



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Board of Accreditation (BOA) Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA)

FELLOWSHIP ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK *for Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Program Accreditation* **version 4.2025**

Accreditation processes are subject to change. Periodic updates to this handbook are highlighted and are effective immediately. When updates occur, program directors are notified, and the handbook is posted publicly. Visit the accreditation webpages at www.cswe.org to ensure use of the current version of this handbook.

The *Fellowship Accreditation Handbook* supplements the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) used for baccalaureate, master's, and practice doctorate social work program accreditation. This handbook identifies the accreditation policies and procedures that apply to post-master's social work fellowship programs, specifically.

This handbook is comprehensive but not exhaustive. Processes and policies outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation, as deemed appropriate by CSWE and the BOA.

Any questions regarding this handbook, or the fellowship accreditation process may be directed to fellowshipaccred@cswe.org. Please note, this handbook is subject to change. Always confirm that the program is utilizing the most current version of the handbook as programs are solely responsible for implementing, demonstrating, and maintaining compliance with accreditation requirements.

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1. Introduction to Fellowship Accreditation

Fellowship programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)'s [Board of Accreditation \(BOA\)](#) provide training and supervision to master's-level social work practitioners within one or more defined areas of social work practice.

Accreditation is a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions for a level of performance and integrity based on review against a specific set of published criteria or accreditation standards. The purposes of accreditation are:

- Quality assurance
- Academic improvement
- Professional preparation
- Public accountability

Accreditation is a developmental, reflective, and renewal process. The process expands beyond quality control, and can be the impetus for innovation, experimentation, and program improvement. Accreditation is a peer-review process, accomplished via dedicated volunteer contributions.

CSWE has accredited master's social work programs since its inception in 1952 and baccalaureate social work programs since 1974. In 2021, following a pilot, the BOA began accrediting post-master's social work fellowship programs. Unlike the academic programs accredited by the BOA, fellowship programs are practice-based, hosted by sites offering social work services, and not tied to degree-granting programs in colleges and universities. Therefore, the accreditation requirements and review process for fellowship programs differ from those used for the accreditation of [baccalaureate, master's, and practice doctorate](#) programs. Namely:

1. The [Fellowship Review Committee \(FRC\)](#) serves as the primary review body for fellowship programs seeking initial or continued accreditation and is responsible for making accreditation recommendations to the BOA. The BOA considers FRC recommendations and ratifies accreditation decisions.
2. The [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#), approved and adopted in October 2021, 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.

1.1 Fellowship Review Committee

The FRC is a volunteer body comprised of social work educators and practitioners. The committee is committed to the following:

- Implementing an accreditation process guided by transparent criteria
- Ensuring fellowship programs meet minimum accreditation requirements
- Fostering continuous improvement and innovation
- Sharing industry knowledge about emerging trends in fellowship practice

Self-Study Review

FRC members are responsible for reviewing each fellowship program's Self-Study; determining whether a site visit is authorized for the program; preparing reports that summarize the strengths, concerns, and areas of improvement of the program; and making accreditation recommendations to the BOA.

Site Visits

FRC members are expected to conduct two (2) site visits per year. FRC members are expected to visit the fellowship programs whose *Self-Study* they have reviewed. This includes cases in which a program's *Self-Study* is assigned for review during an FRC member's term, but the program's site visit takes place after the expiration of the member's term.

Site visit travel expenses are reimbursed by CSWE.

Virtual Meetings

The FRC meets virtually three (3) times a year in January, May, and September. FRC members are expected to attend all FRC meetings on time and participate until their conclusion. During these meetings:

- CSWE staff present updates and provide training,
- FRC discusses any accreditation matters and assesses the effectiveness of the accreditation process and makes changes, as needed, to support the development and continuous improvement of social work fellowship training,
- Reconciles whether to authorize a site visit for self-studies reviewed on that agenda (up to two (2) per meeting); and
- Reconciles accreditation recommendations for the BOA's consideration.

Additional virtual meetings may be scheduled as needed.

1.2 Board of Accreditation

The CSWE Board of Accreditation (BOA) is the sole accrediting body for social work education in the United States and its territories. The BOA receives its authority from CSWE's [bylaws](#), and through its recognition granted by the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#). A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the CSWE Board of Directors and the accrediting body delegates accrediting authority to the BOA.

The BOA is responsible for establishing accreditation standards and processes and conducting accreditation reviews to ensure high quality educational programs that prepare graduates to meet the changing demands of professional social work practice.

As post-master's social work fellowship programs are practice-based and not degree programs at universities or colleges, the BOA relies on the FRC, composed of social work educators and practitioners which ensures a peer-review based accreditation process for these practice-based programs.

Up to two (2) BOA members are appointed to serve as liaisons to the Fellowship Review Committee. The liaisons attend the FRC meetings which allow the liaisons to obtain firsthand knowledge of FRC discussions and provide more opportunities to give feedback and direction to fellowship accreditation initiative. During each BOA meeting, the liaisons and/or staff present a Post-master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Report and assist with clarifying FRC accreditation recommendations to the BOA, as needed.

The BOA may accept recommendations made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative actions. Full BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation.

The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) or other evaluative criteria as the decision-making body. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA at its final plenary session. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

A full description of the BOA, its composition, and responsibilities, can be found in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (3. Board of Accreditation). Also, please note that processes and policies outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) may also be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation, as deemed appropriate by CSWE and the BOA.

2. Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility requirements define the scope of CSWE-BOA's post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. For a program to seek accreditation, it must meet each of the following eligibility requirements:

1. The program is hosted by a site offering social work services in the United States, its territories, or on U.S. military installations.
 - a. 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.
2. The program is practice-based and includes supervision. Practice refers to any of the three types of social work practice: micro-level, mezzo-level, and macro-level. Social work practice experience is defined as providing social work services to individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities.
3. The program's curriculum is competency-based and provides training and supervision within one or more defined areas of social work practice. The program identifies the focused area(s) of practice based on the individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities served by the host site and the resources and expertise available (e.g., staff

expertise, supervision availability) to provide a suitable training program. ([See Accreditation Standard 2.2](#))

4. The program is structured to be 1,000 total hours minimum including 100 didactic instruction hours and 900 practice hours, minimum. The program is also structured to be completed in no fewer than 9 months and no longer than 36 months. ([See Accreditation Standards 2.3.1 and 2.3.2](#))
 - a. Program provides at minimum 900 hours of practice experience to trainees throughout the course of the program. These are hours of social work services provided by the trainee to the individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities the fellowship's host site serves. ([See Accreditation Standard 2.3.2](#))
 - b. Of the 900 practice experience hours, at least 100 hours are supervision. Supervision is instructional guidance provided to the trainee by an experienced social worker throughout the course of the program. Supervisors hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have 2 years of post-master's social work practice experience. ([See Accreditation Standards 2.3.2, 2.4, and 3.4.1](#))
5. The program requires that trainees hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program prior to commencing the program. This includes individuals whose degree was recognized as equivalent through CSWE's [International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service \(ISWDRES\)](#) and graduates from Canadian social work programs accredited by CASWE covered by the [memorandum of understanding between CSWE and CASWE](#).
6. The program appoints a program director to administratively oversee all aspects of the program. If the program director does not hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have 2 years of post-master's social work practice experience, then the program appoints a program coordinator with these qualifications. ([See Accreditation Standard 3.5.2](#)).

If an accredited program is found to be out of compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, the BOA may initiate a special compliance review (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

3. Accreditation Standards

The CSWE-BOA uses the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) to evaluate and accredit post-master's social work fellowship programs. The accreditation 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 accreditation standards describe the operational and programmatic structural elements that the BOA deems essential to a quality program. The accreditation standards provide consistency and quality of the fellowship program for the trainees and the individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities they serve. Achieving accreditation demonstrates to the public and prospective trainees that the program meets a standardized level of educational quality.

While accreditation status is reviewed at periodic intervals, programs are expected to maintain compliance between review cycles. Fellowship programs are solely responsible for implementing, demonstrating, and maintaining compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) at all times.

4. Initial Accreditation Process

The following process is followed by fellowship programs seeking initial accreditation.

4.1 Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application

A fellowship program must first complete and submit a [Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application](#) (see [3. Eligibility Requirements](#)) and pay the non-refundable Eligibility Fee (see [10. Accreditation Fees](#)). Applications are submitted to fellowshipaccred@cswe.org.

