

1.2.4 PROGRAM CHANGES

CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COA) understands that ongoing change is necessary to improve educational quality. In support of programs' continuous quality improvement efforts, COA encourages experimentation in all aspects of program operations. Social work programs may seek to design educational innovations that reflect their unique context or significantly change methodologies to prepare competent graduates to meet the changing demands of the social work profession and current designs or practices.

Some program changes do not impact compliance with EPAS and do not require reporting to the COA or the Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA) (review section A).

The accreditation status obtained at initial accreditation or reaffirmation only covers the components that were reviewed in the benchmarks or self-study at the time of the COA review. Changes may take place within the program prior to its next scheduled accreditation review; however, some program changes do impact compliance with EPAS and require reporting to the COA or DOSWA (see Sections B, C, and D).

Policies and procedures are detailed for each of the following areas:

- **Section A:** *Changes that Do Not Require Reporting*
- **Section B:** *Changes that Require Email Notification to the Accreditation Specialist*
- **Section C:** *Substantive Change Proposals*
 - *Implementing a New Location-based Program Option*
 - *Implementing a New Online Program Option*
- **Section D:** *Failure to Report Changes*

Section A: Changes that Do Not Require Reporting

The following changes do not impact compliance and do not require reporting:

- Revision of the program's mission and goals
- Revision of the curriculum, including:
 - Syllabi
 - Course sequencing
 - Required social work courses (including practice and field courses)
 - Electives
 - Prerequisites
 - General education and liberal arts requirements
 - Areas of specialized practice/concentrations
 - Addition of off-campus courses
 - Addition of a social work minor or dual/double major
 - Addition of a learning site or hybrid/blended curriculum design (*review section C of this policy for definitions*)
- Changes in qualified faculty or the composition of faculty, students, or both

- Changes in the program’s policies and procedures relative to admission, transfer, advisement, grievance, or termination
- Changes to the explicit or implicit curriculum assessment plans

Section B: Changes that Require Email Notification to the Accreditation Specialist

B1. Policy

The following changes require an email notification to the program’s accreditation specialist:

- Changes to the program’s listing in the [Directory of Accredited Programs](#)
- Changes to key personnel (e.g., primary contact, program director, field director, chair, director, dean, institution president, etc.) (review **Section B2**)
- Offering a new dual-degree program
- Initiating a new part-time program
- Reduction in resources (e.g., finances, personnel, technology, etc.)
- Changes in faculty-to-student ratio that effects compliance
- Loss of faculty that places the program below the minimum number of full-time faculty required (two for baccalaureate programs; and six for master's programs)
- Changes in program director and/or field director assigned time that effects compliance
- Closing a program option (e.g., main campus, online, branch/satellite, etc.)
(review section C of this policy for program option types and definitions)

As this list is not exhaustive, the program should contact the accreditation specialist to discuss planned and upcoming changes to determine if notification is required.

B2. Changes to Key Program Personnel

A change in key personnel must be reported to the program’s accreditation specialist to ensure that program records remain accurate and important accreditation communications are delivered to the correct individuals.

Primary Contact, Institution’s President/Chancellor, & Other Key Personnel*

The program must notify the accreditation specialist of changes to their chosen primary contact, institution’s president/chancellor, and other key personnel. Other key personnel include the program director, field director, chair, director, dean, etc. The following information must be provided:

- Name
- Credentials
- Title
- Business mailing address
- Business phone number
- Business email address

- Curriculum vitae (CV)**

**Review section 1.2.7. Information Sharing and Release of COA Decision Letter in the EPAS Handbook detailing primary contact responsibilities*

***Submitted for verification of credentials for program directors and field directors only*

B3. Procedures

The notification must be on program letterhead, signed by the program's primary contact, and emailed no later than thirty (30) days after the implementation of the change. Word documents or searchable PDFs are acceptable. Scanned documents will not be accepted.

The notification should include the following information:

1. Institution name
2. Program level
3. Primary contact's information
 - a. Name
 - b. Credentials
 - c. Title
 - d. Business mailing address
 - e. Business phone number
 - f. Business email address
4. Detailed description of the change

Review Process

The accreditation specialist can, if necessary, request clarifying information, supporting documentation, or refer the change to the COA for review.

