# Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: Progress and Challenges

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Council on Social Work Education | www.cswe.org

# A Brief History of CSWE

- Founded in 1952

- Represents more than 2,600 individual members, as well as over 750 graduate and undergraduate programs of professional social work

- CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COA) is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in this country

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# Current Context of Social Work Education

(as of January 2015)

- 736 Total Accredited Programs in 539 institutions*
  - 502 Baccalaureate Programs
  - 234 Master's Programs

    *Public institutions house more than one half (55.1%) of social work programs, followed by private–religion affiliated institutions (34.5%) and private–other institutions (10.4%).

- 73 Doctoral Programs
- Over 4,700 Full-Time Faculty
- 38,387 degrees awarded in 2012

# Framework for Accreditation

- CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COA) is responsible for developing accreditation standards that define competent preparation and ensuring that social work programs meet them

- The professional judgments of the COA are based on the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit social work programs

- Accredited programs-reviewed for reaffirmation every 8 years

- New programs-undergo a three year candidacy process and are reviewed for reaffirmation 4 years later

# History of Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)

- EPAS is revised every seven years

- Previous standards focused on inputs and evaluating program objectives

- Outlined the academic content considered essential for the education of professional social workers

# Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)

- In 2008, a major shift from an "input" curricular orientation to an "outcomes" student competency orientation

-  The 2008 EPAS identified 10 competencies that are common to all of social work practice

# Focus of Social Work Competencies

- EPAS ensures academic quality by establishing thresholds for competence in a minimum of 10 professional practice domains which guide programs in curriculum design and assessment

- Competencies inform the public of what social work students are expected to know how to do upon completion of an accredited baccalaureate or master's level program

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# Focus on Student Learning Outcomes

- EPAS is a competency-based approach to curriculum design that emphasizes student learning outcomes.

- EPAS requires that the determination of academic quality for programs is an assessment demonstrating student mastery of the 10 competencies.

- The COA advances academic quality in social work programs that are CSWE accredited by ensuring that social work students achieve the competencies detailed in the EPAS.

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# SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCIES

## 10 COMPETENCIES COMPRISED OF MEASURABLE PRACTICE BEHAVIORS
### (can add optional additional competency (ies) according to program context)

| | |
|---|---|
| EP 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly. (6 practice behaviors) | EP 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. (2 practice behaviors) |
| EP 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice. (4 practice behaviors) | EP 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. (2 practice behaviors) |
| EP 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. (3 practice behaviors) | EP 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services. (2 practice behaviors) |
| EP 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice. (4 practice behaviors) | EP 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice. (2 practice behaviors) |
| EP 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice. (3 practice behaviors) | EP 2.1.10(a)–(d)—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. (13 practice behaviors) |

# Competency Framework

- The framework for an integrated curriculum design includes four areas:
  - Program Mission and Goals
  - Explicit Curriculum
    - Competencies set framework for curriculum design
    - Signature Pedagogy-field education opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the 10 competencies in a practice setting
  - Implicit Curriculum
  - Assessment of student learning

# Competency Framework

- **Assessment**
  - Integral component of competency-based education
  - Programs must demonstrate student mastery of the practice behaviors utilized to operationalize the ten competencies in order to be accredited
    - Identify measures of practice behaviors and benchmarks
    - Standard requires programs to post their assessment findings on their website a minimum of every two years

# ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
## UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MASTERS OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM
### LAST COMPLETED ON 1/5/2015

**Form AS4 (M)** Duplicate and expand as needed.  Provide table(s) to support self -study narrative addressing *Accreditation Standards* below.

This form is used to assist the COA in the evaluation of the program's compliance with *Accreditation Standard*s stated below.

**4.0.2** *The program provides evidence of ongoing data collection and analysis and discusses how it uses assessment data to affirm and/or make changes in the explicit and implicit curriculum to enhance student performance.*

**4.0.5** *The program appends the summary data for each measure used to assess the attainment of each competency for at least one academic year prior to the submission of the self-study.*

All Council on Social Work Education programs measure and report student learning outcomes.  Students are assessed on their mastery of the competencies which comprise the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education.  These competencies are dimensions of social work practice which all social workers are expected to master during their professional training.  A measurement benchmark is set by the social work programs for each competency.  An assessment score at or above that benchmark is considered by the program to represent mastery of that particular competency.

| COMPETENCY | COMPETENCY BENCHMARK | PERCENT OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING BENCHMARK (Seattle & Tacoma MSW Programs/Aggregate Scores for Field, Student, Classroom) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ADVANCED Administration and Policy | ADVANCED Advanced Integrative Practice (Tacoma) | ADVANCED Community-Centered Integrative Practice | ADVANCED Children and Family Multigenerational Practice | ADVANCED Health Mental Health Practice |
| Identify as a Professional Social Worker | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 83% | 96% | 93% | 96% | 96% |
| Apply Ethical Principles | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 100% | 100% | 93% | 94% | 93% |
| Apply Critical Thinking | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 96% | 94% | 90% | 89% | 86% |
| Engage Diversity in Practice | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 96% | 100% | 81% | 94% | 96% |
| Advance Human Rights/ Social and Economic Justice | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 70% | 98% | 95% | 91% | 82% |
| Engage Research Informed Practice/ Practice Informed Research | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 61% | 98% | 85% | 86% | 80% |
| Human Behavior Knowledge | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 74% | 98% | 88% | 96% | 89% |
| Engage Policy Practice to Advance Well-Being and Deliver Services | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 78% | 98% | 93% | 82% | 71% |
| Respond to Practice Contexts | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 87% | 100% | 98% | 91% | 80% |
| Practice Engagement* | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 87% | 96% | 93% | 94% | 88% |
| Practice Assessment* | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 87% | 96% | 93% | 94% | 88% |
| Practice Intervention* | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 87% | 96% | 93% | 94% | 88% |
| Practice  Evaluation* | 75% ≥ 4.0 | 87% | 96% | 93% | 94% | 88% |

*Percentage reported combines all practice behaviors for competency 10.

# What has been successful?

- Competency was the right direction and well-received by accredited programs, faculty and students

- Assessment is difficult but focus on student learning outcomes has helped to promote change in the explicit and implicit curriculum to enhance attainment of student competencies

- Encourages new delivery models and curriculum innovations as long as competencies are demonstrated

# Challenges

- Are these "<u>THE</u>" competencies? How were these chosen?

- Assessment is difficult (and a burden) as evidenced by the number of citations in this area

- Is it about the process or the data on student learning outcomes?

- Meaningful measures of competency:
  - What to measure? Best assessment measures?
  - Different benchmarks?
  - Too many practice behaviors and prescribing measurement at this level

# Where are we now?

EPAS 2015

http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/EPASRevision.aspx

# Where are we going?

- Competency-based model will continue

- Development of Competency Assessment Toolkit to assist programs with identifying valid measures for competencies

- More focus on making data meaningful to students and the public

- More focus on delivery methods that enhance attainment of competencies

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# References

- Council on Social Work Education Accreditation http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation.aspx

- Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). (2008). Available at: http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/2008EPASDescription.aspx

- EPAS Revision Information http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/EPASRevision.aspx

- Articles about 2008 EPAS implementation available at: http://cswe.org/Accreditation/EPASImplementation.aspx

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