



**Social Workers  
Registration Board**  
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

Te Pou Tūhono | SWRB Education Standards

# Prescription and monitoring framework

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## 1 Purpose

The Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) has developed this guidance document for tertiary education organisations (TEOs) who deliver or intend to deliver social work qualifications leading to social work registration in Aotearoa New Zealand. It outlines the SWRB's processes for prescribing and monitoring social work qualifications. This formalises existing practice into a transparent and consistent process which is based on the legislative change that makes the SWRB's monitoring function explicit and allows the SWRB to meet its legislative requirements.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Legislative compliance

The SWRB has the legislative responsibility to prescribe and monitor Aotearoa New Zealand social work qualifications that lead to professional registration as a social worker in Aotearoa New Zealand. It can also prescribe and monitor training standards that contribute to registration.

The SWRB derives its regulatory authority for reviewing social work qualifications from the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act). Under the Act, the functions of the Board include:

- 99(1)(f) to recognise or prescribe New Zealand educational qualifications for the purposes of this Act and monitor the provision and delivery of those qualifications.
- 99(1)(i) in consultation with providers of social work education and training in New Zealand and bodies that set standards for social work education and training in New Zealand, to promote and set standards for such education and training for the purposes of this Act.

The purpose of the Act includes protecting the safety of the public and enhancing the professionalism of social workers.

The SWRB Education Standards are secondary legislation.

## 3 About the SWRB Education Standards

The Education Standards outline the SWRB's regulatory requirements of TEOs in their delivery of social work qualifications.

The Standards are designed to ensure that graduates of prescribed programmes have the knowledge and skills to practise social work safely. Qualifications prescribed by the SWRB educate ākonga | students in line with contemporary and internationally recognised theory, practice, and skills in social work.

The SWRB Education Standards set a benchmark against which the SWRB can monitor delivery of prescribed social work qualifications, ensuring graduate outcomes meet regulatory requirements and protect the safety of the public.

The SWRB Education Standards are aligned with SWRB's Regulatory Strategy and therefore underpinned by the principles of accountability, fairness and transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> On 30 March 2025, section 99(1)(f) of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 was amended to add "monitor the provision and delivery of those qualifications" as one of the functions of the SWRB.

### 3.1 Weaving kaupapa Māori into the future of social work education and regulation

The SWRB seeks to ensure the aims and aspirations of Māori are embedded in the Education Standards. The Standards support Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based practice through qualifications which are inclusive in nature, provide contemporary and indigenous approaches to social work and reflect the solid grounding of established practice.

He Arapaki – the SWRB Māori Development Strategy and Action Plan – has been instrumental to the development and implementation of the Education Standards. More information on the contribution of He Arapaki and other kaupapa Māori models is available in Appendix A: Structure of the SWRB Education Standards.

In 2022, the Education Standards Review Advisory Rōpū developed [the full narrative for Te Pou Tūhono: SWRB Education Standards](#).

The Education Standards are represented by three Pou. The SWRB assesses and monitors evidence to determine whether each Pou of the Education Standards is upheld.

#### 1. Pou Tokomanawa

##### Rangatiratanga | Governance

- Aligns with the SWRB value matatika
- Compliance, autonomy, staffing, qualification delivery, stakeholder engagement, quality assurance, collaboration and consultation

#### 2. Pou Tāhu

##### Manaakitanga | The ākonga journey

- Aligns with the SWRB value manaaki
- Admission, selection, information provision, commitment to professional development

#### 3. Pou Tūārongo

##### Kaitiakitanga | Curriculum and field education

- Aligns with the SWRB values māia and mahitahi
- Curriculum (mātauranga Māori, skills and knowledge), field education (clarity of purpose and placement requirements, management and evaluation)

The Education Standards require prescribed qualifications to prepare ākonga for registration within the SWRB's General Scope of Social Work Practice. This means they must be able to meet the SWRB Core Competence Standards, Code of Conduct, the ANZASW Code of Ethics and the requirements under SWRB's Fit and Proper Person and Supervision Expectations policies.

Social work graduates are also expected to be able to work autonomously under professional supervision, as a beginning social work practitioner and as effective members of a team.

