

POST-MASTER'S FELLOWSHIP ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Introduction

Fellowship programs accredited by Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)'s Commission on Accreditation (COA) provide those that hold a master's degree in social work with advanced level of training and supervision within a defined area of social work practice. The Post-Master's Fellowship Accreditation Standards (standards) provide a framework for host sites developing such programs and outline the components for a quality fellowship program. The standards focus on four categories: (1) Program Mission and Goals, (2) Curriculum, (3) Learning Environment, and (4) Assessment. The program mission and goals serve as the foundation of the program. The curriculum and learning environment are developed with fulfillment of the mission and goals in mind. The assessment mechanisms implemented by the program serve to assess if the program is meeting its mission and goals.

The standards describe the operational and programmatic structural elements that CSWE deems essential to a quality program. The standards provide for consistency and quality of the fellowship program for the trainees and the clients and communities they serve. Achieving accreditation demonstrates to the public and prospective trainees that the program meets a standardized level of educational quality.

The standards are written to support institutional autonomy and encourage innovation, while maintaining the quality of fellowship programs and the integrity of the accreditation process.

In evaluating a social work fellowship program, the Fellowship Review Committee (FRC) assists COA in assessing the degree to which the program meets these standards. A self-study, conducted by the program prior to the on-site evaluation, provides data indicating the extent to which the program has complied with the standards.

The Post-Master's Fellowship Accreditation Standards, along with the Post-Master's Fellowship Accreditation Processes and Procedures, serve as the basis to evaluate the quality of the fellowship program offered and to hold the program accountable to these expectations to the community, the profession, and the public.

I. STANDARD 1: PROGRAM MISSION AND GOALS

The mission and goals of social work fellowship programs address the profession's purpose and are grounded in core professional values and [National Association of Social Worker \(NASW\)'s Code of Ethics](#). The profession's purpose and values of service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, human rights, and scientific inquiry are among the core values of social work. These values frame the profession's commitment to engage in respect for all people and further the quest for social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

A fellowship program's mission and goals, in addition to reflecting the profession, specifically describe the fellowship's purpose and commitment to providing advanced education, training, and individualized supervision to social workers within a defined area of practice. The mission and goals are developed to be in line with the mission of the site hosting the program and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting of the program. The host site and setting are evaluated when identifying the program's defined area of social work practice.

A program's mission guides the program's operations, including curriculum and learning environment, and directs future growth. Program goals are developed that support successful achievement of the fellowship's mission. Each program uses qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate and continuously improve program quality.

- 1.1 The program's mission statement communicates the program's purpose, is consistent with the profession's purpose and values, and identifies the program's area of practice.
- 1.2 The program's mission statement aligns with the mission of the host site.
- 1.3 The program goals support the program's mission statement with a focus on the core values of the social work profession.
- 1.4 The program's mission and goals foster continuous program improvement.

II. STANDARD 2: CURRICULUM

The program's curriculum is guided by the program's mission and goals and consists of a formal educational structure made up of didactic and practice experiences required for the program. A fellowship's curriculum is centered on the advancement of social work knowledge and practice with an emphasis on supervision and training. Specific to the program's defined area of social work practice, the fellowship expands and builds on the competencies obtained through completion of a social work master's degree and is focused on moving a social worker from a consumer of learning to a provider of service. The curriculum provides a structure for the designation of types, lengths and sequencing of the learning experiences that ensures the achievement of the program's outcomes and consistency across all program delivery options.

- 2.1 **Curriculum Organization:** The curriculum is designed to ensure congruency between the didactic and practice experience components of the program to achieve program outcomes within a defined area of social work practice.

