



**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

ENOUGH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

POLICY

Approved by: The SWRB Board (09/10/2020)
Last Review Approved by: CE/Registrar (24/06/2026)
Scheduled for Review: (24/06/2028)

Relevant legislation:

The Social Workers Registration Act 2003 Sections 6(1)(d), 7(e), 10(2), 14, 100, and 101.

Relevant SWRB practice standards:

[SWRB General Scope of Practice](#)

[SWRB Core Competence Standards](#)

[SWRB Code of Conduct](#)

Other related policies and practice standards:

SWRB Enough Practical Experience – Operational Guidance 2026

[SWRB Supervision Expectations for Registered Social Workers – Policy Statement](#)

[ANZASW Code of Ethics](#)

Purpose

This policy describes the Social Workers Registration Board's requirements to be satisfied that a social worker has enough practical experience to be eligible for full registration.

Scope

This policy applies to New Zealand and overseas qualified applicants for social worker registration.

Definitions / Glossary of Abbreviations

The Act	The Social Workers Registration Act 2003.
SWRB	Social Workers Registration Board
The Board	The appointed Board of the SWRB established by section 97 of the Act.
Full registration	Granted to a social worker who meets all the criteria for registration appropriate to their application pathway. May be granted through sections 6 or 7 of the Act. Section 13 is repealed effective 28 Feb 2026.
Practising certificate	A document issued by the SWRB and confirms that a registered social worker is legally able to practise social work in Aotearoa New Zealand within their authorised individual scope of practice.
Provisional registration	Granted to a social worker who meets some of the criteria for registration appropriate to their application pathway and is in the process of working towards the rest. (sections 6 and 7 of the Act).

Introduction

The global definition of social work¹ identifies both academic and practice-based elements within the social work profession. Accordingly, both elements are also recognised in the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act) as a requirement for full registration. Academic requirements are met through achieving a SWRB recognised qualification while practical experience is gained through employment in a social work role.

For New Zealand-qualified and overseas-qualified applicants, entitlement to full registration as a social worker depends upon the Board being satisfied that an applicant meets a number of criteria², including:

- holding a recognised qualification (for a New Zealand-qualified applicant), or a qualification equivalent to a prescribed New-Zealand qualification (for an overseas-qualified applicant); and
- being competent to practise social work; and
- being a fit and proper person; and
- having enough practical experience in practising social work; and
- meeting the SWRB English language requirements (for an overseas-qualified applicant).

The Act allows the Board to determine what is considered enough practical experience in practising as a social worker.

Enough practical experience explained

Enough practical social work experience must be gained in Aotearoa New Zealand. Social workers must also hold registration, a current practising certificate, and works within the Scope of Practice³ in order to practise social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. Applicants are therefore granted provisional registration status to enable them to obtain enough practical experience in Aotearoa New Zealand and to meet any additional conditions imposed.

To move to full registration, provisionally registered social workers must complete the minimum number of hours set by the Board as “enough practical experience”. The Board has set that minimum at 2,000 hours of supervised social work experience for both New Zealand-qualified and overseas-qualified social workers.

That practical experience should be undertaken under supervision consistent with the expectations set out in the SWRB Supervision Expectations for Registered Social Workers Policy Statement.

¹ Approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014

² [Sections 6](#) and [7](#) of the Act prescribe the criteria for full registration as a social worker

³ [Section 6AAB](#) of the Act covers the key requirements for practising as a social worker

The Board may exercise its discretion to assess applications for full registration on a case-by-case basis and may request additional evidence.

Exclusion

Social work experience gained overseas will not count towards the 2,000 hours of supervised practical social work experience required for full registration. While international social work experience is valuable, it cannot on its own develop or demonstrate the cultural competence required to practise social work with Māori and with other ethnic and cultural groups within Aotearoa New Zealand.

