



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

**FEEDBACK REPORT ON FRAMEWORK FOR ACCREDITATION OF
PRACTICE DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN SOCIAL WORK
CSWE's Commission on Educational Policy (COEP) &
Commission on Accreditation (COA) Practice Doctorate Committee
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Introduction

CSWE's practice doctorate subcommittee have been actively working to conceptualize and create a timeline and framework for accreditation of social work practice doctoral programs. The development of an accreditation process and standards is set-up to be a thoughtful, lengthy, two year inclusive and collaborative process that includes public comment periods and feedback sessions as outlined on the timeline [here](#).

In an effort to solicit feedback from as many constituents as possible in as many ways as possible, CSWE released the timeline and a Report on Framework for Accreditation of Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work that identifies the definition and scope of practice doctorate in social work that will be accredited and a framework and key features being proposed for practice doctorate accreditation standards. Feedback was sought in the following ways:

- Attend two information and feedback sessions at the 2017 APM and share feedback in person.
- Submit feedback online as an individual and/or program member of CSWE, group or organization at from October-December 31, 2017.
- Submit a feedback letter directly to CSWE at Office of Educational Initiatives and Research, 1701 Duke Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314 or on email by December 31, 2017.

During CSWE's 2017 Annual Program Meeting, CSWE staff and representatives from the Practice Doctorate Committee held two feedback sessions to garner commentary from the membership.

Approximately 150 people participated in the information and feedback sessions. See results in Appendix A. During the sessions, the membership were invited to participate in an 11- question survey, posted on the CSWE website regarding the first draft of the framework report for accreditation of practice doctoral programs. Two announcements also went out to the membership asking them to participate in the survey. That survey closed on December 31, 2017, and the responses are summarized below.

There were 75 feedback responses in total, but only 74 answered the survey, varying in degrees of support and opposition to the accreditation of practice doctoral programs.

Positive remarks that were made throughout the survey are:

- Appreciation for the ability to give feedback
- This is the appropriate time to accredit the Practice Doctorate
- An opportunity to look at the entire Social Work education continuum

Overarching concerns that are voiced throughout the survey are:

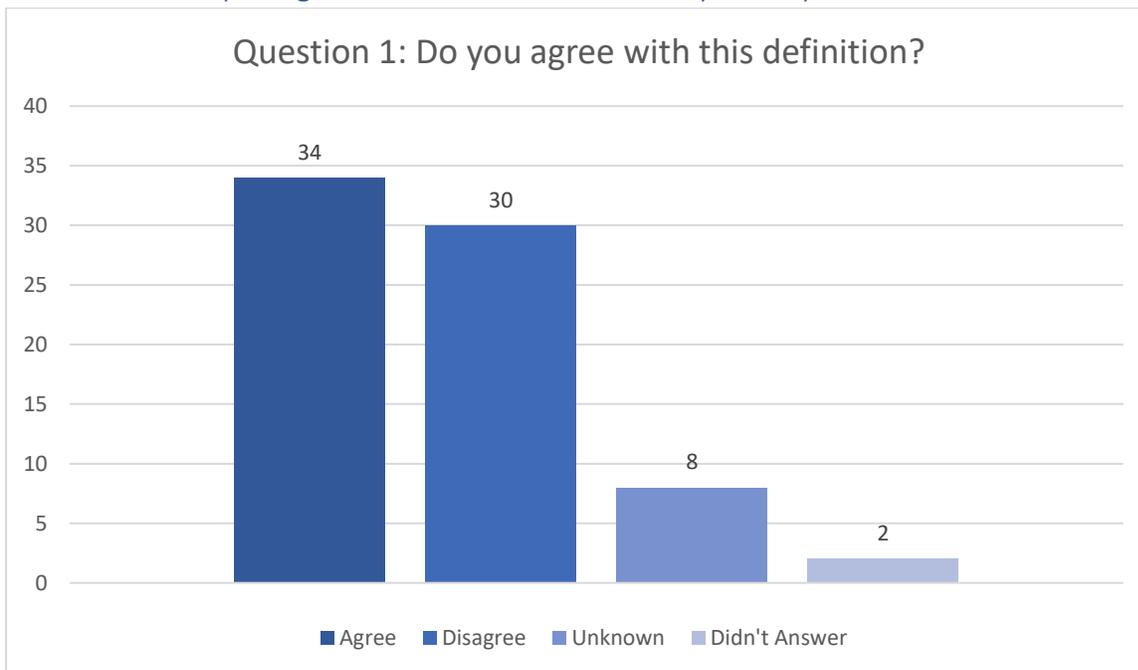
- DSW programs should not exist (relevance of the degree),
- DSW programs should not be accredited,
- process will undermine the MSW degree,
- lack of clarity in continuum of practice skills, and
- the existing DSW directors and programs should be included in this process and work with the task force.