- 2.1.1 The program has an integrated educational structure that includes didactic and practice experiences.
- 2.1.2 The program's curriculum is guided by the program's mission and goals.
- 2.1.3 The program's curriculum expands on knowledge acquired through completion of a master's in social work degree and prepares all trainees with substantive expertise in the program's defined area of social work practice.
- 2.2 **Fellowship Competencies:** A fellowship's curriculum allows the trainee to achieve the program's outcomes through advancing professional competence. All social work fellowship programs integrate the following core competencies: _____. Specific to the program and its defined area of practice, additional competencies are integrated to achieve the program's outcomes.
- 2.3 **Program Requirements:** The program demonstrates compliance with minimum requirements that provide the trainee with learning experiences which result in advanced professional competence.
- 2.3.1 The program provides as systematic set of learning experiences that address the knowledge, skills, and affective behaviors all trainees need to achieve the program outcomes within a set period of time. Fellowship programs are completed in no fewer than 6 months and no more than 36 months.
- 2.3.2 The program offers a comprehensive curriculum that meets minimum required hours within the program's defined area of social work practice. Fellowship programs require trainees to complete a minimum of 1,000 total program hours including 150 didactic instruction hours and 850 practice experience hours inclusive of the 100 hours of 1:1 supervision throughout the program.
- 2.4 **Supervision focus:** The program's curriculum offerings include instructional guidance provided individually to the trainee by an advanced and experienced licensed social worker throughout the course of the program. The supervision model is developed to ensure the advancement of the trainee's knowledge and expertise in the defined area of social work practice. At the discretion of the program, the program may provide supervision hours that can be counted towards licensure in accordance with state requirements.

III. STANDARD 3: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The program's learning environment is developed to complement the curriculum and is guided by the program's mission and goals. The learning environment is composed of the following elements: the program's commitment to diversity; admission criteria, program orientation procedures; administrative policies and procedures; program trainee's role in governance; instructors; administrative structure; and resources. The learning environment is manifested through policies that are fair and transparent in substance and implementation, the qualifications of the instructors and administration, and the adequacy and fair distribution of resources. The culture of human

interchange; the spirit of inquiry; the support for difference and diversity; and the values and priorities in the educational environment, including the practice experience, inform the trainee's learning and development. The learning environment is as important as the curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program's graduates. Heightened awareness of the importance of the learning environment promotes an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession and the program's mission and goals.

3.1 Admissions: A program's admissions procedures allow for equitable evaluation of the trainee's ability to be successful in the program.

3.1.1 The program publishes equitable and inclusive admissions policies, with particular attention to underrepresented groups. At a minimum, the program requires that the trainee has earned a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. Individuals with a degree in social work from a school outside the United States must apply to the CSWE International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service to determine whether their academic credentials in social work are comparable to an accredited degree in the United States.

3.1.2 The program adheres to policies and procedures for evaluating applications and notifying applicants about decisions and any contingent conditions associated with admission.

3.1.3 The program requires all trainees to complete all program requirements and does not grant program credit for didactic or professional experiences conducted outside of the program.

3.1.4 The program ensures each trainee signs a contract/agreement/letter of appointment prior to commencing the fellowship program. With the protection of both the program and the trainee in mind, the contract/agreement/letter of appointment includes the following elements:

- Program costs (tuition and other fees)
- Compensation (financial and benefits)
- Duration of Agreement
- Designated Learning Experiences (including practice settings)
- Expectations of the trainee (hours of work, performance requirements).

3.2 Program Orientation: A program's orientation procedures ensure that the trainees and instructors are aware of program's purpose and requirements.

3.2.1 The program orients trainees and instructors to the program's mission and goals.

3.2.2 The program orients trainees and instructors to the program's evaluation procedures.

3.2.3 The program orients trainees and instructors to the CSWE Post-Master's Fellowship Accreditation Standards.

3.2.4 The program orients trainees and instructors to the program's Administrative Policies. At the discretion of the program, it may choose to utilize a fellowship handbook that trainees and instructors may reference.

3.3 **Administrative Policies:** A program publishes equitable administrative policies and implements consistent procedures designed to protect the trainee and program.

3.3.1 The program implements appropriate advisement policies and procedures, including avenues for communication and feedback.

3.3.2 The program implements appropriate retention policies and procedures including didactic and practice experience evaluation procedures and requirements the trainee must fulfill to maintain active status through graduation.

3.3.3 The program implements appropriate termination policies and procedures including termination for reasons of didactic and professional performance. The program's termination policy identifies the effect termination from the program would have on the trainee's employment status, if applicable.

3.3.4 The program implements an equitable grievance policy, including procedures for appeal that ensures due process for the trainee and instructors.

