In order to be granted RPL for field education the student must provide evidence that they have met the standards and performance outcomes for the first placement. This should include for example, job descriptions accompanied by referee reports; skills assessment and critical reflection on placement or work experience.

## **5.0 Structure of Programs of Social Work Education**

A number of different program structures have been developed by Australian universities that offer social work programs. Programs leading to a professional qualification in social work are either a bachelor of social work level of study leading to a BSW, or a masters of social work level of study leading to a qualifying MSW, and should lead to a distinct named qualification in social work

### **5.1 Bachelor of Social Work Degree**

To be eligible for membership of the AASW with a Bachelor of Social Work, graduates in an accredited social work degree program must have completed:

- 5.1.1 four years of full-time bachelor degree level study or its part-time equivalent, which leads to the award of a distinct qualification in social work.
- 5.1.2 two years of a full-time bachelor degree level study or its part-time equivalent, which leads to the award of a distinct qualification in social work, after the completion of a two or three years Bachelor or its equivalent first degree.

## **5.2 *Master of Social Work Degree***

- 5.2.1 To be eligible for membership of the AASW with a qualifying Master of Social Work, graduates in an accredited social work degree program must have completed two years of a full-time post graduate masters degree level study or its part-time equivalent, which leads to the award of a distinct qualification in social work, after the prior completion of a minimum three year Bachelor degree.
- 5.2.2 Entry requirements for admission to the Master of Social Work degree must be consistent with the Universities entry requirements for other postgraduate coursework degrees.
- 5.2.3 This qualifying MSW program must be clearly distinguished from other post graduate degrees.

## **5.3 *Modes of Delivery of Social Work Programs***

Social work programs may be taught in on-campus, distance, extension, off-shore or other flexible modes of delivery. Regardless of the mode of delivery, the program must:

- 5.3.1 articulate an explicit curriculum that leads to the achievement of specified outcomes; and
- 5.3.2 provide evidence of regular assessment of program outcomes

Some universities offer more than one social work program in different modes of delivery. For example, a four-year BSW dual degree program, a two-year post-graduate program BSW or MSW program, or an on-campus four-year program and an off-campus program. Each program will be assessed separately to determine accreditation of the program and eligibility of graduates for membership of the AASW.

## **5.4 *Flexible Delivery and Off Campus Programs***

Where a social work program is offered via flexible delivery and/or off campus modes, students will be given a range of opportunities by which to engage in interaction with their peers and with experienced practitioners so that they can develop the appropriate knowledge, skills and practice standards for professional practice. These opportunities could include face-to-face interactions, use of on-line technologies, and other innovative strategies that replicate as closely as possible the range of practice contexts in contemporary society.

These opportunities should be available for the equivalent of at least five days for each semester of fulltime study, excluding field education requirements.

This applies to students who are enrolled and studying while living overseas as well as to those who live in Australia.

#### **5.4 *Distance, Extension and Off-shore Programs***

Because social work is a profession in which context is very important, there needs to be special consideration of the content of social work programs taught overseas. The social work program must be relevant to the context in which it is provided, and as an Australian accredited program also ensure knowledge of the Australian social work context is included in the curriculum.

### **6.0 The Articulation of Welfare, Social and Behavioural Science and Community Work programs with Social Work Degree Programs including Credit Transfer**

#### **6.1 *Principles of articulation and credit transfer***

The AASW supports articulation between programs of different levels in accordance with the stated principles of the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AV-CC) (1996). The AV-CC (now Universities Australia) piloted a Credit Transfer Scheme for Social Work, throughout 1995 and 1996. Since 1998 universities have extended credit arrangements, and these may vary between universities.

#### **6.2 *Definitions used in consideration of credit transfer***

For the purpose of this document, the AASW will use the *Universities Australia* definitions when referring to credit transfer. These are:

- 6.2.1 An associate diploma means an associate diploma program accredited by the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW) or recognised by the university granting the credit.
- 6.2.2 A reference to a three-year social welfare degree means a degree program accredited by the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers.
- 6.2.3 A reference to a four-year social work degree means a degree program approved by the Australian Association of Social Workers.

Individual universities may accept, for the purposes of granting credit, associate diplomas and degree programs in addition to those referred to in the above definitions.

#### **6.3 *Conditions set by Universities Australia***

- 6.3.1 The granting of credit will be subject to university requirements for admission, and to university rules concerning the minimum amount of study required before a qualification at that university can be awarded.
- 6.3.2 Conditions may vary for candidates admitted through special entry categories.

6.3.3 Program prerequisites and the requirements of professional bodies will also be unaffected.

**6.4 *Credit for completed associate diploma study (TAFE or an Australian university)***

*Universities Australia* has decided that participating universities will grant to holders of a completed associate diploma in a related field of study and admitted to a four-year social work degree program, minimum credit of twenty-five per cent of that degree program.

**6.5 *Transfers from a Welfare, Social and Behavioural Science and Community Work program to a social work degree program***

*Universities Australia* has decided that participating universities will grant:

6.5.1 To candidates having completed two years of a three-year social welfare degree program, or holding a completed three-year social welfare degree, and admitted to a four-year social work degree program, a minimum of twenty-five per cent credit, and normally in the range of twenty-five to fifty per cent, of the social work degree program.

6.5.2 To candidates having completed one year of a three-year social welfare degree program and admitted to a four-year social work degree program, minimum credit of twenty-five per cent of that social work degree program.

**6.6 *Transfers between social work degree programs***

*Universities Australia* has decided that participating universities will grant to candidates transferring between four-year social work degree programs, full equivalent credit.

**6.7 *Credit transfer for field education subjects***

See section 4.3 of this document.

**6.8 *Credit for certificate courses in welfare***

Credit is not normally accepted for certificate courses in Welfare.

**6.9 *Transfers from a Welfare, Social and Behavioural Science and Community Work program to a qualifying Master of Social Work program***

Candidates entering a qualifying Master of Social Work program who have completed a three year social welfare program may be granted a maximum of 25% or one semester of four.

## **7.0 Recognition of Prior Learning**

The AASW supports the recognition of prior learning (RPL) as a basis for application for entry into a social work program. If a school/ department or unit elects to use RPL, it must clearly articulate the following:

- (i) a transparent process;
- (ii) the rationale for how RPL is to be used;
- (iii) the criteria used to assess RPL;

- (iv) the weighting which the school intends to use;
- (v) the mechanism for appeal by the student.

The AASW acknowledges that life experience informs the student's participation in a social work course, but does not replace the required course content. Formal work experience, tasks, and duties in line with social work roles, tasks and functions should be considered when granting RPL.

### **7.1 *Conditions of granting credit for prior learning***

The granting of credit will be subject to university requirements for admission, and to university rules concerning the minimum amount of study required before a qualification from that university can be awarded. These requirements may vary for candidates admitted through special entry schemes. Universities must ensure that students are not granted credit beyond those allowed and noted in section 6 of this document.

### **7.2 *Assessment for granting credit will include:***

- 7.2.1 Currency of the work experience (5 years full time equivalent experience within a ten year period)
- 7.2.2 Minimum 3 years' practice in a relevant context, used social work practice skills such as assessment and counselling and methods such as case work or community work.
- 7.2.3 A portfolio demonstrating how the student meets the practice standards, demonstrates the integration of theory and practice, social work ethics and values.
- 7.2.4 External, independent verification/ reference as to accuracy of student's claims.

Universities must ensure that students undertake all relevant social work subjects and are not exempted from social work subjects on the basis of the qualification that led to their initial acceptance into the degree. In other words, subjects must not be double counted.

## **8.0 *Organisational Arrangements and Governance of Social Work Programs***

The BSW and qualifying MSW degree must be offered by a university recognised by *Universities Australia*.

### **8.1 *Program Structure***

The social work program must be the responsibility of a recognisable academic unit within the university. Where the unit is not a separate academic unit, the onus is on the university to demonstrate that the organisational structure is appropriate to ensure the achievement of the minimum social work education standards required.

The AASW recognizes that some small universities may not be able to provide a social work program in their own right and may seek to do so in partnership with another university. In such situations the AASW will require information on legal arrangements between the two programs, terms of the

agreement of the partnership, roles and responsibilities, governance and academic leadership arrangements and educational costs and benefits for students.

## **8.2 Resources and Staffing**

An academic unit offering a program of professional social work education must be adequately resourced if the required educational outcomes are to be achieved.

8.2.1 It is particularly important that adequate resources be available for the provision of a quality field education program. Members of staff responsible for field education manage a core component of the academic program.

8.2.2 It is desirable that the head of the academic unit who is responsible for program management and leadership be a senior academic who is eligible for AASW membership. At least one social work academic in the school should hold the position of Professor or Associate Professor.

8.2.3 All teachers of core social work theory and practice including field coordinators and field education liaison staff must have social work qualifications. At least 50% of the staff members teaching in the social work program must have social work qualifications. It is expected that to develop an effective program of active research, a minimum of five full time equivalent social work staff will be required.

## **8.3 Consultative Arrangements**

The university must have consultative networks that provide an opportunity for feedback from the field, and to bring current trends and issues from the field into the university. Formal consultative structures must be developed to enable teaching staff, field educators, human service providers, service users, AASW representatives and students to participate in decision making related to the social work program.

## **PART II**

### ***Process for the Review of Existing and New Social Work Courses***

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) reviews social work programs every five years to ensure graduates are able to demonstrate the minimum standards for social work education. The AASW also offers consultation to universities which are planning new programs of social work education. This section details the processes to be followed in such reviews and consultancies.

It is AASW policy that the costs associated with the review of social work programs will be met by the university under review.

If a social work program is unable from time to time to meet a particular requirement in the manner specified, the onus will be on the social work program to seek immediate consultation with the AASW. As part of this consultation the social work program may suggest an alternative method by which the AASW requirement could be met. Programs that subsequently do not meet these minimum requirements will have their AASW accreditation withdrawn.

The AASW may contact a social work academic unit if a complaint about the social work program or the unit is received.

#### **1.0 THE AASW ACCREDITATION PANEL**

The Accreditation Panel is the name given to those association members approved by the AASW Board to act as reviewers of social work programs for the purpose of determining whether the programs demonstrate the required standards for social work education. Members of the Accreditation Panel who are appointed to review an existing social work program are known as the review team. Experienced accreditation panel members may be invited to chair a review, or act as consultants to universities establishing new social work courses or programs.

##### ***1.1 Term of Appointment to Accreditation Panel***

Appointment to the Accreditation Panel is initially for a period of three years.

Members of the panel may reapply by submitting updated curriculum vitae, to be reappointed thereafter every three years.