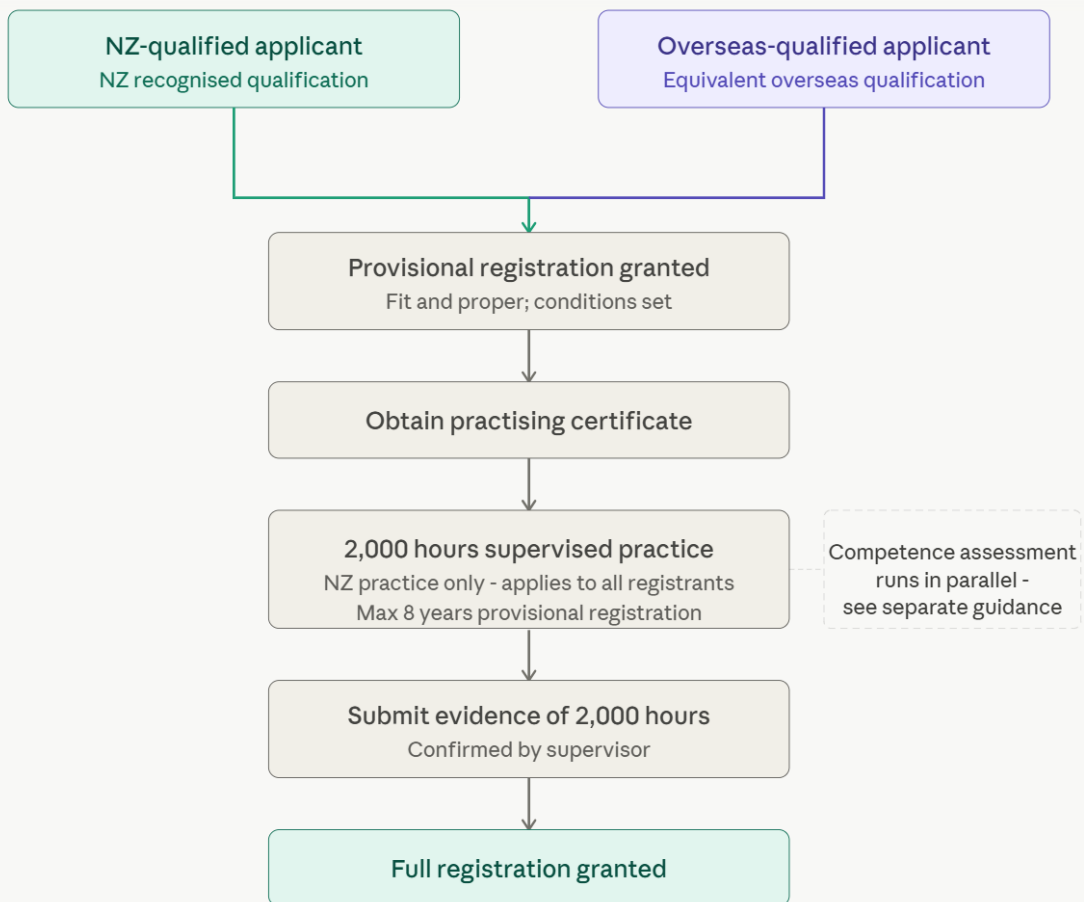
Social workers practising in Aotearoa New Zealand must build their understanding of the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a founding document and recognise that its principles are integral to providing appropriate professional social work services to Māori, as set out in SWRB's Core Competence Standards and Code of Conduct.

Maximum period of provisional registration

Provisional registration cannot be held indefinitely. Under section 10(2) of the Act, the total period of provisional registration for a person to whom section 14 applies, including any renewals, must not exceed eight years. A provisionally registered social worker who has not completed the required practical experience and progressed to full registration within that limit cannot remain provisionally registered once the eight-year period expires. Evidence is required to confirm completion of 2,000 hours of supervised social work practice.

Where a provisionally registered social worker has not completed the required practice hours within the eight-year period, their provisional registration cannot be renewed or extended beyond the statutory eight-year limit.

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Board may exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis (s.100, s.101)
Overseas experience does not count toward the 2,000 hours for any registrant