Below are guidelines/timeframes to assist in submitting the *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application*:

1. *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Applications* are accepted at any time. However, a program should note that once the application is accepted, it must proceed toward accreditation. Specifically, the program must complete and submit a *Self-Study* within two (2) years; failure to do so **will** result in CSWE ceasing review of the program.
2. Full payment of the non-refundable Eligibility Fee is due when the *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application* is submitted.
3. *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application* submissions that are incomplete or incorrectly formatted may result in a request to Revise and Resubmit before it is reviewed (see [9. Document Submission Guidelines](#)).
4. *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Applications* are reviewed by CSWE staff, and if needed, by the FRC to determine completeness of the form and readiness of the fellowship program to proceed with the accreditation process.
5. *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Applications* for programs that do not meet eligibility requirements will be rejected without substantive review.

4.2 Fellowship Accreditation Self-Study

After a fellowship program's *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application* is reviewed and approved by CSWE staff, the program completes and submits a *Self-Study* using the required [Fellowship Accreditation Self-Study Template](#).

Below are guidelines/timeframes to assist in submitting the *Self-Study*:

1. Programs must have at least one trainee enrolled in the program when the *Self-Study* is submitted.
2. Programs must submit the *Self-Study* within two (2) years of approval of the fellowship program's *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application*; failure to do so **will** result in CSWE ceasing review of the program.
3. Full payment of the non-refundable Initial Accreditation Fee is due when the self-study is submitted. The *Initial Accreditation Fee* covers the cost of the visit (see [10. Accreditation Fees](#)).
4. All program options, as defined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#), must be reflected in the *Self-Study*.
 - a. After a fellowship program submits a *Self-Study*, it must not add a program option (see [8.3 Changes that Require a Substantive Change Proposal](#)). Should a program add a program option, the program must notify CSWE staff immediately, and CSWE may suspend consideration of the fellowship program.
 - b. The removal of a program option is not a Substantive Change but still needs to be reported to CSWE Staff as specified in [Section 8. Program Changes](#).
5. The *Self-Study* processing date determines when the program will be reviewed. The FRC meets three (3) times per year and only two (2) self-studies are reviewed per meeting, for a total of six (6) programs per year. Once a *Self-Study* is submitted, the program is placed on the next available FRC meeting agenda, with a corresponding review timeline. Therefore, programs are encouraged to submit a complete *Self-Study* as soon as they are ready. Submission of an incomplete, or incorrectly formatted document may result in a request for the program to *Revise and Resubmit* the program's document before the program is placed on an FRC meeting agenda (see [9. Document Submission Guidelines](#)).

Once a fellowship program's *Self-Study* is received and processed, the program is placed on an FRC meeting agenda for review. The program will be notified of the corresponding review timeline and will be asked to identify any conflicts of interest with FRC members (see [12. Integrity Policy, Conflicts of Interest, and Confidentiality](#)).

4.3 Fellowship Review Committee Review of Self-Study

The FRC meets three (3) times per year in January, May, and September and reviews up to two (2) self-studies per meeting. Ahead of each meeting, CSWE staff members assign two (2) FRC

members to review each program on the agenda. *If at any point a fellowship program no longer wishes to seek accreditation, the program may withdraw from accreditation review by notifying CSWE staff in writing.*

Self-studies are provided to assigned FRC members for review:

- By early November for programs on the January FRC agenda
- By early March for programs on the May FRC agenda
- By early July for programs on the September FRC agenda

Each assigned FRC member is provided four (4) weeks to review the assigned *Self-Study* and to complete an *Initial Accreditation Self-Study Review Brief* documenting findings.

FRC Actions:

During each FRC meeting, the FRC reviews the program(s) on that agenda for a *Self-Study* review takes one of the following actions:

FRC Actions following Self-Study Review	
Authorize a site visit	The FRC authorizes a site visit (see 4.4 Initial Accreditation Site Visit and 12. Site Visit Procedures)
Defer site visit authorization pending receipt of additional information.	<p>Programs that are deferred and asked to supply additional information are placed on the following FRC meeting agenda for review. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the FRC defers the site visit authorization pending additional information at a January meeting, the program will have until March 1 to provide clarifying information so that the site visit authorization may take place at the May meeting. • If the FRC defers the site visit authorization pending additional information at a May meeting, the program will have until July 1 to provide clarifying information so that the site visit authorization may take place at the September meeting. • If the FRC defers the site visit authorization pending additional information at a September meeting, the program will have until November 1 to provide clarifying information so that the site visit authorization may take place at the January meeting.

FRC Actions following Self-Study Review	
Defer site visit authorization and ask the program to Revise and Resubmit the Self-Study	Programs are asked to revise and resubmit when they fail to address all requirements of the accreditation standards sufficiently and/or fail to submit documents in the required format. The request for revision and resubmission reflects substantial issues or errors with program-submitted materials that hinder the review process. Programs in this position will be required to submit a revised <i>Self-Study</i> within 6 months. Once the revised <i>Self-Study</i> is received, the program will be placed on the next available FRC meeting agenda and corresponding review timeline. (See 9. Document Submission Guidelines)
Recommend that the BOA deny a site visit	A program is denied a site visit if the FRC and the BOA find the program's <i>Self-Study</i> to be inadequate. The program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).

BOA Decisions for Self-Study Submission

When the FRC makes a recommendation to the BOA, the program is placed on the next BOA meeting agenda.

- If an accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their January meeting, that program is placed on the February BOA meeting agenda.
- If an accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their May meeting, that program is placed on the June BOA meeting agenda.
- If an accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their September meeting, that program is placed on the October BOA meeting agenda.

The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) and all accreditation requirements.

Any recommendations made by the FRC to the BOA are confidential. The BOA may accept a recommendation made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative action. BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (5.12 BOA Benchmark 1 Decisions and 5.13 BOA Benchmark 2 Decisions) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

4.4 Initial Accreditation Site Visit

After a site visit has been authorized, **a site visit is scheduled in the second half of the trainee's program.** Therefore, when a site visit occurs is dependent on the length and structure of the fellowship program and timing of when the site visit is authorized (see [11. Site Visit Procedures](#)).

1. A site visit must occur within three (3) years of the authorization. If the site visit is not conducted within three (3) years, then CSWE may cease review of the fellowship program.
2. Within two (2) weeks of the completion of the visit, the site visitors will provide CSWE with a completed *Site Visit Report*. CSWE staff members will then provide the report to the fellowship program.
3. Site visits may be conducted any time of year. Accreditation decisions generally occur six (6) to nine (9) months after the site visit.

Following the site visit, any communications between the site visitors and the fellowship program regarding the visit must be conducted through CSWE rather than directly between the site visit team and the program.

4.5 Program's Response to Site Visit Report

Fellowship programs are required to submit a response to the site visit report within two (2) weeks of receiving the report. In its response to the report, the program:

1. lists each accreditation standard and whether it agrees or disagrees with site visit findings,
2. corrects any errors of fact, and
3. clarifies information that may have been incorrectly understood by the site visitors. Disagreements with the site visit report should be stated clearly, and additional documentation should be provided if necessary.

In addition, if the program supplied the site visitors with any additional materials during the visit, it is the program's responsibility to append those materials to the program's response to the site visit report.

The response to the site visit report serves as the program's final written response to demonstrate compliance prior to the FRC making an accreditation recommendation for the BOA's consideration.

Submission of an incomplete, or incorrectly formatted document may result in a request to Revise and Resubmit and may extend the review timeline for the program (see [9. Document Submission Guidelines](#)).

4.6 Initial Accreditation Decision

After the fellowship program's response is received, two (2) FRC members review the site visit report and the fellowship program's response. Each assigned FRC member is provided four (4) weeks to complete an *Initial Accreditation Final Review Brief* and document findings.