##### ***1.2 Procedures for appointment as a Reviewer to the Accreditation Panel***

- (i) A call for applications from members will be published in the National Bulletin as required.
- (ii) Accredited members of the Association can apply for appointment to the position of reviewer.
- (iii) Applications should be sent in writing to the National office, and accompanied by the member's curriculum vitae and a statement addressing the Selection Criteria for appointment to the panel.
- (iv) Applicants will be interviewed by a panel appointed by the Board
- (v) Accreditation panel members' names will be published on the members section of the AASW website.

**1.3 *Selection Criteria to be addressed by applicants for appointment to the Accreditation Panel***

- (i) Ability to represent the Association.
- (ii) Demonstrated understanding of the challenges in the current context of the higher education sector.
- (iii) Demonstrated contribution to the profession.
- (iv) A minimum of seven years experience since graduation.
- (v) Skills in negotiation and conflict management.
- (vi) Analytical skills as required to review policies and curriculum.
- (vii) A demonstrated understanding of relevant educational philosophies, and teaching and learning strategies.
- (viii) Demonstrated experience in curriculum development
- (ix) Demonstrated experience as a field educator of students
- (x) Ability to work effectively in a team
- (xi) Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.
- (xii) Demonstrate flexibility and manage ambiguity
- (xiii) Availability for at least one review per year as required.

**1.4 *Role and Responsibilities of a Review Team member***

- (i) Prepare for a review of a social work program by reading all documentation.
- (ii) Liaise with the chair person of the review team and the AASW. Education Officer prior to the review.
- (iii) Declare any conflict of interest prior to the review.
- (iv) Participate as a member of a team to review the social work program.
- (v) Assist the chair person write the report on the review.

**1.5 *Procedures for appointment of Chair Persons of a review team, and Consultants for the development of a new social work program.***

- (i) Members with at least three years experience and three reviews on the Accreditation Panel will be invited to apply for the position of chair person /consultant.
- (ii) Chair persons/consultants will be appointed by the President or nominee for a three year term initially with the option of continuing.

**1.6 *Selection Criteria to be addressed for Appointment as Chair Person of a Review team, and/or as Consultant for the development of a new social work program.***

- 1. Demonstrated higher level skills to that required by a panel member.
- 2. Demonstrated skills in chairing in a range of different contexts.
- 3. Strategic and skilled in negotiating with senior university personnel.

4. Ability to analyse large quantities of data and to prioritise.
5. Ability to manage a newly formed team.
6. Advanced knowledge of the interface of social work education in a higher education setting.

**1.7 *Role and Responsibilities of Chair person and/or Consultant***

- (i) Advise the AASW on the policies and practice of reviews by participating in a panel of chair persons.
- (ii) Declare any conflict of interest prior to the review
- (iii) Brief the review team prior to a social work program review.
- (iv) Liaise with the social work program prior to the review as required to ensure that all requirements will be addressed.
- (v). Submit the report to AASW within 4 weeks of the completion of the review
- (vi) Communicate with the Education Officer if the member's situation changes.
- (vii) Participate in meetings of the Accreditation Panel as required.

**1.8 *Training of the Accreditation Panel***

Each new Accreditation panel member will be provided with an induction into the role. When appointed to a review team, new reviewers will receive further support from the review team chair who will be experienced in the review process.

**1.9 *Accountability of the Accreditation Panel***

Each review team appointed to review an existing social work program is accountable to the AASW, and its first duty is to ensure that the review is conducted according to AASW standards:-

Members of the Accreditation Panel who agree to act as consultants to universities planning new social work programs are accountable to the university.

Any concerns which emerge during the course of the review which relate to either the review process or AASW documentation or policy must be communicated to the National President, or Vice President responsible for Education.

At the conclusion of its review of the social work program, the team submits a report, which must conclude with a recommendation related to approval (or otherwise) of the program. (see Part 2, 2.0 The Process for Reviewing existing social work programs for further details)

**1.10 *Review of Appointments to the AASW Accreditation Panel***

An Accreditation panel member's name can be removed from the list at the direction of the Board of Directors at any time, for any of the following reasons:  
The assessor

- (i) is no longer a member of AASW;
- (ii) has not maintained Accredited Social Worker status;
- (iii) has committed a proven breach of the AASW Code of Ethics and/or other standards of practice of the AASW, and the National Ethics Committee has recommended this course of action;
- (iv) has failed to comply with the requirements of the review process (for example, reports are below expected standard, time-lines are not complied with, breaches of accountability have occurred); or
- (v) has breached confidentiality.

Allegations that a panel member has failed to meet any of the above criteria will be investigated by the AASW Executive Directors who will present to the Board a report for the Board's decision. The decision-making process will follow the principles of natural justice. The panel member will be entitled to know the nature of the identified problem and to respond to identified concerns.

Members whose names are to be removed from the Accreditation Panel will be advised by the National President in writing of the reasons for their removal.

## **2.0 THE PROCESS FOR REVIEWING EXISTING SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS**

Three members of the Accreditation Panel undertake the review of existing social work programs. Responsibility for membership of the review teams lies with the Executive of the AASW.

### **2.1 *Timing of the Review for an Existing Social Work program***

Social work programs will be reviewed every five years, with the date negotiated five years from the date the AASW Board accredits the program.

A letter will be sent from the Chief Executive Officer of the AASW early each year to those social work programs where a review is expected in that year, to negotiate a date for the review. Once the date within a period of 1-2 weeks has been confirmed, the review team will be appointed.

### **2.2 *Appointment of a review team***

Existing social work programs are reviewed by a review team which consists of three members from the AASW Accreditation Panel, one of whom will be a chair person. The chairperson and one other member is appointed by the AASW. The names of two other available panel members will be provided to the social work program so they may select the third member of the team.

When appointing members of a Review Team the following will be taken into account:

- (i). Compatibility of the proposed team with the school.
- (ii). Particular knowledge base relevant to any special needs of the school.
- (iii). Travel distance involved to contain costs for schools.
- (iv). Any potential conflict of interest
- (v). Representation on the team of teaching/ academic and practitioner panel members.

### **2.3 *AASW Processes to be followed by the AASW Education Officer and the Review Team, prior to the review***

- (i). Following the appointment of the review team, contracts between the reviewers and the AASW, and the AASW and the social work program will be distributed and signed by relevant parties.
- (ii). Names and contact numbers of the review team are distributed to the school nominee and to the chairperson. The chair person will make contact with the social work program and the review team, to brief each party on the process.
- (iii). 6-8 weeks prior to the site visit the AASW will distribute the documentation provided by the social work academic unit in hard and soft copies to the review team.
- (iv). All other documents sent to the AASW, for example field education manuals, will be sent to the chair person to be taken to the review.

### **2.4 *Social Work program processes to be followed prior to the review***

- (i) Prepare a Report to submit to the AASW review team.  
As far as possible the submission should draw on available data as well as reflect the opinion of staff. It should show trends over time and draw some conclusion from these for the future. It should report on what has been achieved and have a position on future issues and opportunities in the context of the social work program, the University and the wider community.

#### **Areas to be addressed in the report.**

Section 1 of the report will address the following key areas:

- Definition of social work
- Principles for Social Work Education
- Goals and Outcomes for social work programs including:
  - Content of social work programs
  - Social Work Practice Knowledge Skills And Values
  - Knowledge from other Disciplines
- Learning for practice in field education. Include an outline of what agencies offer placement, training and support for field educators, retention of field educators, approach to liaison, curriculum for placement, number of hours for each placement and approaches to assessing student performance on placement. Provide an outline of how placements in work places and placements without a social worker in the agency are organized and monitored.
- Structure of Programs for Social Work education.
- The articulation of Welfare and Community Work programs and TAFE with Social Work degree programs, including Credit Transfer.

In summary details of the program curriculum, subject outlines, subject sequencing, modes of teaching and assessment processes, articulation and credit transfer arrangements will be addressed in this section. Field Education manuals and other documents as appropriate will be attached to this section.

Section 2 will address the:

- Organisational Arrangements and Governance of Social Work programs, including number of staff and details of their qualifications, research activities and publications, details of the academic unit board, and projected figures on the demand of the program. Access to resources including teaching rooms and laboratories library holdings and field educators will be outlined.
- Profile of students in the program including numbers of students commencing, enrolled and graduating, entry level scores, gender, number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the ratio of staff to numbers of equivalent full time students. Describe the support available to students with special needs.
- An analysis of Commonwealth Education Quality (EQ) data should be provided with an assessment of the trends over time for the program.
- Additional reports to be made available to the review chair person include copies of most recent internal and external reviews.

Section 3 will:

- (i) Outline community engagement including arrangements for liaison with social workers in the field, with service users and with the local AASW branch.
- (ii) Liaise with review team to arrange the review, including; arranging meetings, booking accommodation and flights
- (iii) Arrange meetings with key stake-holders including; social work program staff and senior Faculty members, students past and present, AASW branch representatives, field educators, members of consultative committees.
- (iv) 6-8 weeks before the review 4 hard and 4 soft copies (CD or email) of the social work program's submission will be sent to the AASW National office for distribution to the review team.(This timeframe was recommended by reviewers)

## **2.5 Processes to be followed after the review**

*Completion and dissemination of the report by the review team and AASW.*

At the conclusion of the review, the chair person prepares a report in consultation with the review team and forwards it to the AASW Chief Executive Officer within four weeks of the completion of the review.

The following factors must be considered in the report:

- (i) The report must focus upon the degree to which the school meets each of the areas in Part 1 of this document

- (ii) The team's judgment should be based on the information made available by the social work program and other interested parties, and on material collected through discussions and observations of the course.
- (iii) The report must not merely copy sections of subject outlines as supplied by the school.
- (iv) The report may be used by the social work program to improve their courses, structure etc. Recommended changes will be presented in a spirit of collaboration unless they are contingent on the social work program being accredited, as per c) below.
- (v) A recommendation on accreditation, that either
  - The social work program is accredited for five years
  - The social work program is not accredited. If this recommendation is made detailed reasons must be provided by the review team, clearly outlining the basis for the recommendation.
  - Provisional accreditation of the program for a limited period, subject to the attainment of certain clearly stated requirements is recommended. This option is preferred to option b) but should only be made if the requirements can be accomplished within the stated time limits.

Differences amongst team members should be identified and minority reports used when appropriate. The review is a retrospective process. However, it may be appropriate for the team to include appropriate prospective comments.