Practice Doctorate Definition

The practice doctorate committee is proposing the scope and purpose of a practice doctorate in social work as the following:

The practice doctorate in social work is an advanced practice degree that is distinct from the bachelor's and master's degree in social work as well as the research PhD. What distinguishes this level of practice is that those who hold the practice doctorate degree will be experts beyond the baccalaureate and masters level in practice and will contribute to continuously improving social work competencies among social workers and other service practitioners (Edwards, Rittner & Holmes, 2011). The practice doctorate degree is intended to prepare social workers to assume advanced professional roles such as master practitioner, educator, administrator, policy practitioner, or leader in settings where social workers practice.

Question 1: Do you agree with this definition? Why or why not?



- Respondents equally in support and opposition to the definition provided by CSWE.
- Those in support either agreed fully because they found the definition clear
- Others agree partially and want clarification on terms or suggested additional language.
- Those that did not agree with the definition generally disagreed with accreditation of the Practice Doctorate programs.
- A common theme was fear of undermining the MSW degree.

Question 2: Recommendations for additions/deletions?

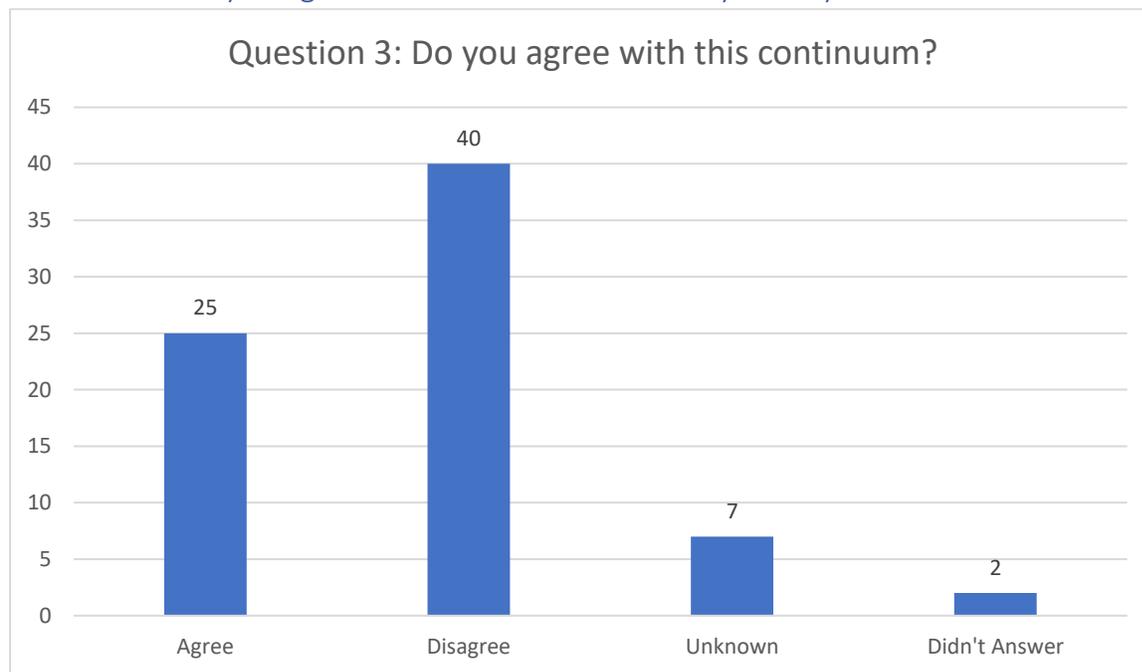
1. Forty-nine respondents provided commentary for additions or deletions for the Framework document. Those that oppose the accreditation of the Practice Doctorate called for the abandonment of the project.
2. However, several others felt like the definition works well, with some minor suggestions for editing. One comment that was seen repeatedly (seven times) was that there needs to a greater distinction between the degrees (BSW, MSW, PhD, DSW). Some commenters felt the distinction just needed to be made between the two doctoral degrees, while others felt there needed to be more discussion between all of the degrees. Part of this discussion also included limitations on how much experience a person should have before entering a DSW program.
3. Another topic that came up was the diversity of DSW programs. Some respondents felt that the diversity of programs (teaching vs clinical vs administration) should be considered when coming up with a singular definition for the Practice Doctorate.
4. Professional roles were also a hot topic for the respondents. Some believe researchers should be reserved for Research Doctorates, while others felt that researchers should be included. This is also true for teachers/educators, program evaluators, and
5. A question that appears here and in other sections is “What skills will they possess that a MSW would not?”
6. Some suggested language was also given: “The advanced practice doctorate in social work (DSW) prepares seasoned social workers for positions as advanced clinical practitioner, leaders in administration and management and as faculty-scholars in academia. DSW education focuses on training students to use and enhance models of scientific inquiry, critical analysis of policy, advanced theory application, and evidence-based practice strategies across all levels of advanced practice with diverse populations. DSW graduates are expected to disseminate advanced direct practice and management knowledge and skills that promote professional excellence in social work.”