FRC Actions:

During each FRC meeting, the FRC reviews the programs on that agenda for an initial accreditation review and takes one of the following actions:

FRC Actions following Initial Accreditation Site Visit & Program Response	
Recommend that BOA Grant Initial Accreditation for 8 Years	The FRC recommends that BOA Grant Initial Accreditation for 8 Years
Recommend that BOA Grant Initial Accreditation for 8 Years with a Progress Report to be Reviewed by the FRC	The FRC recommends that BOA Grant Initial Accreditation for 8 Years but identifies one or more areas of concern that must be addressed in a progress report.
Defer the initial accreditation decision recommendation to the next FRC meeting and Request Clarifying Information	<p>Programs that are deferred and asked to supply additional information are placed on the following FRC meeting agenda for review. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the FRC defers an initial accreditation decision recommendation pending additional information at a January meeting, the program will have until March 1 to provide the clarifying information so that the initial accreditation decision recommendation may take place at the May meeting. • If the FRC defers an initial accreditation decision recommendation pending additional information at a May meeting, the program will have until July 1 to provide clarifying information so that the initial accreditation decision recommendation may take place at the September meeting. • If the FRC defers an initial accreditation decision

FRC Actions following Initial Accreditation Site Visit & Program Response	
	recommendation pending additional information at a September meeting, the program will have until November 1 to provide clarifying information so that the initial accreditation decision recommendation may take place at the January meeting.
Defer the initial accreditation decision recommendation and require an additional site visit	The FRC finds that the program's Initial Accreditation Self-study needs further development and instructs the program to prepare for an additional site visit. (See 11. Site Visit Procedures and 10. Accreditation Fees)
Recommend that BOA Deny Initial Accreditation	A program is denied initial accreditation if the FRC and BOA determine that the program is noncompliant with one or accreditation standards. The program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).

BOA Decisions after the Site Visit and Program Response

When the FRC makes a recommendation to the BOA, the program is placed on the next BOA meeting agenda.

- If an initial accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their January meeting, that program is placed on the February BOA meeting agenda.
- If an initial accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their May meeting, that program is placed on the June BOA meeting agenda.
- If an initial accreditation recommendation is made by the FRC at their September meeting, that program is placed on the October BOA meeting agenda.

The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) or other evaluative criteria as the decision-making body.

Any recommendations made by the FRC to the BOA are confidential. The BOA may accept a recommendation made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative action. Full BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (5.14 BOA Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation Decisions) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

5. Accredited Status & Continuous Compliance

Post-master's social work fellowship programs are accredited for a period of eight (8) years.

5.1 Accreditation Status Statements for Websites & Materials

[Program Name] is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Board of Accreditation (BOA).

Accreditation of a post-master's social work fellowship program by the BOA indicates that it meets or exceeds accreditation standards of program quality evaluated through a peer review accreditation process. An accredited program has sufficient resources to meet its mission and goals and the BOA has verified that it demonstrates compliance with all [*Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards*](#).

Accreditation applies to all program options.

Accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of the program and the competence of trainees graduating from the program.

Review our program's accredited status in [CSWE's Directory of Accredited Fellowship Programs](#). For more information about social work accreditation, contact [CSWE's Department of Social Work Accreditation](#).

5.2 CSWE-BOA Accreditation Logo

Accredited programs may [download the "accredited by CSWE-BOA" logo](#). To request the logo in a different format contact comms@cswe.org.

Guidelines for Use of the Logo:

- The logo must always appear in isolation, uncluttered by competing images; appear horizontally; and be freestanding on a white background and never "framed" in a box.
- The logo is composed of two distinct elements, the graphic image and the tagline. If resized, these elements must remain proportional.
- Do not add words or other visual elements to the logo.
- Programs accredited by the CSWE Board of Accreditation (CSWE-BOA) may use the CSWE logo only as a part of the accreditation logo and only to indicate that a program is accredited by CSWE-BOA.
 - Please remove the CSWE logo from any printed or electronic material, if it appears without the Accreditation tagline.
- When the accreditation logo is placed on an institutional/program website, it must link directly to the CSWE accreditation webpage at <https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/>.

5.3 Retroactive Accreditation Status

The accreditation status obtained at initial accreditation is based upon the components that were reviewed during the accreditation review process. Therefore, the accredited status only applies to the cohort that was enrolled at the time the program's self-study was reviewed and site visit was approved, or after, and not past trainees.

Accreditation status is not retroactively effective to previous trainees and curricula.

5.4 Maintaining Accreditation

Between regularly scheduled accreditation reviews, programs are solely responsible for implementing, demonstrating, and maintaining compliance with the [*Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards*](#).

Programs must also continue to meet accreditation requirements, including completing Cohort Reports & Progress Reports (see [*7. Reports*](#)), submitting Annual Fees (see [*10. Accreditation Fees*](#)), and reporting changes to the program (see [*8. Program Changes*](#)).

Accreditation is an ongoing process and encourages program renewal and continuous quality improvement efforts.

Special Compliance Reviews

The BOA reserves the authority to initiate a special compliance review at any time. Details are outlined in the [*Accreditation Policy Handbook \(4.10 Special Compliance Reviews\)*](#).

Also, should the program believe a special compliance review of the program is warranted, the program director may request a letter from the CSWE Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA) or initiate a Program-Initiated Special Compliance review. Details are outlined in the [*Accreditation Policy Handbook \(4.10 Special Compliance Reviews\)*](#).

Program-initiated Withdrawal

If a program wishes to withdraw from accredited status or discontinue offering the program, the program director and/or their superior sends a formal letter to CSWE staff of its intent and provides its plan for teaching out trainees currently enrolled in the program. A program is expected to remain in full compliance with all accreditation standards during the withdrawal process.

5.5 Accreditation Communications

Program Director as Primary Contact

Each program has one (1) program director who serves as the primary contact. To streamline communication, the program director's responsibility is to represent the program in all exchanges with CSWE and the public. The program director manages all accreditation-related communications including reviewing periodic Board of Accreditation (BOA), Fellowship Review Committee (FRC), and Department of Social Work Accreditation (DOSWA) updates,

submitting program materials for accreditation reviews and between review cycles, receiving official BOA-issued letters, processing fee invoices, and engaging in consultation or other accreditation services with CSWE accreditation staff.

The program director also ensures that CSWE program records remain accurate and current, including the public-facing [Directory of Accredited Fellowship Programs](#) located on the CSWE website. To complete updates to the program's record or Directory listing, review the steps outlined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#) regarding changes in key program personnel.

To change the program director, the current program director and/or their superior must follow the steps outlined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#) to facilitate the transfer of responsibility.

Information Sharing

Accreditation staff do not share program-specific information or provide accreditation services to any individual not identified in the program's CSWE database record as the program director and/or their superior. Such services are reserved for authorized personnel only.

Accreditation staff do not share program-specific information with other programs.

General and public-facing information, such as the information displayed on the [Directory of Accredited Fellowship Programs](#), may be shared upon request with any stakeholder including administrators, faculty, staff, students, and members of the public.

Release of BOA Decision Letters

The BOA is required by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to share [BOA decisions](#) and [programs' accreditation status](#) with the public. The BOA will use the text of its decision letters for research and evaluation purposes in aggregate. The BOA's policy is not to release the full text of decision letters. If a program releases parts of the visit report or the BOA decision letter that distorts the decision, the BOA reserves the right to release the full text of such reports or letters to correct the perceived distortion.

Record Maintenance

Programs are expected to maintain accurate records of their accreditation-related documents, including any documents submitted to the CSWE Department of Social Work Accreditation, FRC, or BOA and official BOA decision letters. Examples of accreditation-related documents include self-study documents, visit reports, program responses to the visit report, authorization of site visit letters, BOA decision letters, deferral letters, program change notifications, and substantive change approvals.

Requesting Copies of BOA Decision Letters or Customized Letter

Authorized personnel have the right to request a copy of a BOA decision letter or custom letter

confirming the program's accreditation history, current status, and next review date. The following are not considered BOA decision letters and may not be re-released to programs:

- Self-study documents
- Authorization of Site Visit Correspondence
- Visit reports
- Program responses to visit reports
- Timetable change approvals
- Substantive change approvals

Authorized personnel include the program director and/or their superior. To report a change in program director, the current program director and/or their superior must follow the steps outlined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#) to facilitate the transfer of responsibility

The request for a BOA decision letter or customized letter must be made in writing via email to CSWE Staff a minimum of 2-weeks in advance of the date the program requires the documentation. Requests that are not allotted the full 2-weeks for staff processing are not guaranteed to meet the program's expected timeframe.

6. Reaffirmation Process

After receipt of its initial accreditation, a program's accredited status is reviewed for reaffirmation every eight (8) years. The steps in reaffirming a program's accreditation are:

6.1 Fellowship Accreditation Self-Study

1. The program completes and submits a *Self-Study* using the required [Fellowship Accreditation Self-Study Template](#).
2. The *Self-Study* must be submitted 11 months prior to the expiration of the program's current accreditation term. Failure to do so may result in a lapse in the program's accreditation.
3. Full payment of the nonrefundable Reaffirmation Fee is due when the self-study is submitted. *The Reaffirmation Fee covers the cost of the visit (see [10. Accreditation Fees](#)).*
4. Submission of an incomplete or incorrectly formatted *Self-Study* document may result in a request to Revise and Resubmit and may result in an extended review period (see [9. Document Submission Guidelines](#)).
5. All program options, as defined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#), must be reflected in the *Self-Study*
 - a. After a fellowship program submits a *Self-Study*, it must not add a program option (see [8.3 Changes that Require a Substantive Change Proposal](#)). Should a program

add a program option, the program must notify CSWE staff immediately. This may result in an extended review period and a lapse in the program's accreditation.