## **2.6 *Decision making process***

- (i). Upon receipt of the review team's report the AASW Chief Executive Officer or nominee will send a copy of the report to the social work program with a request for written comment on the report recommendations, within four (4) weeks.
- (ii) The social work program's response to the report, with a copy of the reviewers report is presented to AASW Executive who then make a recommendation to the Board of Directors.
- (iii). The National President writes to the Vice-Chancellor informing her/him of the outcome of the deliberations of the AASW Board of Directors. A copy of this letter is sent to the social work program - and to each team member.
- (iv). If the social work program has received a provisional accreditation the AASW will work with the program and either engage the chair person of the review team, or a senior academic as appropriate, to work with the University to reach the stated requirements.

## **2.7 *Reimbursement to team members***

The university will pay a fee for the accreditation process to the AASW who then pay team members. Half the payment is due with the contract, the balance on receipt of the team's report.

Reasonable transport, accommodation and meal costs for the review team will be paid directly by the university.

### **3. CONSULTANCY TO UNIVERSITIES PLANNING NEW SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS**

New social work programs or degrees may obtain initially provisional accreditation on the basis of their demonstrating the practice outcomes, and meeting the policies in Part I of the document. New programs that do not meet these minimum requirements of meeting the AASW social work education standards will not be accredited.

It is the responsibility of the university to request a review for accreditation of their proposed new program. Twelve months before the program or degree is to be offered the University will contact AASW to arrange for a Consultant to be employed to work with the University to develop the program. Once a consultant has been appointed a consultation will be arranged at least 6 months before the program is to be offered.

The University will submit a report addressing Sections 1, 2 and 3 as per 2.4 (i) of this document.

#### **3.1. AASW consultants**

AASW consultants are members of the Accreditation Panel who are nominated by the Executive to act as consultants to Universities planning to develop new social work programs, and to social work programs planning to extend their course either to a new location or by introducing a new program structure. It is preferable that consultants are academics or former academics with extensive knowledge and experience in curriculum design. The consultant will have participated in a least three reviews of an existing social work course and be an appointed chairperson.

##### ***3.1.2. Process for appointment of consultants to new social work programs***

Upon receipt of a formal request from the University for the appointment of a consultant, the Chief Executive Officer and the Education Officer will meet and consider the following factors prior to their nomination of two accreditation panel members to the university for its consideration:

- (i) Location of possible reviewers in relation to the university under review.
- (ii) Time since the reviewers last conducted a review or consultation.
- (iii) Availability of reviewers to undertake consultancy.
- (iv) Reviewers' previous experience in curriculum design and evaluation.
- (v) Reviewers' knowledge-base related to any special needs or focus of the university and program under review (eg distance education provision).
- (vi) Other relevant political factors.

After consideration of the factors listed above, the following will occur

- (i) Chief Executive officer nominates two reviewers, hereafter called consultants, from the Accreditation Panel and forwards their names to the social work program having ascertained their willingness to be nominated.
- (ii) The social work program selects one of the suggested consultants, and notifies the Chief Executive Officer.

### ***3.1.3 Accountability of consultant***

The consultant enters into a contract with the university that is planning the new course, and for the duration of the consultancy advises the university on its proposal. The consultant is accountable to the AASW for the production of a report containing recommendations on the proposed new course.

### ***3.1.4 Fees for consultancy***

The university pays fees for consultancy to the AASW who will pay the consultant.

## **3.2 Provisional Accreditation Process**

- (i) The consultant contacts the University to negotiate a time for the consultation and to advise on the process.
- (ii) The University submits their report to the Consultant prior to the consultation
- (iii) The consultant visits the location of the proposed new program and reviews preparations for the program.
- (iv) The consultant may work with the University for a period of months to advise them on the development of the program. If this is extensive, additional fees may be charged by the AASW following negotiation with the University.

### ***3.2.1. Processes following the consultation***

The consultant writes a report ending with a statement to the effect that he/she recommends the proposal for the new course is either:

- a) That it is not accredited
- b) That provisional accreditation of the program is recommended and that the new course can now be implemented.

## **3.3 Decision making process**

- (i). Upon receipt of the consultant's report the AASW Chief Executive Officer or nominee will send a copy of the report to the social work program with a request for written comment on the report recommendations, within four (4) weeks.
- (ii) The social work program's response to the report, with a copy of the reviewers report is presented to AASW Executive who then make a recommendation to the Board of Directors.
- (iii). The National President or Vice President with the Education portfolio, writes to the Vice-Chancellor informing her/him of the outcome of the deliberations of the AASW Board of Directors. A copy of this letter is sent to the social work program nominee.

## **3.4 Processes to gain full Accreditation**

- (i) after the first cohort in the new program completes the program, a full review process will be initiated.
- (ii) Processes as outlined in Part 2 section 2.0 of this document will be followed.

## **Part III Process for Assessing International Qualifications Assessments**

*In 2008 the Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of AASW (AASW, 2000 amended in 2004 and 2006), Parts III and IV will remain in place to be used for the determination of qualifications of international applicants” (AASW Board Meeting Minutes, 16 November 2007). An extract from the Policy which includes all of part III appears below:*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) has a commitment to the international social work community, and is a member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). It values the contribution that social workers educated overseas can make to Australia's increasingly multi-cultural society, and recognises the importance of assessment of overseas qualifications so that eligible social workers may join the AASW and seek employment in Australia as social workers. In Australia the pathway to eligibility for membership of the AASW is completion of a four-year undergraduate degree accredited by the AASW. In other countries there are diverse pathways for admission to the profession, very few of which require the four-year degree with entry level, structure and content similar to those required in Australia. The AASW is committed to developing a system and process of assessment, which reflects an understanding of this diversity, and which also, reflects the academic and professional requirements for social work practice in Australia.

### **FIVE ESSENTIAL CRITERIA USED IN ASSESSMENT OF OVERSEAS SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATIONS (implementation date 1 July 2000)**

**Note: All Five Criteria must be met by a completed academic Qualification in Social Work**

#### **Criterion One**

The qualification must be regarded as a professional social work qualification in the country of training, recognised by whichever official body is responsible for accreditation of social workers and/or social work courses where such a body exists. The qualification must enable eligibility for membership of the professional social work association of the country of training where such an association exists, and where eligibility is conferred by formal qualification. The qualification must enable registration/licensing where such conditions exist in the country.

#### **Criterion Two**

The qualification must be a specific qualification in social work.

#### **Criterion Three**

The level of qualification must be bachelor degree or higher in Australian terms. AASW will make this assessment, using multiple sources, with the major reference point being the Australian Education International-National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition's (AEI-NOOSR) Country Education Profiles (CEPs).

#### **Criterion Four**

The curriculum must correspond sufficiently in all major areas to the AASW

requirements for the BSW according to the AASW *Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility of AASW* (Part I and Part III) available on the AASW website: [www.aasw.asn.au](http://www.aasw.asn.au)

### **Criterion Five**

The length of the qualification should be four years, but where **ALL OTHER CRITERIA** (1-4 above) have been met **AND** the qualification is three years full-time or longer **AND** required evidence can be provided of at least three years' full-time professional social work experience undertaken following completion of the professional social work Bachelor degree and within ten (10) years of the completion of that degree, **THEN** the experience may be considered as a way of compensating for the shortfall of one year in the academic program.

**NOTE: Where deficits exist in both curriculum and length of the qualification, the full time post qualifying employment considered as compensating for the length of the qualification will be in addition to the full time post qualifying employment considered as compensating for the curriculum deficits in Criterion 4 above, as specified in 6.1 and 6.3.**

Assessment of all overseas-educated applicants seeking membership of the AASW is undertaken individually by the AASW on a basis of comparison with the educational requirements of Australian social workers, using written materials. The assessments are not competency-based. The content and requirements of the overseas qualification are compared with the minimum requirements for the Australian Bachelor of Social Work degree, which can be found in Part I of this document. Part III outlines the requirements as they apply to overseas qualifications. Assessment guidelines for assessment of some qualifications from some countries have been developed. However, as they can be changed on the basis of research or appeal, they have not been included in this document.

## **1.0. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK**

The definition of social work given in Part I Section 1 is an Australian definition and there may be differences from country to country in the definition of social work adopted by professional associations.

## **2.0. PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

The AASW recognises that the principles underlying social work education reflect the socio-political educational context in which they evolve. The AASW statement in Part I Section 2 of this document is a reflection of the Australian position. We recognise that some principles may differ from country to country because of the diverse nature of the international community.

## **3.0. GOALS AND OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

It is expected that overseas-trained social workers will be competent, effective, skilled, knowledge-based, ethically aware and confident practitioners. They will have a commitment to social justice and social change in the interests of the citizens of their society, and have an awareness of a number of perspectives for social provision and a capacity to transfer knowledge and skills gained from their country of training to the Australian context. They will have the ability to think critically and reflectively

about their practice, and a commitment to intervene in the interests of the client groups they serve.

#### **4.0. ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS**

The location of social work training varies across countries. It will usually be within a university. There will be differences from country to country in relation to organisational arrangements and governance.

- i) AEI-NOOSR provides advice through its Country Education Profiles on the educational level of the overseas qualification. The AASW then assesses the qualification(s) for academic and professional content.
- ii) In assessing programs the criteria specified in Part I Section 4 will be used as guides to assess equivalence to Australian standards.

#### **5.0. THE STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

For overseas qualified social workers to be eligible for membership of the AASW, courses must satisfy the requirement of four years of full-time degree level study, or its part-time equivalent, which leads to the award of a distinct qualification in social work. This degree level study must be assessed as comparable to the educational level of a four-year bachelor degree in social work, in Australia. This requirement may be met through:

- i) a four-year bachelor degree;
- ii) the combination of a relevant undergraduate degree (see section 6.1) followed by a two-year postgraduate diploma or masters degree in social work;
- iii) other qualification which is assessed by AASW as fulfilling the requirement of two years of foundation subjects followed by two years of social work education at bachelor degree level;
- iv) additional programs of study as recommended by the body undertaking AASW's assessments, eg supplementary education program, one-year program or seek advanced standing in an accredited Australian BSW program;
- v) programs which meet the specification described in the five essential criteria outlined in the Introduction to Part III ( for example, three years of Bachelor level study leading to a distinct qualification in social work with three years post qualifying full time social work employment)

The content of the relevant undergraduate degree and the professional social work qualification is specified in the next section - Section 6. **Where curriculum deficits are identified according to curriculum content below, the prescribed period of post qualifying full time social work employment will be required. Where these deficits occur in a three year bachelor level qualification as in v) above, the employment considered as compensating for the length of the qualification will be in addition to the employment considered as compensating for the curriculum deficits.**

#### **6.0 THE CONTENT OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

##### **6.1. Knowledge for practice**

Knowledge from other disciplines is an integral component of social work education.