3.3.5 The program implements appropriate professional, family and sick leave policies including how these leaves could impact the trainee's ability to complete the program.

3.3.6 The program implements policies and procedures to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations including non-discrimination, privacy, and confidentiality policies.

3.3.7 The program implements policies and procedures to ensure that all trainees maintain comprehensive malpractice insurance to cover all work conducted as part of the program which may or may not be provided by the program's host site.

3.3.8 The program maintains a record of current and past trainees and the program awards a certificate of completion to trainees that complete all program requirements.

3.4 **Instructors:** Instructor quantity and qualifications are sufficient to carry out the program's mission and goals.

3.4.1 Individuals qualified by education and experience make up the instructors in the program. The instructors possess the academic background, professional experience, and ongoing professional development to ensure the delivery of quality fellowship education. Instructors who act as supervisors hold social work licensure in the state the program is located.

- 3.4.2 The program employs a sufficient number of instructors who possess demonstrated expertise to support the program’s mission, goals, and objectives.
- 3.4.3 The program provides ongoing professional development experiences for instructors to support their roles within the program. The professional development experiences enhance the effectiveness of the instructors which results in program improvement.
- 3.5 **Administrative Structure:** A program’s administrative structure is sufficient to meet the program’s mission and goals. The administrators possess the necessary education, knowledge, and skills to make decisions regarding the delivery of the fellowship program.
- 3.5.1 The program director possesses the qualifications necessary to administratively oversee all aspects of the program. The program determines the role and responsibilities of the program director.
1. Describe the program director’s qualifications and relevant experiences.
 2. Provide a copy of the Program Director’s CV.
 3. Describe the role and responsibilities of the program director.
- 3.5.2 A program coordinator is appointed if the program director does not hold a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program or if the program director does not have 5 years of experience in the program’s defined area of social work practice. The program coordinator is responsible for overseeing the program’s curriculum, including the courses and practice experiences. The program determines the roles and responsibilities of the program coordinator.
- 3.5.3 The program’s administrative structure supports the program’s mission and goals.
- 3.6 **Resources:** the program is allocated resources within the host site that are sufficient to create, maintain, and improve the learning environment in support of the program’s mission and goals.
- 3.6.1 The program maintains financial resources that support program sustainability, attainment of the program’s mission and goals, and promote continuous program improvement.
- 3.6.2 The program has sufficient staff, other personnel, and technological resources to support all of the educational activities.
- 3.6.3 The program has sufficient office space, classroom space, and computer-mediated access for instructors and trainees to achieve the mission and goals.
- 3.6.4 The program’s host site is committed to supporting the program and providing the necessary resources. The program’s host site commits to protecting trainees by establishing a plan for teaching out trainees currently enrolled should it decide to discontinue offering the program.

IV. STANDARD 4: ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an integral component of any quality educational social work program. Assessment involves the systematic gathering of data about trainee performance and competency attainment in support of the program's mission and goals. Assessment also involves gathering data regarding the curriculum and learning environment in a commitment to continuous program improvement. Given that social work practice is complex and multidimensional, the assessment methods used by programs and the data collected may vary by context.

The program annually gathers data, monitors outcomes, and analyzes information to determine the effectiveness of the program and the extent to which the program's mission and goals are achieved. The evaluation process is planned, organized, scheduled, and documented to ensure ongoing quality education in a defined area of social work practice. Examples of assessment methods include, but are not limited to completed trainee, instructor, and administrator evaluations of the program, their peers, and self-assessment; documented feedback sessions; and post-completion surveys.

As a result of the assessment process, the program makes iterative changes to continuously strengthen the program's mission and goals, curriculum, learning environment, and assessment methods utilized.