- b. The removal of a program option is not a Substantive Change but still needs to be reported to CSWE Staff as specified in [Section 8. Program Changes](#).

6.2 Fellowship Review Committee Review of Self-Study

CSWE staff members assign two (2) FRC members to review each program's reaffirmation Self-Study. Each assigned FRC member is provided with four (4) weeks to review the Self-Study they're assigned to and completes a Reaffirmation Self-Study Review Brief documenting their findings and preparing for the site visit.

6.3 Reaffirmation Site Visit

1. A site visit is scheduled for around eight (8) months prior to the expiration of the program's current accreditation term. (See [11. Site Visit Procedures](#)).
2. Payment of the non-refundable *Reaffirmation Fee* (see [10. Accreditation Fees](#)) must be confirmed prior to the visit being scheduled. If the site visit is not conducted during this time frame, this may result in a lapse in the program's accreditation
3. Within two (2) weeks of the completion of the visit, the site visitors will provide CSWE with a completed *Site Visit Report*. CSWE staff members will then provide the report to the fellowship program.
4. Site visits may be conducted any time of year. Accreditation decisions generally occur six (6) to nine (9) months after the site visit.

Following the site visit, any communications between the site visitors and the fellowship program regarding the visit must be conducted through CSWE rather than directly between the site visit team and the program.

6.4 Program's Response to Site Visit Report

Fellowship programs are required to submit a response to the site visit report within two (2) weeks of receiving the report. In its response to the report, the program:

1. lists each accreditation standard and whether it agrees or disagrees with site visit findings,
2. corrects any errors of fact, and
3. clarifies information that may have been incorrectly understood by the site visitors. Disagreements with the site visit report should be stated clearly, and additional documentation should be provided if necessary.

In addition, if the program supplied the site visitors with any additional materials during the visit, it is the program's responsibility to append those materials to the program's response to the site visit report.

The response to the site visit report serves as the program's final written response to demonstrate compliance prior to the FRC making an accreditation recommendation for the BOA's consideration.

Submission of an incomplete, or incorrectly formatted document may result in a request to Revise and Resubmit and may extend the review timeline for the program (see [9. Document Submission Guidelines](#)).

6.5 Reaffirmation Decision

After the fellowship program's response is received, two (2) FRC members review the site visit report and the fellowship program's response. Each assigned FRC member is provided four (4) weeks to complete a *Reaffirmation Final Review Brief* documenting their findings.

FRC Actions:

During each FRC meeting, the FRC reviews the programs on the agenda for a reaffirmation review and takes one of the following actions:

FRC Actions following Reaffirmation Site Visit & Program Response	
Recommend that BOA Reaffirm Accreditation for 8 Years	The FRC recommends that BOA Reaffirm Accreditation for 8 Years.
Recommend that BOA Reaffirm Accreditation for 8 Years with a Progress Report to be Reviewed by the FRC	The FRC recommends that BOA Reaffirm Accreditation for 8 Years but identifies one or more areas of concern that must be addressed in a progress report.
Defer the reaffirmation decision recommendation to the next FRC meeting and Request Clarifying Information	<p>Programs that are deferred and asked to supply additional information are placed on the following FRC meeting agenda for review. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the FRC defers a reaffirmation decision recommendation pending additional information at a January meeting, the program will have until March 1 to provide the clarifying information so that the reaffirmation decision recommendation may take place at the May meeting. • If the FRC defers a reaffirmation decision recommendation pending

FRC Actions following Reaffirmation Site Visit & Program Response	
	<p>additional information at a May meeting, the program will have until July 1 to provide clarifying information so that the reaffirmation decision recommendation may take place at the September meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the FRC defers reaffirmation decision recommendation pending additional information at a September meeting, the program will have until November 1 to provide clarifying information so that the reaffirmation decision recommendation may take place at the January meeting.
Defer the reaffirmation decision recommendation and require an additional site visit	The FRC finds that the program's reaffirmation self-study needs further development and instructs the program to prepare for an additional site visit. (See 11. Site Visit Procedures and 10. Accreditation Fees)
Recommend that the BOA place the program on conditional accredited status	A program is placed on conditional accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds that the program is noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards, and if it is believed that the noncompliance issues can be resolved by the program within 1-year. Conditional status is an adverse decision, and the program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision and submit a Restoration Report or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).
Recommend that BOA Initiate Withdrawal of Accredited Status	The BOA initiates withdrawal of accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds that the program is noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards, and it is not believed that the noncompliance issues can be resolved within 1-year. The program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).

BOA Decisions after the Reaffirmation Site Visit and Program Response

When the FRC decides on a recommendation to the BOA, the program is placed on the following scheduled BOA meeting agenda. The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) or other evaluative criteria as the decision-making body.

- If a reaffirmation recommendation is made by the FRC at their January meeting, that program is placed on the February BOA meeting agenda.
- If a reaffirmation recommendation is made by the FRC at their May meeting, that program is placed on the June BOA meeting agenda.
- If a reaffirmation recommendation is made by the FRC at their September meeting, that program is placed on the October BOA meeting agenda.

Any recommendations made by the FRC to the BOA are confidential.

The BOA may accept a recommendation made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative action. Full BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (6.9 BOA Reaffirmation Decisions) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

7. Reports

Cohort Reports are required for all accredited fellowship programs. Progress Reports may be issued by the Board of Accreditation (BOA) when issuing an initial accreditation decision or reaffirmation decision.

7.1 Cohort Report

Accredited fellowship programs are required to complete a [Cohort Report](#) within sixty (60) days of each cohort's completion date.

The purpose of the Cohort Report is to obtain information on the recent cohort and program assessment activities. The report also includes verification of the program's continued compliance with key accreditation requirements.

If an accredited fellowship program fails to submit a Cohort Report on time, the BOA may initiate a [special compliance review](#) (See [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

7.2 First Progress Report

The FRC recommends and the BOA requests a progress report when they find the program compliant with all accreditation standards and/or accreditation requirements but identify one or more areas of concern that must be addressed in a progress report. A letter is sent to the program director identifying specific areas of concern and a due date for the progress report.

After the fellowship program's response is received, two (2) FRC members review the BOA decision letter requesting the *Progress Report* and the fellowship program's response. Each assigned FRC member is provided four (4) weeks to complete a *Progress Report Review Brief* and document findings.

FRC Actions:

During each FRC meeting, the FRC reviews the programs placed on that agenda for first progress report review and takes one of the following actions:

FRC Actions following review of First Progress Report	
Recommend that BOA Accept the First Progress Report	All of the areas of concern were addressed in the progress report, and no further action is required by the program.
Recommend that BOA Request a Second Progress Report to be Reviewed by the FRC	The FRC recommends and the BOA finds that one or more of the concerns in the first progress report are still areas of concern and request a second progress report.
Recommend that BOA Place the Program on Conditional Accredited Status	A program is placed on conditional accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds the program noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards and if it is believed that noncompliance issues can be resolved by the program within 1-year. Conditional status is an adverse decision, and the program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision and submit a Restoration Report or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).
Recommend that BOA Initiate Withdrawal of Accredited Status	The BOA initiates withdrawal of accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds the program to be noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards and it is not believed that noncompliance issues can be resolved within 1-year. The program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).

BOA Decisions after the First Progress Report

When the FRC decides on a recommendation to the BOA, the program is placed on the following scheduled BOA meeting agenda. The BOA has sole and complete authority as the

final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) or other evaluative criteria as the decision-making body.

- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their January meeting, that program is placed on the February BOA meeting agenda.
- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their May meeting, that program is placed on the June BOA meeting agenda.
- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their September meeting, that program is placed on the October BOA meeting agenda.

Any recommendations made by the FRC to the BOA are confidential. The BOA may accept a recommendation made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative action. Full BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (5.14 BOA Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation Decisions and 6.9 BOA Reaffirmation Decisions) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

7.2 Second Progress Report

The FRC recommends and the BOA requests a second progress report when they find that one or more of the concerns in the first progress report are still areas of concern and request a second progress report. The BOA's letter identifies specific areas of concern and a due date for the progress report.