This material is usually covered in subjects variously named sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, history, social theory, philosophy, psychology, human development and behaviour. This essential knowledge may be acquired through university study undertaken prior to the final two years of social work study. In a four-year program it will usually be completed in the first two years of the degree. The following content areas will be covered:

- i) The study of society, and how it is developed and organised. This includes an understanding of the major insights provided by sociology, anthropology, social theory, history, economics and political science, and an awareness of how these contribute to the understanding of the politico economic distribution of resources. This is usually covered in subjects variously named sociology, social theory, anthropology, politics and economics.
- ii) Knowledge of social welfare arrangements, their history and organisation and the role of the law on such arrangements. As the goal of social work is the enhancement of the quality of life, and the development of the full potential of each individual, family, group and community in society, attention needs to be paid to the study of major groups that experience disadvantage and to those social structures and ideologies that give rise to and maintain disadvantage and oppression. These are usually covered in subjects variously named sociology, social theory, politics, law, history, or economics.
- iii) Knowledge of the individual. This includes human behaviour and development, personality development, life-cycle stages, family and social networks, physical health and ill health, disability, vulnerability and resilience. This is usually covered in subjects variously named psychology, human development and behaviour, anthropology.

For the purposes of equivalence the above areas will usually involve study over two semesters. **However, where Knowledge for Practice is not covered in the Bachelor level study, three years of post qualifying full time social work employment may compensate for this curriculum deficit.**

## **6.2. Practice knowledge and skills**

Essential to social work is the recognition that individual need is influenced by socio-political and economic factors. This interactive dual focus of analysis (individual and systemic, private pain and public issues) distinguishes the theory and practice of social work from other helping professions. The content of education for social work practice must include:

- i) All methods of social work intervention - community work, casework, group work, social action, research, social policy analysis and development, and administration. There is an ever-growing body of social work theory to draw on in each of these areas, and a broad range of material must be covered.
- iii) Practice skills, including interpersonal skills, communication skills, the skills of reflective and critical thinking and analysis, and of data collection and management.
- iv) The skills of making assessments and deciding on the most appropriate intervention with which to respond to whatever situation faces the worker. The process of making judgments is a core social work skill, and needs to be developed throughout the social work program.
- v) Material on the recognition and thinking through of ethical issues. This is a core component of social work practice that relies on the ability to think

- critically within a framework of commitment to ethical practice, and needs to be developed throughout the social work program with reference to the relevant country associations' code of ethics and/or the *AASW Code of Ethics*.
- vi) The contexts of social work practice at local, national and international levels. This understanding requires knowledge of and the ability to critically analyse social, political, economic, historical, cultural and ecological systems.

Processes of change, facilitators of, and constraints to, change, and the trends or evolution of systems need to be understood. Social workers need to be able to critically analyse the structure of society, with particular attention being paid to dimensions of power and disadvantage, and the influence of class, gender, heterosexism, race and ethnicity. There must be a focus on empowering and non-oppressive practice. For the purposes of determining equivalence this will usually involve at least the equivalent of four semesters of social work practice theory in the last two years of the course covering casework, group work, community work, research, social policy and administration.

### **6.3. Field education**

Field education is a core component of the social work education process, and has the status of a full academic subject. It is a key activity for the student, providing opportunities to integrate content from classroom learning with practical experience, whilst at the same time developing competence in a range of social work skills. Field education arrangements differ from one country to another. For the purpose of deciding eligibility for membership of the AASW the following principles will apply:

- i) An applicant must have completed at least 140 days (980 hours) of field education in at least two field placements and with two contrasting client foci.
- ii) Field education placements must cover a range of social work methods of intervention.
- iii) Field education placements must be taken over two years in conjunction with the professional social work program of study.
- iv) Where there is a shortfall in field education placement hours and where all other parts of the course meet AASW requirements as outlined above, post qualifying full time social work employment may be taken into account as follows:
  - 180 hours deficit meets requirements with no additional employment
  - A further 400 hours deficit meets requirements with up to 2 years employment on a sliding scale according to the formula  $(X-180) \times 6/100 = Y$  where X is the fieldwork deficit in hours and Y is the employment in months.
- v) **Where other curriculum deficits are compensated for by post qualifying full time social work employment (see 6.1), the employment experience required for each deficit is cumulative i.e. the same employment may not be considered for each deficit.**

**7.0. ARTICULATION** Not applicable.

**8.0. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING** See Part I of this document.

## **Part IV Process for Assessing Overseas Social Work Qualifications**

*In 2008 the Policy and Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Membership of AASW (AASW, 2000 amended in 2004 and 2006), Parts III and IV will remain in place to be used for the determination of qualifications of international applicants” (AASW Board Meeting Minutes, 16 November 2007). An extract from the Policy which includes all of part IV appears below:*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since 1 July 1999 the AASW has been gazetted by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, in accordance with Migration Regulations as the relevant assessing authority for the assessment of qualifications of overseas social workers seeking to migrate to Australia. There is also a Services Contract between the AASW and the Commonwealth of Australia, through the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR), a branch of the Higher Education Division of the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, regarding the provision of these services and assessment services to Australian residents with overseas qualifications in social work. Assessments are undertaken using the AASW membership eligibility criteria outlined in Part III of this document.

### **1.0 INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE (IQC)**

The IQC Committee is a National Committee appointed by the Board of Directors from amongst the accredited members of the AASW. It has the responsibility to oversee the assessments of overseas social work qualifications. It also develops policy and procedures for the assessment of overseas-qualified social workers. The minimum requirements outlined in Part III of this document are supplemented by precedents and by the IQC Committee’s internal assessment criteria and country guidelines, which may change according to changes in AASW’s minimum requirements, changes in AEI-NOOSR’s Country Education Profiles, and as a result of research and review by the committee.

### **2.0 DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR ASSESSMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS**

The applicant completes the appropriate application form and lodges this, together with the appropriate fee and required documents, with AASW National Office. Information about the assessment process, both written and by phone, can be obtained from AASW National Office, prior to lodging the application. Information is also provided on the AASW web site.

2.1 There are separate application forms for those with a visa which allows work in Australia and those without, who may be applying to migrate. These can be obtained from AASW National Office.

2.2 The application forms outline the requirements for supporting documents and fees.

2.3 AASW can complete assessments only when the required documentation and fees have been received.

2.4 AASW reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant if required for the assessment.

### **3.0 PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 AASW will issue a receipt for fees paid.
- 3.2 AASW will undertake the assessment through the overseas qualifications assessment officer.
- 3.3 The assessment officer will advise if further documents or information are required.
- 3.4 Every effort is made to complete the assessment within six (6) weeks from the date of lodgement of completed application, correct fee and all required documents, providing further information and/ or referral to IQC Committee is not required.
- 3.5 If further information is required or referral to IQC Committee is necessary, every effort will be made to complete the assessment within 10 weeks of lodgement of completed application, correct fee and all required documents.
- 3.6 If the qualification cannot be assessed through established guideline or precedent, the application will be referred to IQC Committee members for advice and the applicant will be advised of this.
- 3.7 AASW requires a written release from the applicant before details of the case can be discussed with a third party, including potential and actual employers.
- 3.8 No assessments are given by phone.
- 3.9 Information on AASW assessment criteria, established guidelines and assessment procedures can be given by phone, but this advice does not constitute an assessment of an individual qualification.
- 3.10 If, on the basis of the AEI-NOOSR Country Education Profiles, AASW guidelines and precedents (see Part III, 4.i.) the AASW is unable form a view of the educational level of the qualification, the applicant may be asked to apply to AEI-NOOSR for an individual assessment of educational level at the applicant's own expense.
- 3.11 Applicants are notified in writing of the outcome of the AASW membership eligibility assessment.

### **4.0 REFERRAL TO IQC COMMITTEE**

- 4.1 Applications are referred by the overseas qualifications assessment officer to at least two members of the IQC Committee for assessment where the qualification or combination of qualifications does not clearly meet the minimum requirements described in Part III of this document and is not covered by any IQC Committee country guideline or precedent.
- 4.2 Case summaries and documents supporting the application will be forwarded to the relevant committee members.
- 4.3 The IQC Committee members will provide assessment opinion to the assessment Officer.

4.4 The assessment officer will issue the assessment as soon as possible following receipt of this advice.

## **5.0 NOTIFICATION OF ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES**

5.1 Possible assessment outcomes:

- i) Qualifications meet membership eligibility requirements of AASW; and applicant can apply for AASW membership; or
- ii) Qualifications meet academic requirements for membership eligibility (that is, comparable to four-year bachelor degree in Australia with final two years concentrated on professional social work subjects), but there is a shortfall in professional content which would need to be addressed by completion of one, two or three specified subjects in an AASW accredited Australian Bachelor of Social Work (Supplementary Education Program). Following notification to AASW of successful completion of the specified subjects applicant would be eligible to join the AASW; or
- iii) Qualifications are assessed as bachelor-level qualifications in social work, but full final year of AASW accredited Australian BSW required to fully meet professional and academic requirements for membership eligibility of AASW; (one-year program); or
- iv) Qualification is not assessed at bachelor degree level qualification in social work and applicant is advised to approach an Australian university offering an AASW accredited BSW to seek advanced standing in such a BSW.

5.2 Information provided with notification of assessment outcome for people who are permanent Australian residents, or who have a visa which permits work in Australia and who are not applying to migrate as permanent residents:

- i) assessment notice;
- ii) explanatory letter, which is tailored to the individual assessment and which includes reference to appeal processes;
- iii) if application is assessed as meeting membership eligibility requirements, an AASW application is included;
- iv) if application has been assessed as not meeting membership eligibility requirements, information regarding AASW-approved BSW courses is included.

5.3 Information provided with notification of assessment outcome for those who are not Australian residents or do not have a visa which permits work in Australia:

The same as in 5.2.i) –iv):

If the applicant has applied to migrate under the migration procedures in place prior to 1 July 1999 an additional notice will be included which indicates whether or not the qualifications have been assessed as ‘recognised’ against the occupation social worker (Australian Standard Classification of Occupations ASCO 2511-11). If the application has been assessed as meeting AASW membership eligibility requirements, this will

constitute an ‘Assessment of Overseas Social Work Qualification (for migration purposes)’.