The accreditation specialist will notify the program's primary contact of the outcome of the notification review via email within thirty (30) days after the accreditation specialist confirms receipt of the notification.

If the program reports noncompliance issues, refer to section 1.2.12. *Programs Found Out of Compliance Between Reviews* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) for detailed policies and procedures.

Section C: Substantive Change Proposals

C1. Policy

Programs are required to complete a Substantive Change Proposal when establishing a new program option, such as a physical location or online delivery method.

As the regulatory body for social work education in the U.S. and its territories, the purpose of the *Substantive Change Proposal* is to ensure program changes are consistent with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

The program should not implement any changes that require a *Substantive Change Proposal* during the candidacy or reaffirmation process. The candidacy process begins with the submission of the benchmark 1 document and ends with an initial accreditation decision. The reaffirmation process begins with the submission of the self-study and ends with a reaffirmation decision.

Program Option Types and Definitions:

Program Options: Various structured pathways to degree completion by which social work programs are delivered including specific methods and locations such as on campus, off campus, and virtual instruction (2015 EPAS, pg. 22). Program options are not plans/calendars of study, such as advanced standing, part-time, 16-months, 2-years, etc.

1. Face-to-Face/Traditional – A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is delivered in-person at a primary physical location, such as a main campus.

2. Distance Education – Any curriculum delivery method in which there is a separation, in time or place, between the instructor(s) and student(s). This includes both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) education models.

2a. Online – A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is delivered online.

2b. Branch/Satellite Campus – A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is delivered in-person at a location physically detached from the main campus.

2c. Broadcast Site – A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is broadcasted via television, audio, telephone, internet radio, livestream, computer-based video, or other modes of technology to students collectively convened in-person at program-established classroom location(s) physically detached from the main campus. Each physical classroom location to which the curriculum is broadcasted is considered a separate program option.

2d. Correspondence – The whole curriculum delivered through mailing materials (videos, texts, assignments, etc.) through the post to students.

The following are not identified as a distinct program option do not require a *Substantive Change Proposal*:

2e. Learning Site – Sites where only limited portions (50% or less) of the curriculum is offered offsite at a location physically detached from the main campus. A learning site is not considered an additional program option. A learning site does not require a *Substantive Change Proposal* and should not be identified as a distinct program option in accreditation-related documents.

3. Hybrid/Blended – Locations where limited portions (50% or less) of the curriculum are delivered online at a previously established CSWE-approved location (e.g., main campus, branch campus, etc.). This model includes 50% of courses or less delivered fully virtually as well as individual courses delivered partially in-person and partially virtually. A hybrid curriculum design is not considered an additional program option. Rather, it is a face-to-face program option with online course offerings/elements. A hybrid curriculum design does not require a *Substantive Change Proposal* and should not be identified as a distinct program option in accreditation-related documents.

Scope:

Scope includes local, regional, national, or international and refers to the program's primary focus for providing education to students. Programs are solely responsible for securing the appropriate levels of approval and permissions to operate in additional jurisdictions.

C2. Procedures

The required *Substantive Change Proposal* template is located on the CSWE website. The program should select the template that reflects the accreditation standards under which the program is currently operating.

The proposal must be reviewed and approved by the DOSWA or COA for compliance with the accreditation standards prior to starting a new program option. The COA considers the start (implementation date) to be when classes are offered for the first time in the new program option.

The program should expect approximately 3-6 months between proposal submission date and decision date. This timeline is subject to change depending on the outcome of the review. The program is solely responsible for planning the implementation timeline in accordance with the 3-6-month review process, maintaining compliance with the EPAS, and adhering to the EPAS Handbook policies and procedures in between reaffirmation review cycles.

Separate *Substantive Change Proposals* must be submitted for each new program option proposed. Separate *Substantive Change Proposals* must be submitted for each program level, baccalaureate or master's, for which a change is proposed.

Proposal Submission Deadline Options:

The deadline to submit a *Substantive Change Proposal* corresponds with the COA meeting dates.