After the fellowship program's response is received, two (2) FRC members review the BOA decision letter requesting the *Progress Report* and the fellowship program's response. Each assigned FRC member is provided four (4) weeks to complete a *Progress Report Review Brief* and document findings.

FRC Actions:

During each FRC meeting, the FRC reviews the programs placed on that agenda for second progress report review and takes one of the following actions:

FRC Actions following review of Second Progress Report	
Recommend that BOA Accept the Second Progress Report	All of the areas of concern were addressed in the progress report, and no further action is required by the program.
Recommend that BOA Place the Program on Conditional Accredited Status	A program is placed on conditional accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds the program noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards and if it is believed that noncompliance issues can be resolved by the program within 1-year.

FRC Actions following review of Second Progress Report	
	Conditional status is an adverse decision, and the program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision and submit a Restoration Report or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).
Recommend that BOA Initiate Withdrawal of Accredited Status	The BOA initiates withdrawal of accredited status when the FRC recommends and the BOA finds that the program is noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards and it is not believed that noncompliance issues can be resolved within 1-year. The program has two options in response to the decision: (1) to accept the decision or (2) to appeal by requesting a reconsideration of the decision (see 13. Appeals).

BOA Decisions after the Second Progress Report

When the FRC decides on a recommendation to the BOA, the program is placed on the following scheduled BOA meeting agenda. The BOA has sole and complete authority as the final arbiter of compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) or other evaluative criteria as the decision-making body.

- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their January meeting, that program is placed on the February BOA meeting agenda.
- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their May meeting, that program is placed on the June BOA meeting agenda.
- If a progress report recommendation is made by the FRC at their September meeting, that program is placed on the October BOA meeting agenda.

Any recommendations made by the FRC to the BOA are confidential. The BOA may accept a recommendation made by the FRC or it may choose to take alternative action. Full BOA decision options outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (5.14 BOA Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation Decisions and 6.9 BOA Reaffirmation Decisions) may be adapted for post-master's social work fellowship accreditation. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

7.4 Restoration Reports

If the program accepts the BOA's decision to place the program on conditional accredited status, the program must submit a restoration report within 1-year of being placed on conditional accredited status.

BOA decision options are outlined in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#) (5.14 BOA Benchmark 3/Initial Accreditation Decisions and 6.9 BOA Reaffirmation Decisions). All accreditation decisions are ratified by the full 30-person BOA. Official BOA decision letters are emailed to program directors thirty (30) days following the BOA meeting.

8. Program Changes

Notification requirements are detailed below:

- [Changes that Do Not Require Reporting](#)
- [Changes that Require Notification to the DOSWA](#)
- [Changes that Require a Substantive Change Proposal](#)
- [Failure to Report Changes](#)

The CSWE Board of Accreditation (BOA) and Fellowship Review Committee (FRC) understand that ongoing change is necessary to improve educational quality. In support of programs' continuous quality improvement efforts, BOA and the FRC encourage experimentation in all aspects of program operations. Fellowship 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.

The accreditation status obtained at initial accreditation or reaffirmation only covers the components that were reviewed in the self-study at the time of the BOA review. Changes may take place within the program prior to its next scheduled accreditation review. Some program changes do not require reporting to CSWE, however, other program changes impact compliance with accreditation standards, interpretations, or accreditation requirements and require reporting to the BOA or DOSWA.

8.1 Changes that Do Not Require Reporting

The following changes do not require reporting:

- Change in fellowship instructors
- Revision of the curriculum, including:
 - Curriculum sequencing
 - Addition of a learning site
- Changes in qualified fellowship instructors
- Change in assessment procedures
- Changes to administrative policies
- Changes to assessment plans

8.2 Changes that Require Notification to CSWE

Program changes that may impact compliance with the Eligibility Requirements or Accreditation Standards require an email notification to CSWE staff **no later than 30-days after implementation**. Such changes include, but are not limited to:

- Change in Fellowship Program Director
- Change in the program's **directory listing**
- **Host site name change**
- Change in ownership of host site
- Change in fellowship's mission or purpose
- Change to fellowship format (e.g., full-time, part-time, **1-year, 2-year**)
- **Change to fellowship program's defined area(s) of practice**
- Major modifications to curriculum that result in changes to learning outcomes
- Increase in number of trainee positions
- Reduction in resources (e.g., financial, personnel, **learning site**, equipment, **technology**, trainee positions)
- **Closing a program option (e.g., branch/satellite site)**
 - A plan for teaching out trainees at the closing program option must be provided.
- **Temporary closure of the program or host site in event of a manmade or natural disaster, other public health emergency, or circumstances beyond the control of the educational environment**

As this list is not exhaustive, contact CSWE staff to discuss planned and upcoming changes to determine if notification is required.

Procedures

Fellowship programs must submit to CSWE staff a detailed written description of the proposed change(s) and the potential impact on compliance with the Eligibility Requirements and/or [*Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards*](#). CSWE staff members and, if necessary, the FRC and/or the BOA, review the fellowship change(s) and may

- Approve the proposed change
- Request additional information,
- Request that the program submit a *Self-Study*, or
- Request a site visit (see [*11. Site Visit Procedures*](#) and [*10. Accreditation Fees*](#))

CSWE staff will inform the program director of the outcome of the notification review via email within 30 days after the CSWE staff confirm receipt of the notification. If clarifying information or supporting documentation is requested, or the change is referred to the FRC or BOA for review, CSWE staff will specify next steps and applicable deadlines.

8.3 Changes that Require a Substantive Change Proposal

Programs are required to complete a *Substantive Change Proposal* when establishing a new [*program option*](#). A substantive change is defined as a significant modification, high-impact change, and/or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited program.

The proposal must be reviewed and approved by the DOSWA and/or BOA prior to starting a new program option. Submitting a proposal for review prior to implementation is to ensure that the substantive change does not adversely affect the capacity of the fellowship program to continue to meet accreditation requirements.

The BOA considers the start of a program option (implementation date) to be when a majority (more than 50%) of the curriculum is offered for the first time in the new program option. Accreditation is awarded to and covers all program options; therefore, each program option is required to maintain continuous compliance with the accreditation requirements. Noncompliance issues affecting one (1) program option impacts the accreditation status of the entire program, inclusive of all program options.

As the regulatory body for social work education in the U.S. and its territories, the BOA identifies the purpose of the *Substantive Change Proposal* is to verify that significant program changes are consistent with the Eligibility Requirements and/or [*Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards*](#) and ensure that the planned expansion of program options does not adversely impact the integrity and quality of the current program operations, resources, offerings, and compliance with accreditation requirements.

Program Option Types and Definitions

The program curriculum refers to both the didactic instruction hours and the fellowship practice experience hours. If a host site has multiple locations and a trainee can complete more than 50% of their program at a branch/satellite site, then that constitutes a separate program option.

Program Options – Various structured pathways to program completion by which social work programs are delivered, including the host site or branch/ satellite sites.

Types:

- **Main/Primary Site** – A majority, more than 50%, of the curriculum is delivered at a primary location, such as the host site.
- **Branch/Satellite Site** – A majority, more than 50%, of the curriculum is delivered at a host site location that is physically detached from the main/primary site.

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

Learning Site – A site where only a limited portion (50% or less) of the curriculum is offered offsite at a location physically detached from the main/primary site. A learning site is not considered an additional program option. A learning site does not require a *Substantive Change Proposal* and shall 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 trainees. Programs are solely responsible for securing

the appropriate levels of approval and permissions to operate in additional jurisdictions or expand their scope. BOA's approval of a Substantive Change Proposal does not supersede any approvals also required from applicable federal, state, and local regulators.

Substantive Change Proposal Submission Requirements

- Programs cannot implement any changes that require a *Substantive Change Proposal* during the initial accreditation or reaffirmation process. The initial accreditation or reaffirmation process begins with the submission of the self-study and ends with an initial accreditation or reaffirmation decision.
 - Programs may submit *Substantive Change Proposals* during initial accreditation or reaffirmation process; however, the program cannot implement the change until after an initial accreditation or reaffirmation decision is issued by the BOA.
- If a program makes a substantive change during initial accreditation review, CSWE may suspend consideration of the fellowship program.
- If a program undergoing reaffirmation makes a substantive change, this may result in an extended review period and lapse in the program's accreditation.
- In addition, programs cannot submit substantive changes within self-studies to seek accreditation approval. This is a distinct review process, and a *Substantive Change Proposal* must be submitted separately from any other accreditation review process.
- Programs are not required to wait for acceptance of progress reports to submit a proposal.
- Programs may not submit *Substantive Change Proposals* if they are on conditionally accredited status.
- Should a program not achieve initial accreditation or reaffirmation, then the program must adjust the implementation date of their new program option until the current program is successfully accredited.