Continuum of Social Work Education

The practice doctorate committee has proposed the continuum of social work education in terms of preparation as the following:

Baccalaureate programs prepare students for entry to generalist social work practice. Masters programs prepare students for generalist and specialized practice (EPAS, 2015). The practice doctorate degree is recognized as part of a continuum of social work practice that begins at the baccalaureate level and may culminate at the masters and/or doctoral level (Edwards, Rittner & Holmes, 2011).

Question 3: Do you agree with this continuum? Why or why not?



- The continuum was one of the most controversial topics of the feedback survey.
- One respondent noticed that the PhD was omitted from the continuum.
- Others found the continuum to be confusing, incomplete, or unnecessary in the document. In the same vein, some found that the continuum makes the MSW degree look weaker, or that the DSW could be interchanged with the MSW. Many fear that this will create the DSW to be the terminal degree.
- One respondent stated that they didn't believe that the continuum needed to begin with the BSW (imagine, non-BSW students entering a MSW program) degree and suggested it be modified.
- Overall the respondents are calling for distinction between the MSW and the DSW on the continuum.

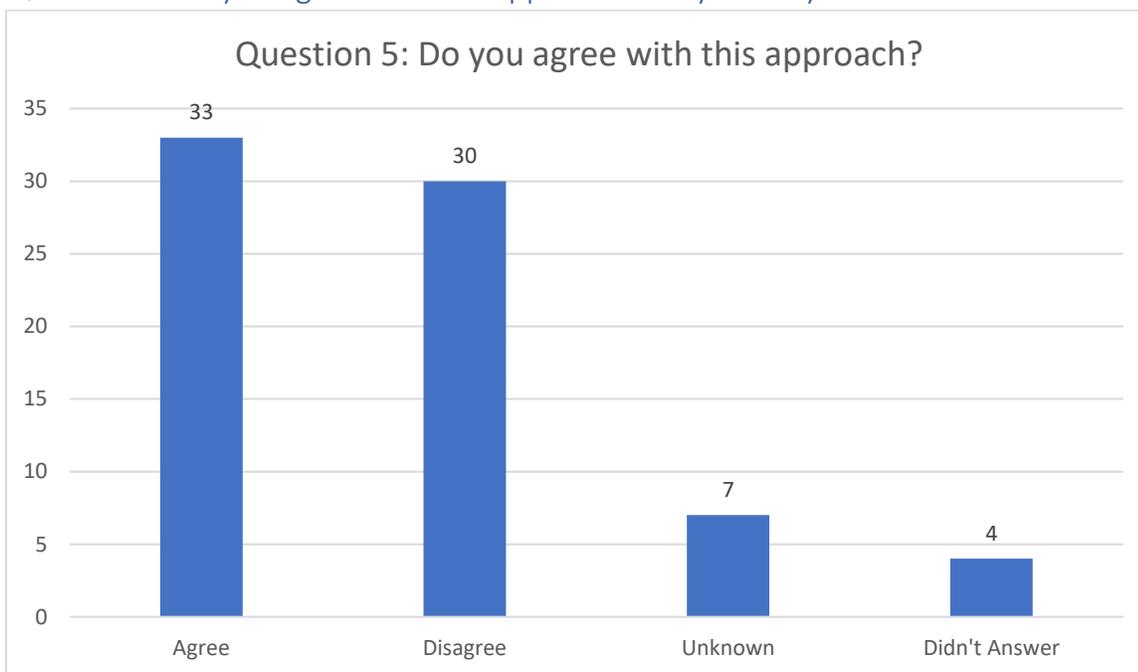
Question 4: Recommendations for addition/s deletions?

1. There were several questions regarding licensure and where it fits on the continuum.
2. Most respondents found the continuum to be poorly described and requires more detail – specifically around the distinction between MSW and the DSW.
3. Additionally, many suggested language that defined the MSW as the terminal degree, but the DSW is an additional degree that builds upon the MSW.