If it has not been assessed as meeting requirements, the additional notice will constitute an ‘Interim Assessment’ and the application will be sent to the Australian Institute Of Welfare and Community Workers for assessment against the AIWCW’s requirements. The relevant Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate is also notified of this outcome. From 21 September 1999 this notice will be valid for 2 years. If the applicant has not yet applied to migrate, but needs the assessment to apply to migrate under the procedures for skilled migration in place since 1 July 1999, the additional notice will indicate whether or not the qualifications have been assessed as ‘suitable’ against the occupation social worker (Australian Standard Classification of Occupations ASCO 2511-11). If the application has been assessed as meeting AASW membership eligibility requirements, this will constitute an ‘Assessment of Overseas Social Work Qualification (for migration or visa application purposes)’. If it has not been assessed as meeting requirements, the application will be sent to the Australian Institute Of Welfare and Community Workers for assessment against the AIWCW’s requirements. From 21 September 1999 this notice will be valid for 2 years.

## **6.0 REVIEW/APPEAL PROCESSES**

The following are the review processes currently in place. Any changes to the migration context may result in changes to these processes.

### **6.1 Assessments for migration purposes for applications lodged prior to 1 July 1999**

The appeal avenues for assessments undertaken as part of a migration application lodged prior to 1 July 1999 are through the appeal processes of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), the Migration Review Tribunal (MRT).

Where an applicant who has applied to migrate requests a review of the social work assessment AASW will not initiate such a review until notified by the relevant overseas Embassy, High Commission or Consulate that this is agreed to by DIMA, as the migration assessment by DIMA may already be complete.

### **6.2 Bases for appeal. In seeking reconsideration the applicant must state what the disagreement is and**

- i) provide new and /or further evidence; and/or
- ii) argue that the evidence has been misinterpreted; and/or
- iii) point out an error in the manner in which the application has been processed.

### **6.3 Procedures for review**

6.3.1 The original letter explanatory to the assessment notice will outline the background to the assessment and reason/s for the assessment and will provide detailed information on the review process available. This needs to be initiated by the applicant within 12 months of receipt of the assessment. The letter will point to the possibility of seeking advice from AASW on the assessment before initiating the review.

6.3.2 At each stage of review, the applicant has the opportunity to provide additional information or argument. Additional information or argument is required in order to progress to the second stage of review.

6.3.3 Letters advising of outcomes for each stage of review will provide for consultation by AASW with the applicant prior to the applicant's decision to initiate a further stage of review.

6.3.4 A fee will be charged for each stage of review.

6.3.5 The stages for review are:

i) Stage 1: IQC Committee Review. The request for review will be sent to members of IQC who were not involved in original decision;

ii) Stage 2: Appeal Committee Review. When a request for a Stage 2 appeal is received, an Appeal Committee will be appointed by National President of AASW and will include two members of the AASW Board of Directors or AASW Executive and a chairperson, who has experience in the assessment of overseas-qualified social workers.

***Part 3 and Part 4 of this document will be reviewed in 2009.***

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#### **ADDENDUM**

- Policy regarding Field Education Assessment Criteria
- Statement of specific Mental Health Curriculum Content
- Statement of specific Child Wellbeing and Protection Curriculum Content

**Additional Specific curriculum statements should also be consulted as they become available.**

## GLOSSARY

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It is acknowledged that there is a need for consistent terminology. To this end the following glossary can be used as a guide.

**ACADEMIC UNIT** refers to a department or school, or other separately identifiable academic organisational unit with the Head of the unit having resource responsibility for that unit and responsibility for the academic programs offered by the unit. In each institution offering accredited social work programs, there should be a Social Work AOU which is regarded as the core AOU capable of offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Social Work. The Social Work AOU would be expected to contain the name 'Social Work' in its title.

**ACCREDITED SOCIAL WORKER** Members of AASW who has complied with the annual requirements of Continuing Professional Education (CPE).

**ACCREDITATION PANEL** The Accreditation Panel is the collective name given to a group of Association members approved by the Board to act as assessors of pre-qualifying social work programs or as consultants to universities that are setting up new social work programs for the purpose of determining whether such programs meet AASW social work education standards.

**ASSOCIATION** means the Association incorporated as Australian Association of Social Workers Limited ACN 008 576 010 and licensed under Section 151 of the Law to omit the word "Limited" from its name;

**ARTICULATION** is an outcome of program design, which maximises the progression of students between programs, which are usually in a related field of study or occupation.

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (AASW** or may referred to as the Association) The AASW is the professional body representing social work in Australia.

**AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF WELFARE AND COMMUNITY WORKERS (AIWCW)** AIWCW is the professional body representing welfare workers in Australia.

**AUSTRALIAN VICE-CHANCELLORS' COMMITTEE (AV-CC)** The AV-CC is a committee of Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors from all Australian universities. It is now known as Universities Australia.

**CLIENT** The individuals, groups, families, organizations or communities provided with social work services.

**COURSE** is a series of subjects around a topic within an academic program that may be studied on its own.

**CREDIT TRANSFER** assesses the initial program, course or subject that the individual is using to claim access to, or the award of credit in, the destination course to determine the extent to which it is equivalent to the required learning outcomes, performance outcomes, or standards in a qualification (AQF Advisory Board 2004).

**DISTANCE EDUCATION** is a generic term used to describe structured education in which teachers and learners are separated and communication is maintained through print and other media such as television, radio, telephone, audio and video tapes, computer networks.

**FIELD EDUCATION** is one of the compulsory academic social work subjects undertaken within a pre-qualifying Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and is a core component of the social work education process.

**FIELD EDUCATOR** The field educator is the social worker who is responsible for the delivery and evaluation in the practice setting of the student's field education experience.

**FIELD EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR** is the university based staff person or persons allocated to manage the field education program within the pre-qualifying social work program.

**FIELD EDUCATION LIAISON VISITOR** is the university person allocated to liaise with the field educator and the student for the duration of the placement. Field Education liaison staff may be members of the program staff or contracted by the university to perform this role.

**FIELD PLACEMENT** A field placement (as opposed to classroom based experience) is a structured learning experience where a student is placed in an agency or a community working on particular tasks, under the supervision of a social worker, for a specified number of days. This is part of the Field Education subject.

**FIELDS OF PRACTICE** Fields of practice are either particular areas of practice, such as corrections or schools, practice which focuses on a particular client group, such as children at risk or persons with a disability, persons with a mental health problem or mental disorder, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander or Rural and Remote.

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION** are the learning outcomes related to knowledge skills and values, and learning for practice in field education required for pre-qualifying social work programs.

**HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM/ACADEMIC UNIT** The head of a social work academic unit is the person who has administrative responsibility (and may have professional responsibility) for the social work academic unit.

**HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDER** is an individual agency, government or non government or private practice provider within the human services sector

**HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR** is the sector of the market place that provides serves to people in the area of community services, health or aging or disability, and includes services provided in this area by government, non government, private practice and communities.

**KNOWLEDGE FOR PRACTICE** This is commonly used to mean knowledge from other disciplines that is regarded as an integral part of social work education.

**LEARNING GOALS** refer to the individual learning goals a student develops around each field placement that they undertake.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES** are the practice objectives of the AASW Practice Standards applied to the learning setting within the social work program. Such outcomes may also include other learning outcomes, in harmony with the AASW Practice Standards, as the social work program requires.

**METHODS OF INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK** The methods of intervention in social work include community work, casework with individuals and families, group-work, social planning and social action, social policy analysis and development, and management.

**MENTAL HEALTH COMPETENCY STANDARDS** or Competency Standards refer to the Mental Health competency standards being developed for entry level social work practice and based on the mental health competency standards published by the AASW in 1999 and updated in 2006.

**MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS** There are a number of requirements related to the delivery of social work program in the AASW Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards. These requirements describe the minimum, often specific numerical figures, rather than the ideal or a higher standard of excellence which a particular social work academic unit may chose to follow.

**MINIMUM STANDARDS** The AASW Practice Standards describe the minimum rather than a higher standard of excellence that a social work program may choose to require.

**PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES** These are the outcomes necessary for first and second field education placements and are uniform across Australia and are to be developed in 2008.

**PRACTICE** is any written, spoken or physical action and (any thought related to it) that social workers engage in as professionals. It is clear from the definition that social work practice can occur beyond the workplace.

**PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE** This is a shorthand term for the body of knowledge, skills and value stances that has been developed by the profession of social work to inform its work.

**PRACTICE SETTING** is the location in which social work practice occurs, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. Examples are a community setting, a social work agency, and an organisation.

**PROGRAM EXTENSION** Program Extension refers to programs that are structured and administered from a central base, and are either a smaller unit at an alternate location of the primary program, or use outreach teaching methods to teach student groups based in regional centres.

**PRACTICE OBJECTIVES** are outcomes of social work practice as described in the AASW Practice Standards. Other outcomes of practice also described are Standards and Indicators.

**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)** is the judgement of an institution of the calibre of previous learning, in the workplace, separate from formal learning, and whether to credit such learning.

**REVIEW TEAM** The three members appointed from the Accreditation Panel to review an existing pre-qualifying Bachelor of Social Work or Master of Social Work program.

**SERVICE USER** is a person who receives services supplied by the human services sector.

**SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM** refers to the entire course of study, successful completion of which results in a degree such as a four year program that leads to a Bachelors degree or a Masters Qualifying Degree. The word program is used in preference to course because it includes higher degree studies which are not typically referred to as courses. In this document social work program also refers to the Academic Organisational Unit.

**SOCIAL WORK SUBJECTS** These are academic subjects covering practice knowledge as distinct from those subjects which cover knowledge from other disciplines.

**SOCIAL WORKER** is a person who is eligible for membership of the AASW.

**SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATION** Named qualifications in social work include a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master of Social Work(qualifying), both of which qualify graduands for membership to the AASW provided the University program has been accredited by the AASW.

**UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA** previously known as Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AV-CC) is a committee of Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors from all Australian universities.

## ADDENDUM ONE

### Policy Regarding Field Education Assessment Criteria for Accredited Social Work Programs

- The following principles should be adopted by accredited social work programs as they implement the *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW 2008)*:
  - Social work programs should map the practice standards specified in *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving Outcomes (AASW 2003)* across the entire curriculum and show how field education is located within this; and
  - Social work programs have a responsibility to assist organisations and field educators to map the AASW practice standards against the experiential learning opportunities offered to students during placements and to articulate how the students' field education experiences relate to the practice standards.
- The following minimum requirements for field education assessment apply:
  - Field Education curricula must be explicit about how the 6 main areas of social work practice, as well as the key aspects and concepts for each, as set out in the *Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving Outcomes (AASW 2003)*, are incorporated;
  - Field Education curricula must demonstrate how first and second or subsequent placements are differentiated; and
  - Field Education curricula must incorporate a development component, such as a rating scale\*, so that student progress against the practice standards and/or levels of achievement can be assessed and recorded.

Note: An example of a rating system is:

Level 1: Students demonstrate that they have been introduced to the standard and are aware of its meaning and relevance

Level 2: Students have explored the standard in depth, are able to apply critical analysis to the standards and how it is practised in the organisation

Level 3: Students demonstrate the ability to practise to this standard at new graduate level.