Implementing a New Program Option

Programs may market, advertise, and recruit for planned program options in advance of receiving approval; however, the program may not state, nor imply, that approval has been granted or that the program option is "CSWE-BOA accredited" in any written materials or verbal exchanges. The [Directory of Accredited Fellowship Programs](#) and CSWE accreditation staff can only confirm approved program options. Thus, approval is advised before advertising and recruiting. Approval is not guaranteed, and the program must plan a minimum six (6) months in advance of their implementation date to request approval. If a program fails to obtain approval of the proposal prior to the implementation date, all written materials must be updated to clarify to constituents that approval is pending.

Substantive Change Fee

A Substantive Change Fee is assessed for each substantive change proposal submitted by a program. Instructions for fee payment are detailed in required *Substantive Change Proposal* template.

Approved Program Options

All approved program options are listed in the program's record in the [Directory of Accredited Fellowship Programs](#).

Procedures

The required *Substantive Change Proposal* template is located on the CSWE website. The proposal must be emailed to fellowshipaccred@cswe.org by the program director.

Substantive Change Proposals are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Upon receipt, the proposal is placed in a review queue and reviewed in order of receipt.

The program must plan a minimum of six (6) months in advance of their implementation date to request approval and expect approximately three (3) to six (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 advance submission, maintaining compliance with the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#), and adhering to accreditation policies and procedures in between review cycles. Submissions that do not plan for advance submission are not guaranteed to be reviewed in accordance with the program's desired timeline. There are no options for an expedited review.

For example: If a program intends to implement a new program option in the August of a given year, a *Substantive Change Proposal* must be submitted by February 1st of the same year to ensure the program submits six (6) months in advance of implementation.

Formatting & Submission

The proposal must use the template, be submitted as a Microsoft Word document, may not include separate appendices nor attachments, and be emailed.

Incomplete or incorrectly formatted proposals are not reviewed, and CSWE accreditation staff may ask the program to revise and resubmit. Documents that require revision and resubmission delay the review process.

Review Process

CSWE staff members and, if necessary, the FRC and/or the BOA, review the *Substantive Change Proposal* and may

- Approve the Substantive Change Proposal

- Request additional information,
- Request a site visit (see [11. Site Visit Procedures](#) and [10. Accreditation Fees](#))

The program director will be notified of the outcome of the *Substantive Change Proposal* review process upon completion of the review. The email notification will include a formal letter. Any citations included will be based upon concerns regarding missing or insufficient information in any section of the proposal. Impact statements are based upon the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) and focus on ensuring that the planned expansion of program options does not adversely impact the integrity and quality of the current program operations, resources, offerings, and compliance with the accreditation standards. These statements also ensure that the program's compliance plans for the new program option aligns with accreditation requirements.

While CSWE staff may approve the proposal, staff do not determine compliance as the BOA is the sole arbiter of compliance. A full compliance review will occur during the program's next regularly scheduled reaffirmation review or special compliance review (See [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

8.4 Failure to Report Changes

It is the sole responsibility of the program to report changes to CSWE according to this section of the handbook. Programs are encouraged to contact CSWE staff to discuss planned and upcoming changes to determine if notification or a *Substantive Change Proposal* is required.

Failure to report required changes or submit a *Substantive Change Proposal* in advance of the implementation date may prompt the BOA to initiate a special compliance review (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

Programs cannot operate additional program options without obtaining appropriate approvals in advance of implementation of a significant change. As a primary purpose of accreditation to protect the public, CSWE accreditation staff cannot confirm accredited status of program options that are not approved and reflected in the CSWE official database records.

When CSWE 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 CSWE requesting the proper documentation within 60 days.

If the program fails to submit the required documentation by the deadline, it may result in the program being referred to the BOA Executive Committee for a special compliance review (See [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

9. Document Submission Guidelines

CSWE Staff and the Fellowship Review Committee are responsible for reading materials of several fellowship programs. For that reason, it is vital that the materials provided by programs

are concise, complete, straightforward, and well-documented. The following requirements apply to all documents submitted to CSWE, BOA, or FRC. This includes but is not limited to:

- Statements of Intent
- Initial Accreditation Self-Studies
- Reaffirmation Self-Studies
- Program responses to visit reports
- Cohort Reports
- Progress Reports
- Substantive Change notifications

Programs that submit materials that are incomplete or incorrectly formatted may be asked to Revise and Resubmit. The request for revision and resubmission reflects substantial issues or errors with program-submitted materials that hinder the review process. Should the program fail to submit the accreditation document(s) by the revision due date, the BOA may initiate a **special compliance review** (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

Required Format

- Accreditation processes are paperless. All materials are submitted electronically via email.
- Programs will utilize the required templates for submission of Statements of Intent, Self-Studies, or Cohort Reports.
- The entire document must be a single/continuous file with all relevant compliance materials embedded directly into the document. Appendices and separate attachments may not be included in any document submission.
- Acceptable document types include:
 - One (1) comprehensive searchable Adobe PDF document; or
 - One (1) comprehensive Microsoft Word DocumentDocuments must be accessible and searchable. Cloud-based documents, scanned documents, or password protected documents will NOT be accepted. Short supporting documentation such as letters or memos are the only exception to the no scanning rule. Any short supporting document that is scanned needs to be legible and incorporated into the relevant narrative response section (not included as an appendix or separate attachment).
- Address each component of the standard and/or prompt in your response and use subheadings when appropriate.
- All required compliance information **MUST** be documented via a narrative response to the standard and/or prompt. Narrative responses need to be complete, and cannot include responses such as “n/a,” “see attached,” or only include a web-based hyperlink.
- Do not refer to previously submitted documents. The FRC and the BOA must be able to review and determine compliance and will not refer to previously submitted documents not provided in the current submission.
- Program options, defined in [Section 8. Program Changes](#) as branch/satellite sites, must be explicitly addressed in response to each accreditation standard.
 - Explicitly state if the written information provided is identical for all program options.

- If the written information provided is different for each program option, explicitly explain full and complete compliance information for each program option.
- All program information and operations reported should be current as of the time of the submission.

Program Responses

- Specify the actions that have been taken and provide documentation of completion. Clearly identify the plan, the schedule, and evidence of commitment of resources for accomplishing the plan.
- Do not refer to previously submitted documents. The FRC and the BOA must be able to review and determine compliance and will not refer to previously submitted documents not provided in the current submission.

Failure to Abide by Document Submission Guidelines

It is the sole responsibility of the program to report abide by the Document Submission Guidelines according to this section of the handbook. Failure to abide by the guidelines may result in a request for the program to Revise and Resubmit accreditation documents.

Requests for revision and resubmission may be made by CSWE Staff, the Fellowship Review Committee (FRC), or the Board of Accreditation (BOA) due to the following reasons:

- Usage of outdated forms, templates, or accreditation materials
- Formatting and submission errors
- Failure to address all accreditation standards
- Pervasive issues within the document
- Failure to fully complete a required form or template

Due to these reasons, the review of the accreditation materials is significantly hindered, or a decision cannot be rendered based on the materials provided.

If the program fails to submit the required documentation by the deadline, it may result in the program being referred to the BOA Executive Committee for a special compliance review (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

Revise and Resubmit

The BOA, FRC, or staff may issue a *Revise and Resubmit* for a specified timeframe based on the significance of the errors within the program's document. Should the program fail to submit the revised accreditation document(s) by the due date, the BOA may initiate special compliance review (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

10. Accreditation Fees

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), through its Board of Accreditation and Department of Social Work Accreditation, maintains established accreditation fee schedules to support the operations of the accreditation processes for post-master's social work fellowship programs.

CSWE reviews its fee structure periodically along with budget projections for the coming years. The results of these reviews are used to determine whether the fees or the structure applied to fee collection should be modified to meet the requirements of an autonomous operational budget supported by accreditation fees as expected for an accrediting organization recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

The types of fees applicable to post-master's social work fellowship program accreditation are summarized below. All fees associated with accreditation are non-refundable and subject to change. Direct any questions regarding accreditation fees to feesaccred@cswe.org.