Approach for the Accreditation Process

The practice doctorate committee is considering a diverse approach for the accreditation of practice doctoral programs that encompasses the broad scope of social work practice (e.g. clinical, macro, policy, teaching, leadership) at the doctoral level. Current practice doctoral programs are highly innovative, and the accreditation process and standards developed will ensure that these programs can differ in their goals, curricula, and in the competencies of their graduates.

Question 5: Do you agree with this approach? Why or Why Not?



- The responses to this question were split almost evenly.
- Respondents recognize the diversity of the profession and believe this approach will cover all areas of the scope of practice.
- The respondents that disagree with the approach are concerned that the broad approach will make standardization and competency creation difficult.
- Others are concerned that a broad approach will water down the programs and create weak professionals out of it.

Question 6: Recommendations for another approach?

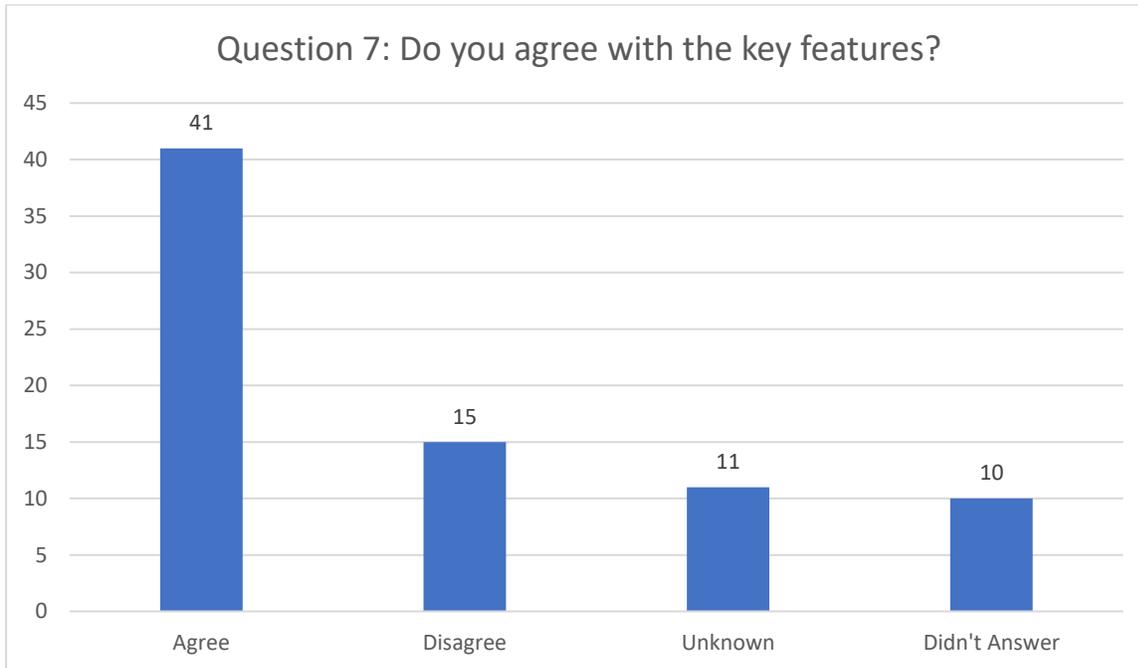
1. Some believed that the approach should be abandoned, left for GADE to handle, or a collaboration with NADD and GADE.
2. The majority of the comments called for standards or competencies to be established.
 - a. The standard ones can be broad and create minimum standards for the programs.
 - b. Specialized standards or competencies can be created for specialized DSWs (teaching vs. clinical were mentioned specifically) and approaches.

Key Features for the Framework

The practice doctorate committee utilized the key elements from the Report of the Task Force on the DSW Degree convened by the Social Work Leadership Forum to develop the key features. The key features for the framework include:

- a) Advanced practice knowledge and skills beyond those obtained at a master's level**
- b) Greater emphasis on differential theoretical approaches to social problems and practice approaches**
- c) Advanced knowledge about and skills in cutting edge and emerging intervention**
- d) Enhanced practice competency in evaluation skills that include practice/program/community evaluation and the use of cutting edge research strategies**
- e) Emphasis on scholarly dissemination of advanced practice skills and competencies**

Question 7: Do you agree with the key features? All or some? Please indicate which ones and why or why not?



*Unknown includes statements & comments that do not assert an opinion.