This system could be developed further to include a scale which shows where a student is located in relation to "passing point" for both year levels.

**Board Approved 26 February 2009**

## ADDENDUM TWO

# Statement of specific mental health curriculum content for social work qualifying courses

Australian Association of Social Workers  
May 2008

## CONTENTS

<b>Preamble</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>A. Attitudes and values</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>B. Knowledge for social work practice</b> .....	<b>52</b>
1. Mental health problems and interventions.....	52
2. Social work assessment and intervention.....	53
3. Relevant services, policy and legislation.....	53
<b>C. Skills for social work practice</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>55</b>

## Acknowledgements

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) acknowledges the high quality work of Dr Valerie Gerrand in developing this Statement. This project is an exemplar of collaboration within the sector. All Australian social work programs were consulted in the development of this Statement. It is the first of specific core curriculum statements being developed to be read in conjunction with the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards.

The AASW is grateful for the support of Dr Noel Renouf, the Project Management Group and the National Mental Health Committee in bringing this to fruition, to the Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work for their support and to the Department of Health and Ageing for the funding for the project.



**Professor Bob Lonne**  
**National President**

## **Preamble**

This Statement provides detail on the specific mental health curriculum content which is part of the new AASW Education and Accreditation Standards (2008). The content covers attitudes and values, knowledge for social work practice and social work practice skills. Distribution of the Statement to universities is accompanied by a resource package which identifies key references and other educational material.

By including specific mental health curriculum content in the Education and Accreditation Standards, the AASW acknowledges that social workers in any practice setting will have at least some clients affected by mental health problems, of varying severity. This reflects the prevalence of mental health problems in the Australia population, and also the complex situations that clients are likely to be facing. In turn, clients should be able to expect that social workers can recognise the nature of their difficulties, including mental health problems, and work collaboratively with them to resolve or ameliorate their situation.

In the Statement, the term ‘mental health problems’ is used to encompass the broad spectrum of conditions. This term has been chosen for its inclusiveness and everyday currency. Whilst in itself, it does not differentiate between levels of distress and disability; this can be achieved in other ways, such as by referring to minor or major mental health problems. The content outlined in this Statement also refers to positive mental health. There are two further terminological issues. The first concerns the terms ‘client’ or ‘consumer’ for those with a mental health problem who make use of services. The two terms are used interchangeably in this document. The second issue is what term to use for ‘significant others’. The document uses ‘family and friends’ and ‘carer’ interchangeably.

It is important to note that the mental health curriculum content covered in this Statement is introductory in nature. It builds on other important bodies of knowledge, such as human development across the life span and sociological perspectives on stigma, which students would be expected to have covered elsewhere. The focus here is on mental health content directly relevant to social work practice and to beginning practitioners.

The Statement identifies the basic attitudes and values, knowledge and skills aimed at preparing social work graduates to respond to clients’ mental health problems in a range of practice settings. The intended outcome is an entry-level social worker who can identify when mental health problems may be affecting a client, respond appropriately and act accordingly. This might include continuing to assist clients whilst referring them for specialist mental health care, or in the event that such a referral is refused. Social work interventions would be guided by the profession’s primary concern to build the capacity of individuals, families, groups and communities, and to promote mental health and well being.

The Statement draws on the AASW Code of Ethics (1999) and AASW Practice Standards (2003). It is also influenced by the AASW Competency Standards for Mental Health Social Workers (2004) and the National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce

(2002). However, neither of the latter documents is directly applicable as they both focus on standards to be reached after two years of practice in the mental health field, rather than by entry-level practitioners.

Given the Statement focuses on mental health content at an introductory level, universities may choose to provide additional mental health input such as electives and/or fieldwork placements for students intending to work in the mental health field after graduation. It would also be expected that social work graduates taking positions in mental health services would have in-service training, and access to post-qualifying courses in mental health practice.

## **SPECIFIC MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM CONTENT**

The curriculum content described here encompasses the basic attitudes and values, knowledge and practice skills which would enable an entry-level social worker in any practice setting to identify and respond appropriately to clients with mental health problems.

### **A. ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

It is assumed that the values, principles and ethical behaviour for social work practice as outlined in the AASW Code of Ethics (1999) would be covered fully in other parts of the qualifying social work course curriculum. This section concentrates only on attitudes and values which are particularly important to people with mental health problems, due to their experience of disadvantage, stigma and discrimination, including from mental health professionals.

The attitudes and values identified here draw on the practice principles specific to mental health which are identified in the AASW Competency Standards for Mental Health Social Workers. In this Statement, they are taken to underpin basic mental health knowledge and skills. The mental health curriculum content would therefore be expected to cover the following:

1. Recognition and valuing of the person.
2. Respect for the client as a person, irrespective of their mental health problems.
3. A commitment to the importance of partnership and mutuality, especially with clients and their family and friends, through active collaboration and a readiness to engage in respectful partnerships.
4. Sensitivity to the impact of powerlessness, marginality, stigma and disadvantage, and the experiences of the client and family members, especially of social stigma and self-stigmatisation.
5. Empathy, compassion, and the importance of conveying hope and confidence.
6. Sensitivity to process, and adherence to mutuality, respect, honesty and integrity in professional practice.
7. A commitment to social justice for people with mental health problems, based on their human rights, and to advocacy at the individual and system level.
8. A commitment to the key tenets of professional confidentiality, recognising that confidentiality for clients with mental health problems may be subject to legislative caveats.
9. Understanding and respect for the ethic of care in relation to people with mental health problems, including the right of access to treatment, as well as the right to refuse treatment, except in certain circumstances defined in state mental health legislation.

## **B. KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

The range of knowledge potentially relevant to social work practice with clients affected by mental health problems is considerable, yet arguably not all is necessary for the beginning practitioner. Furthermore, there are obvious limits to how much can be encompassed in a social work course qualifying students for practice.

For these reasons, the areas of knowledge identified below are separated into those designated essential to the mental health curriculum, and those considered as desirable.

### **Essential**

#### *1. Mental health problems and interventions*

- 1.1 An appreciation of the potential risks as well as developmental opportunities associated with major life stage transitions, such as attachment difficulties in early childhood, child behavioural problems, adolescent body image problems, and mental health problems following childbirth.
- 1.2 A beginning understanding of patterns of thinking, feeling and action which might indicate that a client is experiencing mental health problems, and of relevant contextual factors eg. current or recent stressful life events.
- 1.3 A beginning appreciation of how the different health disciplines interpret mental health problems, and their approach to resolving these problems, and how to use this in establishing collaborative working relationships.
- 1.4 A basic grasp of a psychiatric diagnostic framework, including differentiating between psychotic and non-psychotic conditions, and an introductory knowledge of how a client might present with behaviours characteristic of common mental health problems such as anxiety or depression, and also the less common, including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- 1.5 An appreciation of the possible co-occurrence and influence of problematic use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- 1.6 An introductory understanding of the purpose of psychiatric diagnosis and specifically, the nature of a mental status examination, and of the implications for social work practice.
- 1.7 A beginning understanding of contemporary approaches to mental health care, including early intervention and relapse prevention, rehabilitation and recovery approaches, and of the implications for social work practice.
- 1.8 An introductory knowledge of contemporary treatment modalities, including the use of psychotropic medication, individual therapies such as cognitive behaviour and interpersonal therapy, group work and family therapy.

## *2. Social work assessment and intervention*

- 2.1 Knowledge of what should be covered in a social work assessment, particularly understanding the relevance for a client's mental health problems of social and environmental factors, such as social isolation, family stress, unemployment, low income and inadequate housing.
- 2.2 An appreciation of how the emergence of mental health problems and their ramifications are influenced by age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geographical location.
- 2.3 Understanding the importance of taking account of the impact of parental mental health problems on children, and of a child or adolescent's emotional and psychological problems on parents and siblings.
- 2.4 An appreciation of the possible range of consumer experiences, including social stigma and self-stigmatisation, and how this should influence social work practice.
- 2.5 An understanding of the likely experiences of families and other carers, including the impact of social stigma, and how this should be taken into account in social work practice.
- 2.6 A basic grasp of social work interventions at the individual, family, group and community level and how these might be applicable to clients with mental health problems.

## *3. Relevant services, policy and legislation*

- 3.1 Knowledge of services and resources relevant to a better quality of life and recovery for clients with mental health problems, and their availability and accessibility in the local area.
- 3.2 Knowledge of the basic structure of local mental health services, public and private and including disability support as well as clinical services, and referral pathways. Understanding when a referral for mental health care might be appropriate for a client with mental health problems, and to whom referral should be made and how.
- 3.3 A basic knowledge of sections of state mental health legislation relevant to social work practice, particularly confidentiality, involuntary treatment (whether in hospital or the community), and guardianship. Understanding when a referral for assessment for involuntary treatment might be necessary, and how to do this respectfully with a client.
- 3.4 An introductory grasp of national and local state mental health policy.

3.5 A beginning appreciation of how research and evaluation applies to social work practice with people with mental health problems, especially in relation to evidence-based practice and program evaluation.

### **Desirable**

1. An understanding of the influence of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographical location on mental health problems, and specifically:
  - 1.1 Mental health problems characteristic of different age groups across the life span.
  - 1.2 Different presentations by women and men, and related life stresses.
  - 1.3 Indigenous experience and understanding of mental health problems.
  - 1.4 Mental health problems associated with migration, especially the experience of being a refugee.
  - 1.5 Mental health problems associated with poverty and disadvantage.
  - 1.6 Mental problems in rural and regional areas.
2. An understanding of the history and current state of national and local state mental health policy development.
3. An understanding of historical and contemporary conceptions of mental health problems and societal responses.

### **C. SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

The focus here is on basic skills for working in a range of practice settings with clients with mental health problems. It is acknowledged that the client may well have been referred for matters other than mental health problems. The skills are the capacity to:

1. Engage with clients with mental health problems, paying attention to their experience of stigma, discrimination and powerlessness.
2. Build a trusting relationship with clients with mental health problems, including with those whose need for service might not be recognised or accepted by other workers or services due to difficulty in communicating and relating to others.
3. Explore the experience of the client's family and friends, establish a relationship and work collaboratively with them as well as the client. This may include negotiating and resolving potentially complex confidentiality issues.
4. Take account of the possible influence of mental health problems on a client's situation when undertaking a comprehensive, collaborative social work assessment.