The Standards ensure that prescribed qualifications prepare ākonga for registration so they may enter the social worker workforce with the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes of an entry-level qualification of study. Under the Pou, the Standards highlight the relational nature of social work practice. Whakawhanaungatanga – building relationships, connection, and engagement – underpins, unites, and is embedded within the three Pou. This brings together programme leaders, the deliverers,

the ākonga and mana whenua. Collectively and collaboratively they create a framework to connect, engage, and build relationships with whānau, tamariki, hapori and communities.

The Standards emphasise knowledge of and attention to the needs of Māori and the necessity of developing culturally safe practice for all through critical reflection with a focus on public safety.

We acknowledge the contribution of the social work sector, particularly the advisory rōpū who brought a Tiriti focus to the development of the Education Standards.

## **4 Prescription and monitoring**

The Education Standards are the SWRB's regulatory tool for assessing the delivery and quality of social work qualifications. Prescription is the SWRB's process for assessing whether a qualification meets the Education Standards. Holders of social work qualifications prescribed by the SWRB are eligible to apply for social worker registration within the General Scope of Social Work Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Monitoring is the SWRB's process for ensuring prescribed qualifications continue to comply with the Education Standards. Prescription is reassessed at least every four years. This process is called prescription confirmation and is one of the monitoring events described in this document.

The SWRB Education Standards and prescription and monitoring methodology is aligned with the SWRB Regulatory Strategy. The underpinning principles of accountability, fairness and transparency apply to all prescription and monitoring activities. Our regulatory practise is intelligence-led, responsive, proportionate, and public safety focused.

Qualifications prescribed by the SWRB are delivered in line with contemporary and internationally known theory, practice, and skills in social work.

The SWRB Education Standards and prescription and monitoring processes are additional to the approval and accreditation requirements of:

- the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for wānanga, private training establishments (PTEs) and institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), and
- the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) for university qualifications.

### **Overview of SWRB monitoring events**

This document provides guidance on the following SWRB monitoring events:

- Prescription confirmation (4.5)
- Annual monitoring (4.14)
- Custom monitoring (scheduled or unscheduled) (4.15).

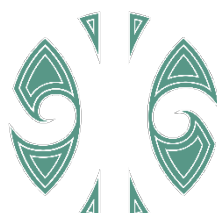
## 4.1 The SWRB's values

The SWRB seeks to uphold the following organisational values in the prescription and monitoring of qualifications against the Education Standards:



### **Mahitahi**

To work collaboratively and professionally with other teams to identify the best solutions.



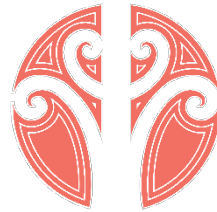
### **Matatika**

To provide timely, fair and impartial advice that is informed by evidence and data insight.



### **Manaaki**

To treat everyone with respect, and to deliver quality products with our legislative purpose in mind.



### **Māia**

To be bold and confident in challenging the status quo, and be open to continuous service improvement.

## 4.2 Prescription process

### **Overview**

- All TEOs who wish to deliver social work qualifications leading to registration in Aotearoa New Zealand must have their qualification prescribed by the SWRB before commencing course delivery.
- New qualification prescription assessment is a comprehensive process that may take up to six months.
- Prescribed programmes are reassessed at least once every four years. This assessment is a monitoring event called prescription confirmation.
- Ongoing prescription is subject to satisfactory ongoing monitoring.
- SWRB may form joint panels with NZQA or CUAP for new qualification assessments or prescription confirmation. The SWRB and NZQA/CUAP produce independent reports.
- Prescription reports may be shared with the other relevant tertiary monitors (NZQA or CUAP).

## 4.3 Prescribing a new qualification

A TEO intending to offer a social work qualification leading to registration must have the qualification prescribed by the SWRB before commencing course delivery.

The first step to gaining prescription is to submit a completed new qualification prescription notification (available on request from the SWRB). We recommend TEOs submit this application at least six months before the intended course start date. Assessment is scheduled as soon as a prescription and monitoring panel (panel) is available. The panel assesses the proposed qualification against the Education Standards. Information about the structure and activities of the panel is found in section 6.