- Question seven was the other question with the biggest gaps in responses.
- The two key features that were least popular were D and E.
- Several respondents had issue with the term “cutting-edge research,” whether it suggests we do not teach this to MSW students, or that it belongs in the PhD realm.
- One respondent recommended dividing D into two parts:
 - 1) “Enhanced practice competency using cutting edge technology, literature, and research strategies”
 - 2) “Attention to progressive forms of scholarship such as applied, integrated, and teaching.”
- Feature A was also controversial, as some felt they defined the undoing of the MSW as the terminal degree, while others felt that it demonstrates the movement beyond the MSW.

Question 8: Recommendations for additions/deletions?

1. Higher specification of these key elements are needed.
2. Provide more details on what is learned.
3. One suggestion was to cut out “cutting edge” as it is seen as slang.
4. Another suggested collaborating with existing DSW programs and directors.
5. One respondent found the key features helpful and asked if they would be applicable to the PhD as well.
6. Incorporating the understanding of the Grand Challenges
7. Focus on the clinical aspect of social work

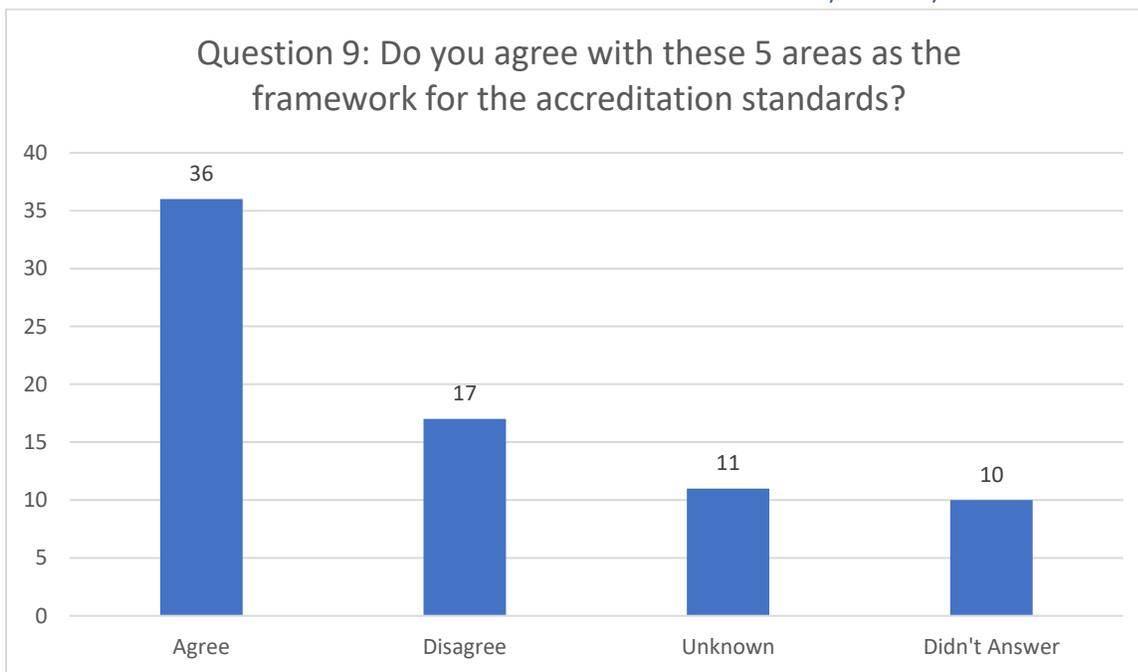
8. Add leadership/supervision
9. Add research and dissemination of knowledge.
10. Include core social work values (social justice, etc).

Five Areas for Accreditation Standards

The practice doctorate committee is recommending five general areas as the framework for the practice doctoral program accreditation standards that include:

- a) Program Mission and Goals
- b) Core Expertise and Skills
- c) Explicit Curriculum
- d) Implicit Curriculum
- e) Assessment

Question 9: Do you agree with these 5 areas as the framework for the accreditation standards? All or some? Please indicate which ones and why or why not?



- Most respondents agreed with the five areas as the framework for the accreditation standards
- One respondent suggested that assessment is across all groups and levels: micro, mezzo, macro.
- Another suggested that this process and standards should also be used for the PhD programs
- A couple of participants noted that these standards reflect the current BSW and MSW accreditation standards.

- Self-studies were also mentioned in terms of time-consumption for programs and also suggesting doing combined self-studies across programs.

Question 10: Recommendations for additions/deletions?