5. Assess the likelihood of client self-harm, including suicidal risk, and identify appropriate responses.
6. Assess the possibility of harm to others eg. children's emotional or physical needs not being met, and of harm from others, such as through an abusive relationship, and identify appropriate interventions.
7. Develop an individual service plan based on the maximum level of collaboration possible with the client and their family.
8. Undertake social work interventions at the individual, group, family and community level, such as problem-solving, developing relapse prevention strategies, providing family education and support.
9. Advocate for client and/or family access to relevant resources.
10. Work collaboratively with other practitioners involved with the client, including GPs and disability support workers.
11. Make effective referrals and respond appropriately to referrals.
12. Obtain and provide consultation where necessary.
13. Seek out relevant research and evaluation on a regular basis to inform practice.

## **References**

Australian Association of Social Workers (1999). Code of Ethics. Canberra: Australian Association of Social Workers.

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**ADDENDUM THREE**

**Statement of specific child wellbeing and protection curriculum content for social work qualifying courses**

Australian Association of Social Workers  
December 2008

**CONTENTS**

**Preamble**..... 57

**A. Attitudes, values and principles**..... 59

**B. Knowledge for social work practice**..... 61

1. Children in the context of their families and communities..... 61

2. Legislative, policy and service contexts of social work practice with children and families..... 62

3. Social work practice with children and families..... 62

**C. Skills for social work practice**..... 63

**References**..... 64

**Acknowledgements**

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**Professor Bob Lonne**  
**National President**

## **Preamble**

The purpose of this Statement is to outline the specific child wellbeing and protection curriculum content required by the AASW Education and Accreditation Standards March 2008 (paragraph.4.1.2). The Statement covers the attitudes and values, knowledge and skills required of beginning social workers to promote the wellbeing of children, young people, families and caregivers, and to prevent or respond to child abuse and neglect.

By including specific content relating to children in its standards for social work education, the AASW acknowledges the vital importance of the wellbeing of all children and young people. The AASW recognises the significant role of social workers in every practice setting in promoting this and in ensuring the safety and protection of all children. These practice settings include adult as well as children's services, government, nongovernment and private practice and practice settings as diverse as health, corrections, education, income security, drug and alcohol and mental health.

The intended outcome of including the child wellbeing and protection curriculum content is that all entry-level social workers will be alert to the needs of children. They will be able to: communicate with them, act to promote their wellbeing; identify when children's wellbeing may be compromised; and use a range of social work practice methods to respond to the need that is assessed. All such social work interventions will be guided by the profession's commitment to the pursuit of social justice, the enhancement of the quality of life and the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society.

Concern for the wellbeing of children and young people has been a core element of social work practice internationally since the development of social work as a distinct profession. The AASW acknowledges that in Australia social workers played a role in the history of child protection, including the removal of Indigenous and other children from their families and communities and that this has led to intergenerational trauma and the tragic legacies of the 'Stolen Generations' and 'Forgotten Australians'. Social workers have also been among those who have advocated for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other vulnerable children and families. The AASW acknowledges the need for social workers to be alert to and advocate against unjust practices and policies, and to analyse the potential for professional practices to perpetuate abusive practices.

The AASW recognises the constructed nature of the terms 'child wellbeing' and 'child protection'. In this Statement the term 'child wellbeing and protection' is used to refer to the responsibility of everyone, including social workers, for the wellbeing, development and safety of the children and young people in our community. The term encompasses a full range of strategies to enable children to develop their potential, from those which promote and support child wellbeing, to those which prevent and address harm.

This Statement rests on assumptions that the family, in all of its diverse forms, is the basic unit of care for children and young people and that all families need supportive

connections to enable them to grow and develop securely and happily. It acknowledges that many families and communities have to face situations and conditions that challenge their capacity to provide optimal care for children and young people and that in these situations most families and children need additional, personalised supports. Social workers, in a variety of practice contexts, need to be able to promote child wellbeing and to assess and respond to the needs of children and families through direct practice and through working for structural changes.

This Statement is based on the generic content of social work education outlined in the AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards March 2008. It is structured so that the content areas correspond to the AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards March 2008 (parts 4.1 and 4.2). It identifies particular instances where the generic education program needs application to children and families. Distribution of this Statement to universities will be accompanied by a list of resources that identifies key references and other relevant educational materials which social work educators may use to support the inclusion of the child wellbeing and protection content. Some universities may choose to provide additional child protection content such as electives and/or fieldwork placements in child protection. It is anticipated that social work graduates who work in statutory child protection services will participate in in-service training provided by their organisation and will have the opportunity to study child protection at postgraduate level.

## **SPECIFIC CHILD WELLBEING AND PROTECTION CURRICULUM STATEMENT**

The curriculum content described here encompasses the basic attitudes and values, knowledge and practice skills needed by an entry-level social worker in any practice setting to promote the wellbeing of children, young people, families, caregivers and to prevent or respond to child abuse and neglect.

### **A. ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

**(relates to 4.1.1 of the AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards)**

It is assumed that the values, principles and ethical behaviour for social work practice as outlined in the AASW Code of Ethics (1999) would be covered fully in other parts of the qualifying social work course curriculum. The principles and attitudes identified here relate to the key social work values for situations involving children. These attitudes and values provide the ethical foundation for the knowledge and skills described further on in this statement. The overall goal is that entry-level social workers can understand and apply core social work values and principles as laid out in AASW Code of Ethics (1999) when encountering children, their mothers, fathers and carers in their family and social contexts regardless of agency setting.

#### *1 Human dignity and worth*

- 1.1 Respect for the rights of children and young people as citizens, including the right to be informed about and to participate in decisions affecting them, and the right to protection from harm.
- 1.2 Respect for the rights and responsibilities of mothers, fathers, family and community members to make informed decisions and to participate in decision-making processes about their own lives and those of children and young people in their care.
- 1.3 Respect for families as the foundation of the social, cultural, and emotional wellbeing for children and for the needs of children and families for supportive and stable relationships with each other and with informal and formal supports in their communities.
- 1.4 Commitment to ensure the maximum autonomy possible for children, mothers, fathers and families, to provide information to children, mothers, fathers and families and to ensure that principles of natural justice apply, including where there is a concern for a child's safety.
- 1.5 Respect for the knowledge of all involved in partnerships that provide care to children, including foster carers, residential carers, birth and extended family members and statutory workers.
- 1.6 Respect for the cultural and spiritual needs of children.

## *2. Social justice*

- 2.1 Respect for cultural diversity, including respect for Indigenous kinship and family values and child-rearing practices, and those of other cultural groups.
- 2.2 Commitment to empowering children, mothers, fathers, families, individuals, groups and communities to access resources, choices and opportunities and to participate in the development of relevant policies and programs.
- 2.3 Awareness of power imbalances where issues of child abuse and neglect are raised, including an awareness of the social worker's own power practices.
- 2.4 Commitment to oppose discriminatory practices with children and families.
- 2.5 Commitment to child-sensitive practice, recognising that unless there is sensitivity to children's needs, children and parenting responsibilities can be invisible in adult services.
- 2.6 Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles.

## *3. Service to humanity*

- 3.1 Promotion of the wellbeing of children and families takes precedence over the social worker's personal positions about family life or child rearing.

## *4. Integrity, honesty, reliability and impartiality*

- 4.1 When recording information about children, mothers, fathers, families and other significant adults, demonstrate impartiality, accuracy, inclusivity, cultural sensitivity and show a capacity to distinguish what is observed and described from opinion.

## *5. Competence*

- 5.1 A commitment to practitioner's life-long learning in the areas of child wellbeing and cultural knowledge, regardless of field of practice.
- 5.2 A commitment to practitioner's active participation in reflective supervision and reflective practice.

## *6. Ethical decision making*

- 6.1 Application of AASW Code of Ethics (1999) guidelines for ethical decision making in situations involving children. This encompasses principled decision making and actions that are transparent, research- and evidence-informed and which place the needs and wellbeing of children at the centre in the light of their developmental level and capacity for decision making.

- 6.2 Ability to articulate a decision-making process that takes account of the tensions between ethical principles when the interests of children, young people, their families and the broader community may conflict.
- 6.3 Reflective and reflexive practice that allows heightened awareness of personal and professional values and assumptions that influence assessment and intervention in the lives of children and families.

## **B. KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

Application of the social work practice knowledge areas outlined in the AASW Australian Social Work Accreditation Standards to children and families involves the development of beginning knowledge and capacity for critical appraisal of knowledge in the following areas: children in the context of their families and communities; the policy, legislative and service contexts of social work with children and families; and social work practice with children and families.

1. *Children in the context of their families and communities* (relates to 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 of AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards).

Beginning knowledge of:

- 1.1 Child development, including ecological models of human development, children's developmental needs, transitional milestones and life cycle phases, definitions and indicators of the wellbeing of children and young people within a sociological framework that encompasses the social construction of childhood and family life and ethnocentric understandings.
- 1.2 Parent-child attachment and significant other attachments, the protective effects of secure attachment relationships and the effects of disruptions to primary carer-child attachment and of multiple changes of primary carers.
- 1.3 The diversity of family structures, dynamics, systems and community networks with particular attention to cultural variations in family and community relationships and child care practices, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices.
- 1.4 Different types of child neglect and abuse, the way in which definitions of child neglect and abuse are shaped by culture and history, their interactions, manifestations, prevalence, incidence, causality, and effects including the effects on children's brain development of long-term neglect or traumatic injury, and the signs of maltreatment which may present in a range of practice settings.
- 1.5 Current evidence about protective and risk factors relating to child wellbeing and child maltreatment at individual, family and community levels. This includes the impact of parental alcohol and other drugs misuse and parental mental health problems on children's wellbeing, a critical understanding of domestic and family violence, and the protective factors associated with children's resilience including enduring relationships and positive community connections.

1.6 The process of colonisation and intergenerational trauma experienced by families, children and young people due to colonization and/or past child welfare practices, in particular, the Stolen Generations, adults who grew up in alternative care, and children who have experienced detention.

*2. Legislative, policy and service contexts of social work practice with children and families (relates to 4.1.5 of AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards).*

Beginning knowledge of:

2.1 The history and contemporary debates in social philosophy and policy relating to the wellbeing of children and families, including the history of child protection policy in Australia, with particular mention of the history of child protection interventions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and social work's role in the implementation of these policies.

2.2 Structural and multiple disadvantages in Australia, including poverty and its impacts on children, families and communities.

2.3 Contemporary service frameworks for children and families such as the continuum of services from promotion of wellbeing to prevention of abuse and neglect to treatment services and the ways in which services along this continuum match the multiple needs of children and families.

2.4 The range of services and organisations which are relevant to the wellbeing of children and families (e.g. health, education, including schools, housing, alcohol and other drug, income support, refugee), Commonwealth and State responsibilities, the role of statutory child protection services and the Family Court, the relationships between services, the likely existence of protocols between services, and the local services and networks available to support mothers, fathers and families.