The prescription assessment process includes:

- a desk review of the proposed curriculum and evidence provided in the application
- a request for further information if needed
- a visit to the site(s) from which the qualification will be delivered (one to two days)
- interviews with key staff and stakeholders, e.g. mana whenua, employers, community stakeholders, using a key lines of enquiry approach.

New qualifications have a monitoring visit approximately one year after programme delivery begins. This follows the format of custom monitoring. See section 4.15 for more information.

#### **4.4 Prescribing a significantly changed qualification**

If a TEO wants to make a significant change to a prescribed qualification, the qualification must first be reassessed to retain prescription. The TEO must notify the SWRB promptly of a proposed change to allow time for us to schedule assessment before the delivery of the changed programme starts.

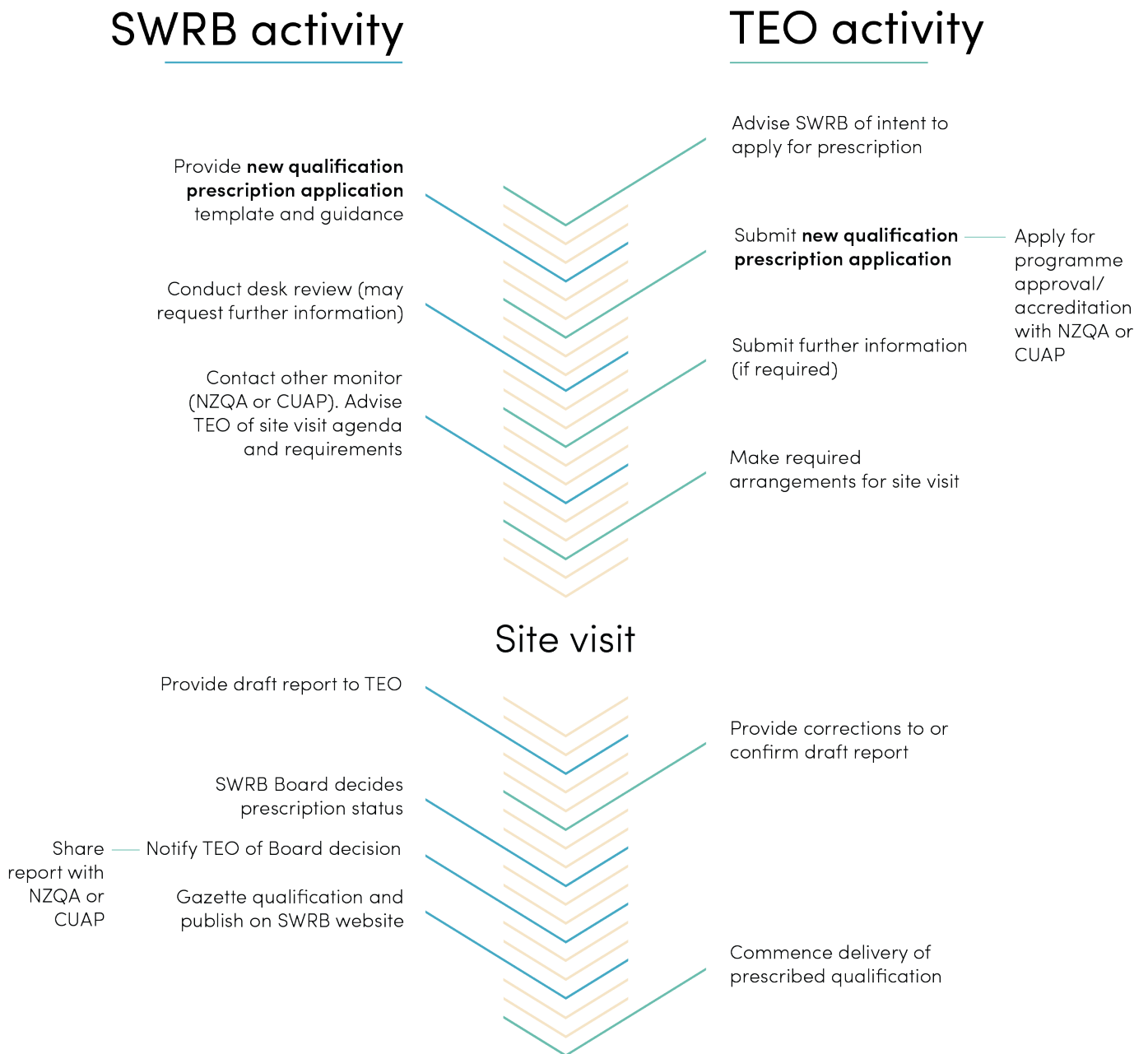
Significant change may include but is not limited to changes in:

- qualification title
- regulations concerning entry requirements and cross-crediting arrangements
- the level or credits necessary to gain the qualification
- overall programme objectives
- the structure, content, duration or mode of delivery of the qualification
- the programme being offered at a new site or change of site
- anything covered by NZQA as a Type Two change
- any proposal that must be submitted to CUAP as described by the CUAP handbook.

There may be cases where a change listed above is proposed as an isolated matter that does not have wider impact on the programme and is therefore not classed as a significant change. If you are unsure whether the proposed changes are significant, the SWRB can provide advice to guide you.

Significantly changed qualifications are assessed by a panel using the same process as a new qualification prescription assessment. Please complete the new qualification prescription application template to apply to have a significantly changed qualification assessed.

**Figure 1: Prescription process for new and significantly changed qualifications**



#### 4.5 Prescription confirmation assessment

Prescription confirmation is a comprehensive monitoring event that is due four years after the last prescription event in most cases.<sup>2</sup> The qualification is assessed by a panel against all Education Standards to ensure ongoing compliance. Prescription status is updated after each prescription confirmation.

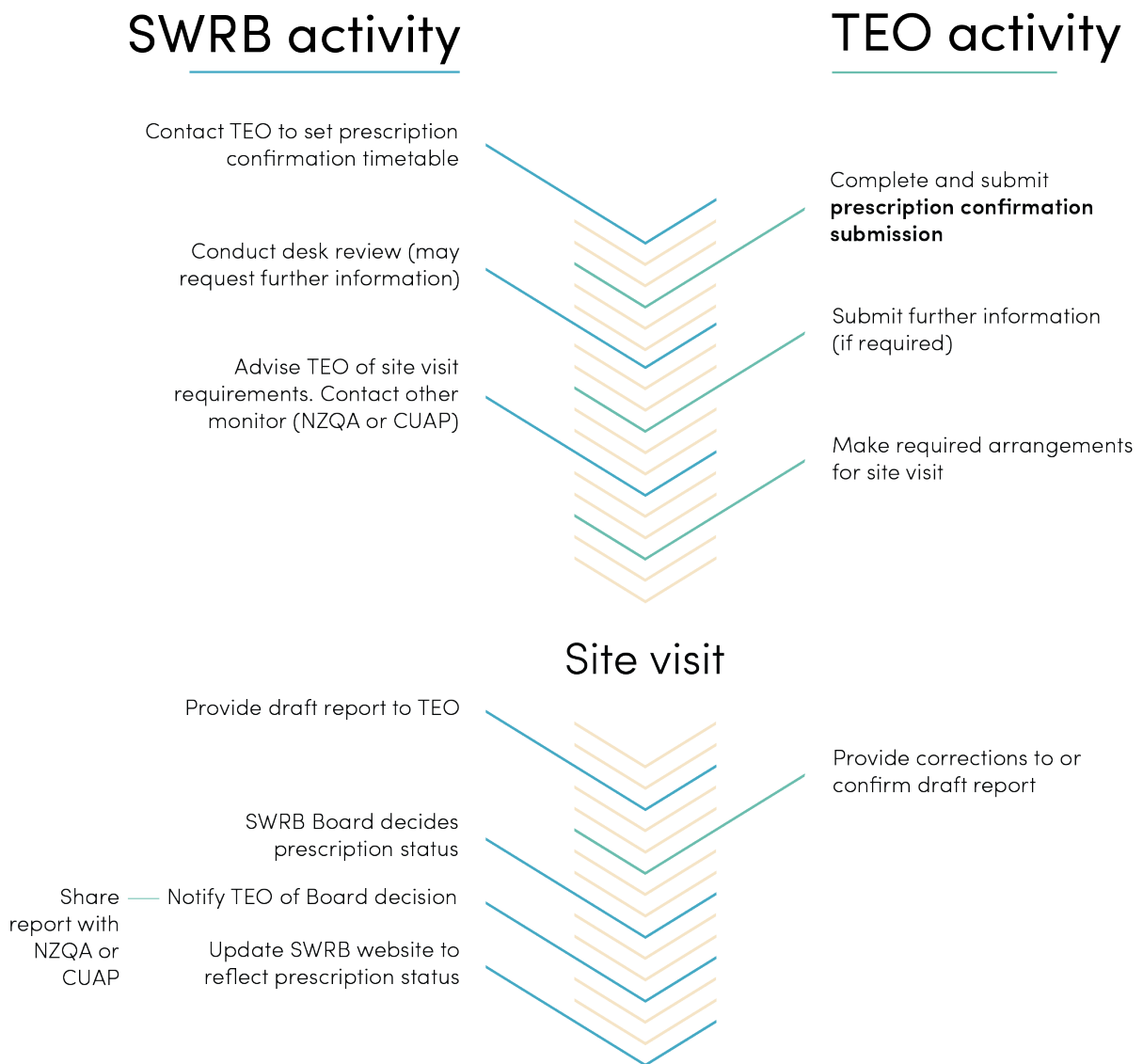
The SWRB contacts the TEO and provided the submission template approximately one year before prescription confirmation is due. We recommend starting work on the prescription confirmation submission early to successfully complete and submit it by the due date. The process for prescription confirmation includes:

<sup>2</sup> In cases where there are significant requirements to meet, the next prescription confirmation may be scheduled for less than four years, but not less than two years from the most recent prescription confirmation.

- a desk review of the prescription confirmation submission provided by the TEO to demonstrate how the programme meets the SWRB Education Standards
- a review of institutional documentation including curriculum by the panel
- an ākongā survey
- stakeholder engagement
- a site visit (where a qualification is delivered at multiple sites, each site is assessed individually).

Ahead of the panel assessment visit to your site, we will send you the visit agenda and let you know our key lines of enquiry.

**Figure 2: Prescription confirmation process**



#### 4.6 Multi-site and multi-provider applications

Prescription of a single qualification delivered from two or more sites is possible. Circumstances anticipated by the SWRB include:

1. a single TEO with multiple campuses from which the same qualification is delivered (single provider, multi-site)
2. two or more TEOs delivering a single qualification from their respective campuses (multi-provider, unified degree)

3. a combination of the above in which some or all of the TEOs delivering a unified degree have multiple sites from which a social work qualification is offered.

The usual process for assessing new or confirming existing social work qualifications and monitoring applies to all of these situations. The SWRB requires the following additional evidence with multi-site applications to ensure the Education Standards are consistently met across all sites:

- Plan for management of future programme development
- Consistency in development and implementation management across sites
- Plan for future programme review and monitoring
- Plan for internal and external moderation
- How maintenance of the programme across delivery sites will occur to ensure consistent delivery, timeframes, assessment etc
- Quality management processes
- Plan for catering to regional differences including stakeholder engagement and relationships with mana whenua

The SWRB can individually review each site delivering prescribed qualifications as part of the prescription and monitoring process.

The following requirements also apply to multi-provider, unified degree situations:

- The partner TEOs must identify a lead TEO who has responsibility for managing prescription applications and maintaining curriculum integrity.
- Governance arrangements for the unified degree, including decision-making authority, curriculum ownership, and operational responsibilities, are expected to be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding and Terms of Reference. These must be submitted as part of the prescription application with other evidence of meeting the Standards.
- The lead TEO co-ordinates annual monitoring submissions as follows:
  - Each TEO completes an annual monitoring submission covering matters specific to that TEO/site.
  - The lead TEO also completes a unified degree annual submission focusing on communications, relationship management between partner TEOs, maintenance of curriculum and assessment integrity, and how issues/refinements are managed.
  - The lead TEO collates all the submissions from partner TEOs and sends them to the SWRB as one submission.