10.1 Eligibility Fee

The eligibility fee is paid by a fellowship program seeking initial accreditation. The fee is submitted alongside the program's *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application*. *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Applications* are accepted on a rolling basis.

Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Fee information is located [here](#).

10.2 Initial Accreditation Fee

Fellowship programs seeking initial accreditation will be invoiced for the initial accreditation fee upon submission of the initial accreditation *Self-Study*. The fee covers the cost of the site visit.

Payment of the non-refundable Initial Accreditation Fee must be confirmed prior to a site visit being scheduled.

Initial Fellowship Accreditation Fee information is located [here](#).

10.3 Annual Accreditation Fee

All accredited fellowship programs must pay an annual fee to maintain accreditation. Fees are invoiced in January and due by February 28 each year.

Fellowship Annual Fee information is located [here](#).

If an accredited program fails to submit an Annual Fee on time, the BOA may initiate an adverse action.

10.4 Reaffirmation Fee

Fellowship programs seeking reaffirmation will be invoiced for the reaffirmation fee in accordance with their Timetable for Reaffirmation. The fee covers the cost of the site visit.

Payment of the nonrefundable Reaffirmation Fee must be confirmed prior to a site visit being scheduled.

Fellowship Reaffirmation Fee information is located [here](#).

10.5 Additional Site Visit Fee

The program's Initial Accreditation Fee/Reaffirmation Fee covers the cost of the site visit. Should an additional site visit be required, the fellowship program must pay a Site Visit Fee once the visit is scheduled, which is equivalent to the cost of the Initial Accreditation Fee/Reaffirmation Fee. If the site visit fee is not paid 60 days before the date of the scheduled visit, the site visit will be cancelled and CSWE may cease review of the fellowship program, or the BOA may initiate adverse action.

11. Site Visit Procedures

All programs seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation undergo a site visit. There may be times when additional or subsequent site visits are required by the FRC or the BOA to determine compliance with accreditation requirements (see [10. Accreditation Fees](#) for site visit fee information).

11.1 Site Visit Purpose

The site visit is an integral part of the peer-review process. It allows the FRC and the BOA to ensure that, in the best judgment of a group of qualified professionals, the fellowship meets accreditation requirements.

Specifically, site visitors validate findings and information present in the *Fellowship Accreditation Eligibility Application* and *Self-Study* as well as clarify and collect information to be used by the FRC and the BOA to determine the extent to which the [Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards](#) are met.

Site visits occur so that a site visitor may gather information. Please note that site visitors do not make judgements, recommendations, or compliance determinations.

11.2 Site Visit Components

Site visits are conducted in-person by two (2) FRC members. Whenever possible, the same FRC members will review the fellowship program's *Self-Study* and complete the fellowship's site visit.

Site visits are generally conducted over the course of one (1) day. Depending on the fellowship program size or structure, a longer visit may be warranted. The major components of the site visit include the following:

1. **Meeting with the fellowship program director.** This meeting helps orient the site visitors to the program and establishes the relationship with the program director as **point of contact** for the duration of the visit. Should the program director wish, they may invite other constituents to participate in their meeting.
2. **Meeting with the department administrator or program director's superior.** Depending on the program structure, it may be appropriate for the site visitors to meet with other representatives from the host site. The purpose of the meeting is to learn more about the role and place of the fellowship program within the host site. The program director may or may not be present for this meeting.
3. **Meetings with fellowship program instructors.** These meetings may take place individually or as a group. The term "fellowship instructors" refers to both the staff responsible for any of the non-supervision learning activities as well as the staff providing the 100 required hours of supervision (see Accreditation Standard 3.4 in the [*Post-Master's Social Work Fellowship Accreditation Standards*](#)). The program director is not to be present for these meetings.
4. **Meetings with current fellowship trainees.** These meetings may take place individually or as a group. The site visit is conducted in the second half of the trainee's program to facilitate information gathering by the site visitors. These meetings are only between the visitors and the trainee(s)
 - a. If the program has recent graduates that can participate in the site visit, it is helpful to include meetings with these individuals as part of the visit. The meetings may be conducted individually, as a group, or combined with the current trainee meeting(s).
5. **Tour of the host site.** This is the time to show the visitors the office and learning spaces used by the program.
6. **Dedicated time and space for the site visitors.** This is dedicated time for the site visitors to privately prepare for the closing summary.
7. **Closing summary with fellowship program director.** During this session, the site visitors summarize their findings, and the program may ask clarifying questions. Other stakeholders may be invited to participate at the discretion of the fellowship program director.
 - a. Please note that the site visitors are only present to gather information and do not make judgements, recommendations, or compliance determinations. The closing session is not intended to be a discussion or debate of findings. Following the visit, the program will be given the opportunity to respond to the *Site Visit Report* before a compliance determination is made.

Recording the Visit

No portion of the site visit may be recorded.

Visit Conclusion

After the visit has concluded, the contact between the program and site visitor must cease. If the program has additional questions or comments after the visit, CSWE staff should be contacted.

Programs with More Than One Program Option

All fellowship program instructors and trainees are to be included in the visit, when possible, inclusive of all program options. These stakeholders can be included in-person or virtually, as visitors are not expected to visit all program options. CSWE, the FRC, or the BOA, reserve the right to request visits to specific program options, as needed. For information regarding program options, see [Section 8. Program Changes](#). For information regarding additional site visits and corresponding fees, see [Section 10. Accreditation Fees](#).

11.3 Sample Site Visit Agenda

Site visits are generally conducted over the course of 1 day (6-8 hours). Here is a sample site visit agenda:

8:00am	Site Visitors meet with Fellowship Program Director
9:00am	Site Visitors meet with Department Administrator/fellowship program director's superior
9:30am	Site Visitors meet with Fellowship Instructors
11:00am	Tour of Host Site
12:00pm	Lunch & document review
1:00pm	Site Visitors meet with current trainees and graduates (if applicable)
2:00pm	Executive session of site visit team
2:30pm	Closing meeting/Summary of Review with program (may be just Director or include other program staff)

11.4 Emergency Procedures

CSWE recognizes that scheduled visits may need to end early, be delayed, adapted for virtual participation, or cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of relevant parties. Examples of these unforeseen circumstances include inclement weather conditions, natural or manmade disasters, illness, or changes to visitor's or key personnel's schedules due to extenuating circumstance.

In these circumstances, CSWE must be consulted to determine the best course of action in an emergency before any changes to the date or the format of the visit are enacted, unless CSWE staff are unavailable.

To inform CSWE accreditation staff of changes to a planned visit:

1. The party (visitor or program) must immediately notify the [CSWE Fellowship Accreditation Manager](#) via email or telephone. If the Fellowship Accreditation Manager is unavailable, the [CSWE Director of Accreditation Operations](#) or [CSWE Executive Director of Accreditation](#) may be contacted.
2. The party (visitor or program) will then notify the other parties via email and telephone.
3. The program, visitors, and CSWE accreditation staff must communicate to determine the best course of action. Due to complexity in scheduling visits, cancellations and delays will be avoided whenever possible. Possible outcomes include but are not limited to:
 - Change the format of the visit to allow for virtual participation on the same day
 - Delay visit
 - Reschedule visit with same visitors for a later date
 - Reschedule visit with alternate visitors for the original date
 - Reschedule visit with alternate visitors for a later date

If CSWE is unavailable and/or the emergency occurs outside of business hours, the program/visitors may make an informed decision and report the course of action immediately to the CSWE accreditation staff. These occurrences will be handled on an individual basis. Examples of these emergencies include inclement weather conditions, natural or manmade disasters.

In the event that a visit cancellation or delay is prompted by the program, the program will be responsible for any fees or additional costs associated with the change.

Volunteer Insurance Policy

CSWE holds a volunteer insurance policy that may be provided upon request.

12. Integrity Policy, Conflicts of Interest, and Confidentiality

12.1 Integrity Policy

In all relationships with the Council on Social Work Education, its Board of Accreditation (BOA), or its Fellowship Review Committee, a program shall demonstrate honesty and integrity. In submitting materials for initial accreditation, reaffirmation, or other accreditation-related processes, the program agrees to comply with CSWE's requirements, policies, procedures, guidelines, decisions, and requests.

Accredited and applicant programs must evidence full and candid disclosure and shall make readily available all information necessary to determine compliance. Programs are responsible for ensuring the integrity of the data and information submitted. Presenting false or materially inaccurate information, either through intent or through failure to exercise care and diligence in verifying the information, is considered a breach of this policy.