For example: If a program intends to implement a new program option in the summer of a given year. A *Substantive Change Proposal* should be submitted by December 1st of the prior year for review at the February COA meeting.

Below are the three (3) proposal submission deadline options:

December 1	To be reviewed at the February COA meeting
April 1	To be reviewed at the June COA meeting
August 1	To be reviewed at the October COA meeting

The proposal must be emailed the accreditation specialist by the program’s primary contact. The proposal must be a single Word document or searchable PDF, may not include separate attachments nor appendices, and must be searchable. No scanned documents will be accepted.

Incomplete or incorrectly formatted proposals will not be reviewed, and the accreditation specialist may ask the program to revise and resubmit. Documents that require revision and resubmission may be reviewed at the next COA meeting.

Refer to section *1.2.11 Document Submission Policy* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) for detailed formatting and submission requirements.

Review Process

Programs implementing a new location-based program option, such as a branch/satellite campus, will be reviewed by the accreditation specialist.

Programs implementing an online program option will be reviewed by the COA.

The accreditation specialist can, if necessary, request clarifying information, supporting documentation, or refer the change to the COA for review.

The accreditation specialist will notify the program’s primary contact of the outcome of the *Substantive Change Proposal* review process via email within thirty (30) days following the COA meeting at which the proposal was reviewed. The email notification will include a formal letter.

Decision Options for <i>Substantive Change Proposal</i>	
Accept the <i>Substantive Change Proposal</i>	COA finds the program in compliance with all educational policy and accreditation standards.
Defer Decision for One Meeting and Request Clarifying Information to be Reviewed by the Accreditation Specialist	COA finds that the program’s documentation is insufficient to make a decision, so the program must submit documentation or clarification necessary for COA to make a decision at or before the next meeting. Specialist reviews are conducted on a rolling basis in-between or at the next COA meeting.

Defer Decision for One Meeting and Request Clarifying Information to be Reviewed by the COA	COA finds that the program's documentation is insufficient to make a decision, so the program must submit documentation or clarification necessary for COA to make a decision at the next meeting.
Defer Decision for One Meeting and Request Clarifying Information to be Reviewed by the COA Executive Committee	COA finds that the program's documentation is insufficient to make a decision, so the program must submit documentation or clarification necessary for COA to make a decision at the next meeting.
Order a Virtual Site Visit	Program may be out of compliance with one or more accreditation standards. A site visitor is sent virtually with instructions and the program is reviewed at the next COA meeting following the visit.

The COA or accreditation specialist may defer the decision multiple times until all requested documentation or clarification is provided by the program. Once all questions and concerns are resolved, the accreditation specialist will inform the primary contact of acceptance of the *Substantive Change Proposal* within thirty (30) days following the COA meeting at which the clarified proposal was reviewed.

The accreditation specialist may accept the proposal; however, staff do not determine compliance as the COA is the sole arbiter of compliance. A full compliance review will occur during the regularly scheduled reaffirmation process.

Section D: *Failure to Report Changes*

It is the sole responsibility of the program to report changes to the COA and/or the DOSWA according to the policies and procedures detailed in this section of the Handbook.

Failure to submit a *Substantive Change Proposal* in advance of the implementation date may adversely impact the program's accreditation status.

When the DOSWA becomes aware of a program change without the receipt of notification or submission and acceptance of a *Substantive Change Proposal*, the program will receive email communication from the department requesting the proper documentation within 3-4 months (depending on the date of the next COA meeting). If the program successfully submits the required documentation by the deadline provided, the notification or proposal will be processed according the policies and procedures documented in this section of the Handbook.

If the program fails to submit the required documentation by the deadline, it will result in the program being placed on conditional accredited status. Placement on conditional status is an adverse action, and programs may request reconsideration. Refer to section 1.2.6. *Appeals of COA Decisions* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) for information on how to request reconsideration. If the program accepts the COA's decision, it must submit a restoration report within one (1) year of being placed on conditional accredited status.

Refer to section 2.6.4. *Restoration Report Decisions* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) for a list of decision types after submitting a restoration report.