

SAMPLE LETTER OF INSTRUCTION

March 3, 2017

Site Visitor Name and Address

RE: *Letter of Instruction (LOI)*
University Name (State)
Master's Social Work Program (MSW)

Dear [site visitor]:

At its February 2017 meeting, the Commission on Accreditation (COA) reviewed the self-study submitted by the social work program and issued this *Letter of Instruction (LOI)*.

Instructions for General Questions

Discuss general questions related to these three standards, using the *2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)*, with the program: Program mission and goals (**AS 1.0**), diversity (**AS 3.0**), and assessment (**AS 4.0**). Ask broad questions about how the program's mission and goals relate to the level of practice it prepares students for and find out if it gained any insight from the assessment of student outcomes. In addition, explore the challenges and achievements the program has experienced in making specific and continuous efforts to provide a learning context in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity are practiced.

Instructions for Specific Questions

Accreditation Standard 1.0.3: *The program identifies its goals and demonstrates how they are derived from the program's mission.*

The program identified its goals, but did not clearly demonstrate how the goals are derived from the program's mission.

The site visitor is asked to explore with the program how each of its goals are directly derived from the program's mission.

Accreditation Standard M2.0.1: *The program explains how its mission and goals are consistent with generalist practice as defined in EP 2.0.*

The program explained how its mission and goals are consistent with most areas of generalist practice, as defined by **Educational Policy 2.0**. However, the program did not explain how its mission and goals are consistent with engaging diversity in practice; advocating for human rights and social and economic justice; and building on the resiliency of all people.

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The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how its mission and goals are consistent with all areas of generalist practice, as defined by **Educational Policy 2.0**.

Accreditation Standard M2.0.3: *The program provides a matrix that illustrates how its generalist practice content implements the nine required social work competencies and any additional competencies added by the program.*

The program provided a matrix that illustrates how its generalist practice content implements the nine required social work competencies, but the program did not identify curriculum content to address all the dimensions of some of the competencies.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how its generalist practice content implements all the dimensions for the nine required social work competencies.

Accreditation Standard M2.1.4: *For each area of specialized practice, the program provides a matrix that illustrates how its curriculum content implements the nine required social work competencies and any additional competencies added by the program.*

The program provided a matrix that illustrates how its advanced practice content implements the nine required social work competencies, but the program did not identify curriculum content to address all the dimensions of some of the competencies.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how its advanced practice content implements all the dimensions of the nine required social work competencies.

Accreditation Standard 2.2.1: *The program explains how its field education program connects the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the classroom and field settings, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice.*

The program stated that theories and concepts are learned in the classroom and implemented in practice, but did not discuss specifically how the program connects the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the field setting, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program specifically how it connects the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the field setting, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice.

Accreditation Standard M2.2.2: *The program explains how its field education program provides generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate social work competencies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities and illustrates how this is accomplished in field settings.*

The program explained how its field education program monitors the field setting through assignments associated with the field experience, but did not specify how field settings provide generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate social work competencies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how field settings provide generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate social work competencies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Accreditation Standard 2.2.5: *The program describes how its field education program provides a minimum of 400 hours of field education for baccalaureate programs and a minimum of 900 hours for master's programs.*

The program described how its field education program provides a minimum of 900 hours for master's programs. However, the program identified that advanced standing students only receive 493 hours of field placement. Additionally, the program indicated that it counts hours spent in the field seminar as part of their field education hours.

The site visitor is asked to verify with the program that all students receive a minimum of 900 total hours in field settings and ensure that the program does not count time spent in the field seminar toward their field education hours.

Accreditation Standard M2.2.9: *The program describes how its field education program specifies the credentials and practice experience of its field instructors necessary to design field learning opportunities for students to demonstrate program social work competencies. Field instructors for master's students hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have 2 years post-master's social work practice experience. For cases in which a field instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited social work degree or does not have the required experience, the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective and describes how this is accomplished.*

The program specified the credentials and practice experience of its field instructors necessary to design field learning opportunities for students to demonstrate program competencies. The program also described how the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective and how this is accomplished, in instances where field instructors do not possess the requisite credentials. However, the program only specified that it requires that an individual must possess a master's degree in social work to serve as field instructor, but did not specify that the degree must be from a CSWE-accredited program.

The site visitor is asked to verify with the program that field instructors must possess master's degrees from CSWE-accredited programs to design field learning opportunities for students to demonstrate program competencies.

Accreditation Standard 3.2.3: *The program documents a full-time equivalent faculty-to-student ratio not greater than 1:25 for baccalaureate programs and not greater than 1:12 for master's programs and explains how this ratio is calculated. In addition, the program explains how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; number of program options; class size; number of students; advising; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities.*

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The program provided its faculty-to-student ratio, which was within the recommended ratio parameters, and specified how its ratio is calculated. However, the program did not discuss how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; number of program options; class size; number of students; advising; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; number of program options; class size; number of students; advising; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities.

Accreditation Standard 3.2.5: *The program describes its faculty workload policy and discusses how the policy supports the achievement of institutional priorities and the program's mission and goals.*

The program described its faculty workload policy and discussed how the policy supports the achievement of institutional priorities. However, the program did not discuss how its faculty workload policy supports the achievement of the program's mission and goals.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how its faculty workload policy supports the achievement of the program's mission and goals.