Breaches of Integrity

The program's failure to disclose information honestly and completely by presenting false or materially inaccurate information, by the intentional omission of relevant information, or by a distortion of information for the purpose of deliberate misrepresentation, will be considered a breach of integrity, in and of itself. Programs will be held responsible for the actions of its representatives. Verification of any alleged instances of breaches of integrity that impact compliance with one or more accreditation standards or requirements is referred to the BOA Executive Committee. The committee may conduct an investigation that may result in a **special compliance review** (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

To ensure that programs receive an equitable and impartial review from the FRC and the BOA free from any ethical conflicts or inappropriate influences that could either corrupt the integrity of the accreditation process or could result in any appearance of impropriety, the following conflict of interest and confidentiality policies and procedures shall be in place.

12.2 Conflicts of Interest

A variety of situations exist where the potential for ethical dilemmas in the form of a conflict of interest can arise when volunteers serve in the capacity of an FRC or BOA member. Some of these potential ethical conflicts are easily discernable and others more nuanced. The questions of whether an FRC or BOA member can act in an impartial manner free from any bias, or the potential for the program to believe that any such lack of impartiality exists, should be paramount to determining the existence of a potential ethical conflict of interest.

Program-Identified Conflicts

Programs undergoing review are asked to identify potential conflicts of interest with any FRC member. If a program is aware of any potential conflict of interest issue, they are responsible for immediately notifying CSWE staff of such potential conflict of interest, so that alternative arrangements can be made. Should it later be determined that a program knew or should have known of a potential conflict of interest and did not disclose this, the BOA may initiate a **special compliance review** (see [5.4 Maintaining Accreditation](#)).

Reviewer-Identified Conflicts

Should an FRC or BOA member be aware of any potential conflicts of interest, it is also their responsibility to immediately notify CSWE Staff of such potential conflict of interest, so that alternative review or visit arrangements can be made. Should it be later determined that an FRC or BOA member knew or should have known of a potential conflict of interest and did not disclose this, they will be referred to the Executive Director of the Department of Social Work Accreditation for remediation and potentially removed from future service.

Situations where recusal is necessary:

If any of the following situations occur, the volunteer must recuse themselves from any involvement in the visitation, discussion, or review of a program, and decision-making about a program:

- The volunteer has any existing or prior relationship with the host site or program, as an employee, faculty member (full or part-time), staff member, student, alumnus, intern,

donor, board member, member of educational or research collaborative, previous or current applicant (student or employment), party to any litigation, and/or consultant.

- The volunteer has any pecuniary or personal interest in the host site or program. This may include but is not limited to, any monetary or personal interest in the outcome of an accreditation decision; any close personal or professional relationships with individuals at the host site or program (including, but not limited to, any family members attending); or nonpublic or privileged information.
- The volunteer believes that any other circumstances not aforementioned, could result in an impairment of judgement, create any appearance of impropriety, or cast any reasonable doubt as to the integrity of the accreditation process.

12.3 Confidentiality

When accepting an appointment, FRC members are required to follow the *FRC's Ethical Guidelines* and sign an ethical pledge at each meeting. This ensures that duties are carried out equitably, by avoiding real or apparent conflicts of interest or other improprieties. Adherence to these guidelines is essential to maintaining and preserving the integrity and effectiveness of the accreditation process. If a FRC member has information believed to be relevant to the accreditation process, they must discuss this with CSWE Staff to determine the appropriate use of the information. BOA members shall not make any comments in private or public about their involvement in the accreditation process and program materials, especially those that are negative or disparaging.

Program materials provided to the FRC and the BOA are strictly to be used in furtherance of the accreditation process for the specific program that developed those materials. These materials are confidential, as is the review process. FRC nor BOA members may not use any of that program's materials for any other purpose and must dispose of, delete, and/or destroy any program-related materials following review. Any FRC or BOA member who is found to have used program materials for personal gain, consultant work, internal use by their own program, or discusses confidential program material or findings with any external source outside of CSWE staff, will be removed from service.

13. Appeals

The following BOA decisions are adverse actions and are eligible for appeal:

- Deny a Site Visit
- Deny Initial Accreditation
- Place the program on Conditional Accredited Status
- Initiate Withdrawal of Accredited Status

If a program receives an adverse decision, the BOA provides two (2) appeals procedures: reconsideration and panel review. Reconsideration must be completed before moving to the panel review. An accredited program retains its accredited status until all appeals are exhausted.

The appeals procedures are outlined in 4.8 *Appeals of BOA Decisions* in the [Accreditation Policy Handbook](#).

14. Complaints

Formal complaints to the CSWE Board of Accreditation (BOA) must pertain to matters related to program compliance with accreditation standards. Persons, groups, or organizations related to the program are considered recognized complainants and may file a complaint.

The BOA is not authorized to adjudicate, arbitrate, or mediate individual instructor or trainee grievances against a program. Complainants must use all appropriate institutional and professional channels of appeal before filing a formal complaint with CSWE-BOA. The institutions in which programs are housed assume responsibility for implementing and enforcing their own policies in these areas. When alleged violations cannot be resolved within the institution, appellate procedures within state systems of higher education or state judicial courts shall be used to assess and enforce institutional compliance with policies.

Instructions to File a Complaint

Once all guidelines are reviewed, submit a complete [Fellowship Complaint Form](#) via email to the [CSWE Executive Director of Accreditation](#).

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the [CSWE Executive Director of Accreditation](#) with evidence that the complaint meets the following criteria:

- Filing is by a recognized complainant.
- The complaint is accompanied by documentation showing that the complainant has exhausted all appropriate institutional and professional channels for resolution.
- The complaint is related to a possible violation of one or more accreditation standards.
- The documentation submitted in the formal complaint must be connected to a possible violation of one or more accreditation standards.
- The complainant must provide evidence that the program director, or department administrator, of the program named in the complaint was given a copy of the complaint, including all materials submitted to the BOA.

Evaluation to Determine if Criteria Have Been Met

Upon receipt of the formal complaint, CSWE accreditation staff determine whether the criteria for formal complaints have been fully met and whether the complaint falls within the BOA's authority. If the CSWE accreditation staff determine that the complaint does not meet the criteria for formal complaints or is not within the BOA's jurisdiction, the complainant is notified and given specific reasons for the refusal.

If CSWE accreditation staff determine the complaint meets the criteria for a formal complaint, the complainant and the program concerned are notified. The program has thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of the complaint to respond. CSWE accreditation staff share the program response with the complainant, who is given two weeks to respond. CSWE accreditation staff presents the formal complaint, the program's response, and the complainant's response to the BOA during its next regularly scheduled meeting and recommends a decision.

The BOA may decide to take one of the following actions:

Decision Types for Complaints Regarding Program Compliance	
Find the Program Compliant with the Accreditation Standard and Dismiss the Complaint	If the BOA dismisses the complaint, CSWE staff and the BOA Chair notify the complainant and the program, stipulating the reasons for the BOA's action.
Defer Action	If the BOA finds evidence that the program has made reasonable progress in rectifying the situation, it can defer the decision to a BOA meeting within the next year.
Order a Modified Site Visit (<i>In-person or Virtual</i>)	If the BOA believes that a program may be noncompliant with one or more accreditation standards, the BOA orders a modified site visit to collect more information. A visitor is sent, at the program's expense, in-person or virtually, to review specific compliance issues. This program is reviewed at the next BOA meeting after the site visit.
Appoint an Investigating Committee	If the BOA needs more information to make a decision, it will appoint an investigating committee to conduct a confidential investigation with full knowledge and consultation of those concerned. The program pays expenses relating to the investigative visit. The investigating committee reports its findings to the full BOA at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the BOA decides if the program is compliant with the accreditation standards in question.
Find the Program Noncompliant with One or More Accreditation Standards and Place it on Conditional Accredited Status	The program is placed on conditional accredited status if the BOA believes that noncompliance issue(s) can be resolved by the program within 1-year. Conditional status is an adverse decision, and programs may request reconsideration. If the program accepts the BOA's decision, it submits a <i>Restoration Report</i> .
Find the Program Noncompliant with One or More Accreditation Standards and Initiate Withdrawal of Accredited Status	The BOA initiates withdrawal of accredited status if it believes that the program cannot take corrective action within 1-year. The program is required to work with CSWE accreditation staff to make arrangements for the graduation or transfer of its trainees and determine the date the accreditation will be withdrawn. The decision to initiate withdrawal of accredited

	status is an adverse one, and programs may request reconsideration.
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