- 4.1 **Program Mission and Goals Assessment:** The program annually gathers data, monitors outcomes, analyzes information to assess achievement of the program's mission and goals.
- 4.2 **Curriculum Assessment:** The program annually gathers data, monitors outcomes, analyzes information to assess curriculum effectiveness in preparing all trainees for advanced practice in the program's defined area of social work practice.
 - 4.2.1 The program implements a consistent process for ongoing assessment of trainee outcomes for all Fellowship Competencies. Assessment of competence is done throughout the course of the program and by the appropriate program instructors. Feedback is provided to the trainee at regular intervals to ensure timely program completion and appropriate progression of trainee advancement.
 - 4.2.2 The program implements an annual process for evaluating whether the program's didactic and practice experience offerings prepare trainees with substantive expertise in the program's defined area of social work practice. Specifically, the program evaluates the content, sequencing, and distribution of the curricular components.
 - 4.2.3 The program implements an annual process for evaluating trainee outcomes and their implications for program renewal across program delivery options. Program delivery options include multiple program formats or variances in how trainees complete didactic components or use practice sites.
- 4.3 **Learning Environment Assessment:** The program annually gathers data, monitors outcomes, analyzes information to assess the effectiveness of the program's learning environment in preparing all trainees for advanced practice in the program's defined area of social work practice.

- 4.3.1 The program implements a consistent process for ongoing assessment of the program's admissions criteria, how it conducts program orientation, and its administrative policies. When determining effectiveness, the program gathers data from multiple sources, including the program trainees and instructors.
- 4.3.2 The program implements an annual process for evaluating instructors which may include assessment of teaching ability, supervision, and trainee support. Data are gathered from multiple sources and feedback is provided annually to the instructors for continued program improvement.
- 4.3.3 The program implements an annual process for evaluating the program's administrative structure which includes assessment of the program director and program coordinator's administrative abilities, ability overseeing the curriculum, and effectiveness in meeting the roles and responsibilities established by the program. Data are gathered from multiple sources and feedback is provided annually to the program director and program coordinator, if applicable, for continued program improvement.

4.4 Assessment of Program Effectiveness: The program annually gathers data, monitors outcomes, analyzes information regarding program completion and the post-completion performance of graduates to assess the effectiveness of the program. The program publishes outcomes data and uses the results for program evaluation and continuous improvement.

- 4.4.1 The program implements an annual process for evaluating program completion data. The program's process includes calculating the program's retention rates, graduation rates, and time to complete the program for each program delivery option.
- 4.4.2 The program implements an annual process for evaluating post-completion performance of graduates for each program delivery option. The program's process may include collecting information from graduates.
- 4.4.3 The program routinely publishes outcomes data that communicate program performance. The published outcomes data are indicative of program delivery options and includes information on program completion and post-completion performance of graduates.
- 4.4.4 The program utilizes outcomes data to guide the program's continuous improvement efforts.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Commission on Accreditation: recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in the United States and its territories.

Fellowship: a social work fellowship is a post-master's practice-based training program centered on advanced training within a defined area of practice. Fellowship programs offer trainees direct practice experiences, didactic/structured learning, supervision, and other activities (teaching, research, educational dissemination).

Fellowship Review Committee: serves as the primary review body for fellowship programs seeking initial or continued accreditation and is responsible for making accreditation decision recommendations to CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COA).

Host Site: the organization, institution, or facilitate that hosts the fellowship program. In accordance with the Eligibility Requirements, programs must be hosted by sites offering social work services in the United States, its territories, or on U.S. military installations. If more than one organization sponsors the fellowship, there must be a contractual agreement between the organizations that outlines specific responsibilities and ownership for the fellowship.

Practice: refers to any of the three types of social work practice: micro-level, mezzo-level, and macro-level.

Program Delivery Options: multiple program formats or variances in how trainees complete didactic components or use practice sites.

Program Director: the individual responsible for the direction, conduct, and oversight of the fellowship. If the program director does not have a master's in social work degree from a CSWE-accredited program with 5 years of experience in the program's defined area of social work practice, then the program appoints a Program Coordinator with those credentials, per Standard 3.5.2.

Supervision/Supervisor: Supervision is a fundamental element of fellowship training; see Standard 2.4. The program's supervision model is developed to ensure the advancement of the trainee's knowledge and expertise in the defined area of social work practice. Supervision is individualized and is a continual learning experience provided throughout the course of the program. For accreditation purposes, the term supervisor refers to a type of program instructor. Supervisors are licensed social workers that provide the minimum required hours of supervision. For clinical programs, supervisors hold clinical social work licensure, for non-clinical programs, supervisors hold non-clinical social work licensure.