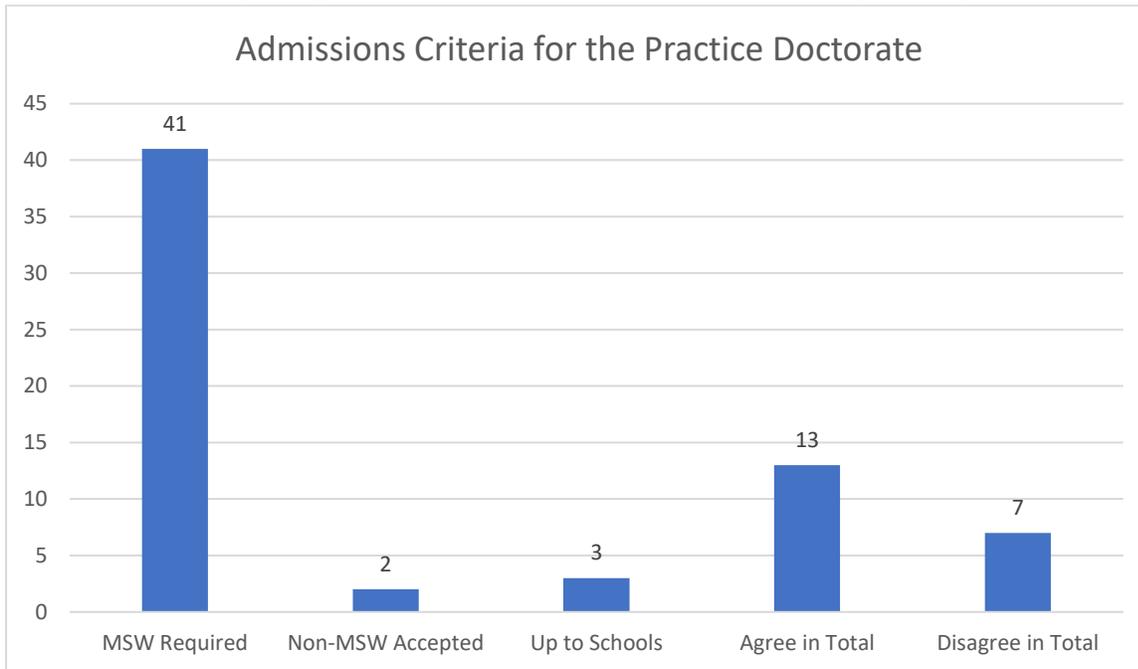
1. In terms of accreditation standards, respondents suggested specific core expertise and skills.
2. Add research was another suggestion
3. Add emphasis on research and assessment.
4. Add the Grand Challenges as a general area of its own.
5. GADE has a best practices model for PhD degrees, instead of full set of competencies, and it was suggested that CSWE follow that model for the DSW.
6. Faculty was another topic that appeared.
 - a. Qualifications of the faculty
 - b. Administrative and FTE structures.
7. Residency was also mentioned
 - a. how does it fit in all of this?

Admissions Criteria for Practice Doctorate Programs

There has been some debate regarding admission criteria for practice doctorate programs and if programs should articulate as a condition of admission that applicants have a MSW or related degree from a social work program that is accredited by the Council of Social Work Education and practice experience. The practice doctorate committee is considering the following for admission criteria:

- **Admissions criteria that are clear and transparent but may vary by program based upon program mission and goals. Rationale for admission criteria would need to be presented.**
- **MSW plus at least two year's post master's experience (clinical or teaching specializations)**
- **MSW or master's degree in related field plus at least two years' experience for other specializations**

Question 11: Do you agree with these admission criteria? Why or why not?



*Numbers do not match to 74, as some comments were unrelated

- The majority of comments received from CSWE membership believe that admission to a DSW program should require a MSW degree (41).
- Within that group, there were varying opinions of how much experience should be required (none – five years).
- One respondent suggested including licensure in the requirements, as the applicants should already be established Social Work advanced practitioners.
- Another respondent believed that an BSW or an MSW would be sufficient for admission criteria.
- Other comments did not agree with the accreditation process in general
- Some had questions regarding track definitions (clinical vs. teaching).
- Others believed the admissions criteria listed is insufficient due to the need for more discussion between CSWE and membership, or that they aren't strict enough.

Question 12: Recommendations for additions/deletions?

1. Many comments in this section were related to related professions.
2. Almost all of the respondents for this question felt that the “master’s in related fields” should be removed, or have additional practice experience required of them.
3. Licensure was also suggested as a requirement for DSW admission.
4. Adding BSW foundational curriculum to the DSW programs is also an option, as some enrolled students may not have a BSW or MSW degree.

Question 13: Please provide any additional comments and thoughts regarding the feedback questions listed above that you were not able to address?