2.5 The legal context for social work practice in child protection in Australia, and the legal and ethical responsibilities of a social worker under the legislative frameworks that protect children, including the reporting responsibilities of social workers under the relevant legislation in the State or Territory in which the social work educational program is located or in the case of distance education programs, in the State or Territory in which the student is located.

2.6 Contemporary frameworks that enshrine the rights of children including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*3. Social work practice with children and families (relates to 4.1.3 of AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards).*

Beginning knowledge of:

3.1 Critical practice frameworks that enable the application of a range of theories of social work practice to situations where the social worker encounters children,

regardless of agency context, and which may include child-centred and family-focused practice, strengths-based and solution-focused approaches, anti-oppressive practice, group work, community development, research and policy responses.

- 3.2 Assessment frameworks for assessing the psychosocial needs of children and families, including contemporary evidence about the use and relevance of risk and protective factors in assessment frameworks.
- 3.3 Practice with involuntary clients, including power imbalances and strategies to respectfully promote engagement with children, young people and adults who do not wish to be clients.
- 3.4 Culturally appropriate and respectful ways of working with children and families from diverse cultures, including Indigenous families and the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles.
- 3.5 Strategies that reduce risk factors to children at a family level and strategies that support mothers, fathers and families within the context of the promotion of wellbeing, prevention and tertiary continuum of services.
- 3.6 The role of social workers in building and disseminating evidence about what works in practice and policy to promote the wellbeing of children and families and strategies to access specific information about children, families and communities as required, for example, cultural knowledge.

### **C. SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

(relates to 3 and 4.1.4 of AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards).

This section outlines the skills that involve the capacity to implement the values and knowledge described earlier in this Statement. Newly graduated social workers in all practice contexts need beginning skills to:

1. Appropriately transfer generic social work skills and apply social work practice theory when encountering children within their families and communities.
2. Identify the roles of the specific organisations in which they work and the relationships of those organisations to other parts of the service system that encounter children, young people and families, including protocols and referral pathways.
3. Engage with, listen to and build respectful trusting relationships with mothers and fathers, maintaining awareness that English may be a second language for many Australians, including some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
4. Conduct a purposeful conversation with a child or young person, respecting their rights as a citizen and using developmentally and culturally appropriate strategies in order to understand the child or young person's perspective on their life.

5. Work ethically with professional authority while acknowledging and mediating the inevitable power disparity between worker and clients.
6. Undertake a holistic family assessment, in collaboration with the family, child and kinship networks where possible, which includes attention to the wellbeing of children and which builds on a critical understanding of the family's ecological and socio-economic contexts.
7. Develop a respectful working partnership with children, young people, mothers, fathers, families, caregivers and other significant adults, to form a shared plan to address identified issues.
8. Undertake advocacy, conflict resolution, problem solving, planning, meeting facilitation and crisis intervention as required to promote the wellbeing and safety of children.
9. Collaborate effectively and respectfully with other professions and services/organisations, recognising that families may have multiple needs requiring the involvement of multiple organisations.
10. Make effective referrals/connections of families and children and caregivers with other services and community resources.
11. Write clearly and keep accurate records that distinguish what is observed and described from opinion.
12. Seek and utilise current evidence about good practice with children and families, and collect and use practice data to inform policy that promotes the wellbeing of children.
13. Work in a culturally safe way with children, families and communities and seek training to enable culturally safe practices. This will include implementing knowledge of culturally respectful ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and adhering to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles.
14. Think critically and critically reflect on practice, identifying the knowledge used, the worker's own feelings and values about child wellbeing and families, and utilizing supervision to explore how these may influence practice.
15. Practise self protection and self care. This involves being sufficiently self aware to manage one's own wellbeing in the work context and to make appropriate use of supervision and other available supports.

### **References**

Australian Association of Social Workers (1999). Code of Ethics. Canberra: Australian Association of Social Workers.

Australian Association of Social Workers (2008). Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards. Canberra: Australian Association of Social Workers.

## ADDENDUM FOUR

# Statement of specific cross-cultural curriculum content for social work qualifying courses

Australian Association of Social Workers  
November 2009

### Contents

PREAMBLE.....	66
A. ATTITUDES AND VALUES.....	67
B. KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE.....	68
C. SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE.....	69

### Note

To accompany this Statement an Educational Resource Package, developed by Dr Lou Harms, is available as a separate document.

### Acknowledgements

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**Professor Bob Lonne**  
**National President**

## **PREAMBLE**

The purpose of this Statement is to outline the specific cross-cultural curriculum content required by the *AASW Education and Accreditation Standards March 2008* (paragraph 4.1.2). The Statement covers the attitudes and values, knowledge and skills required of beginning social workers to promote effective cross-cultural social work practice.

The standards outlined in this Statement promote the development of a critical awareness as to how both social workers and clients understand and experience their cultural identities that emerge from their unique cultural and social contexts. Along with the necessary skills, this ensures 'social workers promote respect for traditions, cultures, ideologies, beliefs and religions amongst different ethnic groups and societies, insofar as they do not conflict with the fundamental human rights of people' (*AASW Education and Accreditation Standards March 2008* p. 5).

The standards have been developed in recognition of the importance of ensuring that all graduates of social work programs are able to work cross-culturally.

### **Terminology**

'Culture' refers to a constantly changing phenomenon of individuals and societies. As such, it is a socially-constructed and a highly-contested phenomenon within social work discourses.

Cross-cultural practice refers to practice where there is a diversity of traditions and intergenerational issues; ideologies, beliefs and religions; and race and ethnicities.

Cross-cultural practice can refer also to work acknowledging other diverse identities, such as sexual, political, professional and organisational. Where appropriate, these Standards therefore address these broader dimensions of cross-cultural practice. All of these dimensions impact on us as culturally diverse social workers and clients alike, and therefore should be acknowledged as core to good practice in whatever context.

Throughout these Standards the term 'client/s' is used referring to the people with whom we work. The term can be referring to individuals, families, groups and/or communities.

These Standards do not specifically address the values and attitudes, skills and knowledge required for practice with Indigenous clients, recognising that there are many significant differences in Aboriginal Australian experiences. The Indigenous Curriculum Standards have been developed alongside these standards and seek to complement the focus of this document.

All social work programs are required to deliver this introductory material within their social work curriculum. Each university may implement these standards in

different ways. Some universities may choose to provide additional cross-cultural curriculum through electives and/or fieldwork placements.

## **SPECIFIC CROSS-CULTURAL CURRICULUM CONTENT**

The curriculum content described here encompasses the basic attitudes and values, knowledge and practice skills needed by an entry-level social worker in any practice setting to promote competence in cross-cultural practice.

### **A. ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

It is assumed that the values, principles and ethical behaviour for social work practice as outlined in the *AASW Code of Ethics* (1999) will be covered fully in other parts of the qualifying social work course curriculum. The cross-cultural curriculum content (refer to 4.1.1 of the *AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards*) is expected to address the following specific attitudes and values underpinning practice:

1. Respect for the person and his or her unique cultural identities.
2. Respect and empathy for the diversity of cultural experiences.
3. Valuing cultural diversity and the complexity of that diversity.
4. An understanding of, and a critical engagement with, notions of universal human rights.
5. Acknowledgement of the need for continual critical reflection on our personal and professional cultural contexts.
6. Acknowledgement of the complexities of cultural identities and experiences.
7. Recognition of the richness of knowledge and skills within different cultural groups.
8. Recognition of the differential power positions of various cultural groups in society and a preparedness to challenge racism and oppression.
9. Recognition of the strengths and tensions of diverse worldviews, and how they are culturally derived.
10. Recognition of the importance of dialogue in building cultural understanding.
11. Recognition of the Australian practice context and the interface with cultural diversity.
12. Recognition of the changing nature of cultural contexts and experiences.

## **B. KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

Application of the social work practice knowledge areas outlined in the *AASW Australian Social Work Accreditation Standards* to cross-cultural practice involves the development of beginning knowledge and capacity for critical appraisal of knowledge in the following areas: cultural and race theories; culturally safe and sensitive practice; specific historical and contemporary cross-cultural issues in Australia, international cross-cultural issues.

1. A critical understanding of culture as a socially constructed and contested concept.
2. Knowledge of theories of ethnicity, race and whiteness, diversity, racism and power.
3. Knowledge of global and historical foundations of oppression.
4. Knowledge of theories for understanding identity and migration.
5. Recognition of the intergenerational impacts of cultural experiences.
6. Knowledge of the impact of conflict, trauma and torture on many migrant individuals and communities.
7. Knowledge of culturally safe and sensitive practice.
8. Knowledge of key organisations that support cross-cultural groups.
9. Knowledge of the importance of language barriers and the need to work with interpreters and/or bicultural workers.
10. Understanding of historical and contemporary perceptions of social work services amongst cross-cultural groups.
11. Knowledge of Australia's migration history and its importance in shaping the nation.
12. Knowledge of Australia's history of cultural diversity and racism.
13. Knowledge of settlement and support services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
14. Knowledge of international protection regimes for refugees and asylum seekers.
15. Recognition of international politics and current affairs and their impact on migration and refugee policies and trends.
16. Recognition of the language and worldview barriers experienced by many people in the Australian community that inhibit well-being.

### **C. SKILLS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

This section outlines the skills which involve the capacity to implement the values and knowledge described earlier in this Statement. The focus is on working with all clients in culturally-sensitive and safe ways. Newly graduated social workers in all practice contexts need beginning skills to:

1. Critically reflect on their personal and professional cultural identities and the influence they have in social work practice.
2. Critically reflect on the organisational and social factors influencing the capacity for practice to be culturally sensitive and safe.
3. Engage in continual learning about culturally-respectful, empowering practice.
4. Draw on their own cultural identities in effective social work practice.
5. Engage critically, and with flexibility and curiosity, in cross-cultural encounters.
6. Establish rapport and empathy with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
7. Assess the language barriers that may impact negatively on client outcomes and access appropriate support processes and/or services.
8. Work effectively with interpreters and bicultural workers.
9. Communicate effectively through culturally respectful, clear dialogue.
10. Assess and address the barriers to effective communication.
11. Assess the cultural context and experiences of clients as part of an overall assessment to understand the ways these are influencing current well-being and/or difficulties.
12. Advocate with and on behalf of their clients in culturally respectful and socially just ways.
13. Use the full range of social work methods to work for change and social justice for culturally diverse people and communities.
14. Use supervision to critically reflect upon cross-cultural issues emerging in practice.