Accreditation Standard 3.3.6: *The program describes its administrative structure for field education and explains how its resources (personnel, time and technological support) are sufficient to administer its field education program to meet its mission and goals.*

The program described how its personnel resources support the administration of its field education program, but did not discuss time and technological support or its sufficiency to administer the field education program to meet its mission and goals.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program the availability of time and technological support resources and the sufficiency of those resources to administer its field education program to meet its mission and goals.

Accreditation Standard 3.4.5: *The program describes and demonstrates sufficient office and classroom space and/or computer-mediated access to achieve its mission and goals.*

The program described its office and classroom space, but did not discuss the sufficiency of these resources to achieve its mission and goals.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program the sufficiency of its office and classroom space to achieve its mission and goals.

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Accreditation Standard 4.0.1: *The program presents its plan for ongoing assessment of student outcomes for all identified competencies in the generalist level of practice (baccalaureate social work programs) and the generalist and specialized levels of practice (master's social work programs). Assessment of competence is done by program designated faculty or field personnel. The plan includes:*

- *A description of the assessment procedures that detail when, where, and how each competency is assessed for each program option.*
- *At least two measures assess each competency. One of the assessment measures is based on demonstration of the competency in real or simulated practice situations.*
- *An explanation of how the assessment plan measures multiple dimensions of each competency, as described in EP 4.0.*
- *Benchmarks for each competency, a rationale for each benchmark, and a description of how it is determined that students' performance meets the benchmark.*
- *An explanation of how the program determines the percentage of students achieving the benchmark.*
- *Copies of all assessment measures used to assess all identified competencies.*

The program presented its plan for ongoing assessment of student outcomes for all identified competencies in the generalist and specialized levels of practice, which included all the requisite elements, with the exception of the rationale for each benchmark and an identification of the dimension assessed using each outcome measure.

The site visitor is asked to explore with the program the rationale for its benchmarks and review with the program which dimension is being assessed by each individual outcome measure.

Accreditation Standard 4.0.2: *The program provides its most recent year of summary data and outcomes for the assessment of each of the identified competencies, specifying the percentage of students achieving program benchmarks for each program option.*

The program provided data for some of the competencies at the generalist level, but reported that it has not yet completed its data collection process at the specialized level.

The site visitor is asked to obtain from the program its most recent year of summary data and outcomes for the assessment of each of the identified competencies, specifying the percentage of students achieving program benchmarks at the competency level for specialized practice.

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Accreditation Standard 4.0.5: *For each program option, the program provides its plan and summary data for the assessment of the implicit curriculum as defined in EP 4.0 from program defined stakeholders. The program discusses implications for program renewal and specific changes it has made based on these assessment outcomes.*

The program provided a plan for assessing the implicit curriculum and provided summary data in several areas. However, the program did not provide data from current students. The program also provided a brief discussion of the data collected so far, but has not yet completed discussion of implications for program renewal and specific changes it has made based on these assessment outcomes.

The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program its implicit curriculum assessment data and specific changes that will be made to the program based on its assessment outcomes.

Arranging the Site Visit

Using this letter as a guide, work with the program director to plan the site visit schedule, including the names and positions of those with whom you will meet.

The program director is provided a copy of this *LOI* for informational purposes and guidance in working with you to plan the visit.

During the site visit, you are expected to give the program the opportunity to provide you with information that clarifies, corrects, or supplements those parts of its self-study about which the COA has questions. Any additional materials the program provides during the site visit must be included by the program in its program response. The site visitor is not responsible for sending any supplemental materials provided during the visit.

Site Visit Report

Within 2 weeks of the last day of the site visit, send one (1) e-copy and three (3) hard copies of the report with your findings to the program's accreditation specialist at CSWE. The report should summarize the conversation on general questions regarding program mission and goals (**AS 1.0**), diversity (**AS 3.0**), and assessment (**AS 4.0**), as well as cite each **accreditation standard** and corresponding questions raised by the COA in its *Letter of Instruction* and thorough discussion of your findings for each. The *Site Visit Report* template is enclosed for your convenience.

Program Response to the Site Visit Report

The COA does not expect the program to take formal action on the *LOI*, nor to submit a response to it. Instead, within 2 weeks of receipt of the *site visit report* from CSWE, the program should submit a formal written response to _____, Accreditation Specialist in the Department of Social Work Accreditation.

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The COA will review the site visit report and the program response at its October 2017 meeting to determine if the program's accreditation should be reaffirmed.

Sincerely,

COA Chair

Chair, Commission on Accreditation

AWS/

Cc: Program's Primary Contact

Site Visitor for Baccalaureate Social Work Program

Enclosure: *Site Visit Report* Template

SAMPLE

**Council on Social Work Education
Commission on Accreditation**

Site Visit Report

Program Visited Name:
Program Visited State:
Program Level(s) visited:
Date of Site Visit:

Site Visitor(s) Names:

1. Include a copy of the site visit schedule or a list of people who met with the site visitor(s) during the visit (e.g.: groups and individuals from the program and institution).

2. Write a brief summary of the conversation on general questions regarding: program mission and goals (**AS 1.0**), diversity (**AS 3.0**), and assessment (**AS 4.0**).

3. List each **accreditation standard** and question raised by the COA in its *Letter of Instruction* with a thorough discussion of findings for each.

Accreditation Standard X
Full text of the accreditation standard.

Instructions
Language from the COA *Letter of Instruction*

Site Visit Findings
Discuss your findings on this issue from the visit.