1. Several respondents felt that the purpose of this project is not worth pursuing and damaging to the profession – particularly BSW and MSW programs.
2. They found the process of setting up the accreditation for DSWs to be insular, and did not properly engage the membership.
3. Many felt that CSWE needs to consult current seventeen DSW programs and directors, and other strong programs to guide these discussions.
4. Why are PhDs not being accredited? Why has CSWE not communicated the answer to this?
5. When would this go into effect?
6. Will it just be theory courses, or will there be a practicum?
7. Many respondents reiterated their stance that the MSW degree should be required for admission to the degree, as well as having practice experience.
8. There were comments (six) that reflected a positive feeling towards accreditation – that they are happy about the process and that the time has come.
9. There is concern for the MSW maintaining its status as the terminal degree.
 - a. Will it water down the profession?
 - b. Will the quality of programs suffer?

Appendix A

Notes from the APM Feedback Session – 10/21/2017

Introductions of Committee Members, COEP Reps, COA Reps, and CSWE Staff

- Viewing of website, timeline, standards, and process (Fall 2019 set of standards and process)
- Rationale for accreditation
- Statistics - 2015/2016 comparisons, number of schools sent survey, enrollment growth, increase in planned programs;

Moderator 1:

- Structure is open and transparent; feedback necessary
- Scope of programs, what is the purpose of practice doctorates? Distinction is key
- Key Elements of the framework
- Questions

Moderator 2:

- Nothing set in stone at this point
- Key Elements of the framework - greater detail given
- Key Features - work in progress; based on feedback
- Admission criteria up for debate
 - Must require MSW?
 - How much experience?

Questions & Feedback

- Question 1: Not opposed; value it as long as process is followed and makes sense.
 - Q1A) Initial draft from previous; FTE ratio 2.5 to 15? Does that still stand?
 - Andy- didn't mean it to be prescriptive, just a starting point
 - Q1B) Is it backed by empirical - what does the research say? Is that backed?
 - Q2) Are you looking at requiring field experience?
 - Andy - looking at program mission and goals
- Question 2: Comment – Some programs do have clinical components
- Question 3:
 - Q1A: How did you decide DSW was the focus and not the research doctorate? Not meaning to make it adversarial, but some may see it that way.
 - Response - because it is a practice. Related to licensure; practice community.
 - Q1B: Reasoning doesn't make sense to me.

- Response- Assumption is that they are all the same and they aren't. There is a wide range of practice.
 - Q2A: What impact do you anticipate accreditation have on graduates who have already graduated from program where it wasn't instituted at all, or yet?
 - Response - program specific. Up to program to make those decisions. Jo Ann - will the degree fall in accreditation.
 - Q2B – there appears to be a preference to graduates from accredited program in hiring processes.
 - Response - No grandfather process; program must decide if they want to seek accreditation.
- Question 4: Practice experience before degree? - When women pursue doctoral degrees – [they are] often choosing between family and careers; A lot of students are non-traditional and women.
 - Q1: How much practice experience before degree?
 - Q2: Is it making it difficult for those groups to pursue
 - Research response:- all but two students has two-years post-practice experience; self-selection.
- Question 5:
 - Clarification - Hears that CSWE WILL accredit DSW programs
 - Response - we accredit programs, not degrees. Decision has been made by CSWE.
- Question 6: May see DSW grads in faculty applicant pool. Currently, accreditation standards specify point of intersection of BSW/MSW education; Haven't seen that addressed in DSW level. Part of it is addressed at point of admission. MSW should have that core; but what if program accepts someone without social work background? Make sure we have three levels where they can all talk to each other.
- Question 7:
 - Q1 : what do you see as a faculty requirement/people teaching? Qualifications?
 - Response - too early; haven't gotten there yet. Curriculum standards.
 - Response - determined by regional accrediting bodies.
 - Q2: Are there any DSWs on the committee that are working on this process.
 - Response - not at moment, but hoping to add more. Lied - there are two from DSW programs, but do not have DSW degrees.
 - Q3: On ppt - requiring quality research; Research is what separates the two degrees - how does that work in the paradigm?
 - Response - Combines practice and research professional. Deb - General research required at both Doctoral levels - more for PhD, but not devoid at DSW level.

- Response – Hoping the program will determine this. CSWE will not set guidelines. CSWE would require it, but program tweaks it.
 - Response- what is the mission and goals of program and what is the rationale and end product?
- Question 8: There has to be a translation between BSW, MSW, and DSW.
 - Q1A: Interprofessional education; What related field means? Is that a slippery-slope?
 - Response - Still open at this point; There is a split preference/gap at this point and what are the implications).
 - Q1B: What does related field mean?
 - Response - We want a lot of feedback on this.
 - Q1C: What is the standard for other professional degrees?
- Question 9: Impact of Practice Doctorate on MSW degrees in marketplace and social work education.
 - Q1A: Have you explored what happened in other fields? What are your thoughts? Is there anything CSWE that can do that will favorably impact...
 - Response - That is the question. Long-term impact - not from accreditation process, declarations, etc. Terminal degree. Have spent a lot of time with other professions.
 - Response - Market demand. Up to the programs to determine how many students they take. Not up to accreditation.
 - Response - Talked to other disciplines, a lot of health - made statement to be the DNP to be terminal for entry into practice. We are paying attention.
 - Response - Practice AS doctorates; programs vary in scope.
- Question 10: In framework, several notations of focus - research-strategies in scholarly manner/dissemination.
 - Response - program makes those decisions.
 - Q1A: Sounds like a lot of flexibility in the accreditation standards.
 - Response - our intent is that these are guidelines. At this point, program makes decision and rationale.
 - Q1B: Will there be conferences, presentation opportunities for students ?
 - Response - implicit curriculum.
- Conclusion Encouraged feedback through website and email, which closes on 12/31/2017. There are six questions - must be done in one setting - cannot go back and complete. Will report back in the Spring.

Notes from the APM Feedback Session – 10/22/2017

Introductions from Committee Members

Agenda - Background and Context - Committee activities, Rationale,

Framework

Diverse approach

We are encouraging people with DSW degrees to apply for the committee (calls will go out on 4/1)

- Question 1: Will schools be accredited if they apply to go through the pilot process/reviews?
 - Response - Yes, they will be. Pilot reviews are required by CHEA

- Question 2: Thinking of starting DSW Program –
 - Q1: What are unintended consequence of MSW Programs?
 - Response – Want people to ask those existing programs. Folks want organizations to declare a terminal degree. But that doesn't change what happens in the region. Market-driven reality - if we're putting out people with a higher degree than MSW, that will make a difference.
 - Response - It's up the program themselves. Schools making decision of moving forward and enrolling so many DSW programs and students. Social Work organizations declare MSW the terminal. Discuss with faculty and administration.
 - Response - lots of discussion with other disciplines to try to understand. Not terminal degree, but entrance to practice. Part of continuum. Licensing issues. Reality is - we're responding to programs already out there. Not accreditation issue, there are other factors.
 - Response - Compliment to MSW.

 - Q2: Does the implicit curriculum differ between accredited programs and non-accredited? Does it raise importance?
 - Response - Quality concern. What determines that - scope and nature.

- Question 3: Academe sees MSW terminal. Seems different for tenure process. For accreditation, must have so many PhD faculty.
 - Q1: Would be DSW be accepted for that [Faculty requirement for accreditation standards]?
 - Response- For our standards, must be doctoral, not necessarily PhD. Standards do allow Master's Level to teach BSW and MSW. Regional accreditors not accepting that. For institution, must be one level above.

- Question 4:

- Q1: What was the rationale for two-years post-master's requirement? How did that come up?
 - Response - programs decision
 - Response - rationale for mission and goals of program
 - Response – It is not required at this point, and it is possible to not require that at all.
 - Response - We want more feedback on this topic. Two-sides to the argument.

- Question 5:
 - Q1: Where is ASWB on this issue?
 - Response - As of now, 15-20 states that in their standards for education, will say MSW or Doctoral/PhD/DSW/something like that. In most cases, it is an either/or situation. Some states (TX is one), must have proof of practice. MSW not required, just to get licensed, you must have practice experience.
 - Response - you don't necessarily have to have MSW to get PhD.
 - Response - Up to program to determine. Can offer a PhD and call it a practice doctorate; Trying to make sure scope and purpose is clear. CSWE accredits programs, not degrees.

- Question 6:
 - Comment: Concerned we're saying that the PhD is a level above the DSW.
 - Response - we envision it to be two different types of doctoral education.
 - Response - haven't tackled that, but not intending hierarchy.
 - Response - we used Research PhD a lot, but implication could be misleading that DSW does not have research and PhD doesn't have practice.

- Question 7:
 - Q1:- Most PhD are research focused, some have clinical; DSW is practice focused - CSWE is saying that.
 - Q2: Why practice- focused?
 - Response - PhD with practice focused can apply for accreditation.
 - Response - PhD programs did self-study. What we have to do over PhD programs is same as what you have to do for BSW/MSW programs. Same evaluations, rigor, etc.
 - Response - Psych doesn't accredit at BSW/MSW level; PhD is the entry of practice.

Conclusion