## 4.7 Prescription outcomes

The SWRB takes a right-touch regulatory approach to prescription and monitoring.<sup>3</sup> By grading prescribed qualifications according to risk, we can monitor these programmes proportionately and responsively, which aligns with the principles of our Regulatory Strategy. The benefits of this approach include:

- allowing for commendations
- providing an opportunity to reduce the burden of regulatory compliance where excellence is evidenced

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/improving-regulation/right-touch-regulation> Cited 17 March 2025

- promoting continuous improvement. Feedback provided in prescription and monitoring reports can be used by TEOs to strengthen their prescribed social work qualifications.

The SWRB’s risk assessment model is described in Appendices B and C.

When a new qualification prescription assessment or prescription confirmation is completed, the panel makes recommendations to the SWRB Board. The recommendations include the:

- prescription outcome
- date for next prescription confirmation
- custom monitoring schedule (if appropriate).

Table 1 explains the range of possible prescription outcomes. Further detail on declined and revoked prescription outcomes follows the table. Section 5 outlines how the SWRB communicates prescription outcome decisions with TEOs.

**Table 1**

Prescription outcome	What the outcome means	Scheduled monitoring activities
Prescribed with commendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme has met all Standards, several with commendation</li> <li>• Some recommendations may be made for improvements</li> <li>• No requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual monitoring submission</li> </ul>
Prescribed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme has met all Standards</li> <li>• Recommendations for improvements are made</li> <li>• May have some low-risk requirements which can reasonably be expected to be met within a short, specified timeframe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual monitoring submission</li> <li>• Custom monitoring, either virtual or on-site visits</li> </ul>
Prescribed with requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specified requirements must be met within timeframe set by the SWRB to meet Standards and retain prescription status</li> <li>• Recommendations may also be made</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual monitoring submission</li> <li>• Custom monitoring by on-site visits</li> </ul>
May be <b>declined</b> or <b>revoked</b> <b>OR</b> May be prescribed with requirements*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further detail on prescription being revoked or declined is provided in the following sections</li> </ul>	<b>If</b> prescription is granted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescription may be granted for less than 4 years (but not less than 2 years)</li> <li>• Annual monitoring submission</li> <li>• Custom on-site visits</li> </ul>

\*Where there is a reasonable expectation that Standards can be met within specified time without posing unacceptable risk

It is possible that in a multi-provider, unified degree application (as described in 4.6), some TEOs may have commendations and other may have requirements. The Act empowers the SWRB to prescribe qualifications, not TEOs, so in this case the prescription outcome for the unified degree would be determined by the matrix score of the TEO with requirements to meet. However, custom monitoring (if required) is specific to the TEO. This is outlined further in section 4.15

### 4.7.1 Prescription declined

If we assess a new qualification prescription application and find that the Education Standards are not met, the SWRB may decline prescription. In the interest of natural justice, we will first provide detail on what the TEO needs to do to achieve prescription and allow a reasonable time to complete those requirements.

If a TEO requests reassessment of the requirements within the specified time and our assessment finds they are all met, the SWRB Board may prescribe the qualification without charging any additional fee. If the TEO does not request reassessment within the specified time and/or the reassessment finds the requirements are not met, we will decline prescription and provide a full explanation for the decision.

If a new qualification prescription application has previously been declined, any subsequent application is treated as a new application, and the full new qualification prescription application fee must be paid.

### 4.7.2 Prescription revoked

Prescription revocation is a serious action and is described in section 5C of the Act. Revoking the prescription of a qualification may be required if the Education Standards are no longer being met to such an extent that we no longer have confidence that graduates will have the competence required of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand and there is a risk to public safety. Before deciding to revoke prescription, the SWRB Board seeks the views of:

- the TEO management and staff
- relevant social work entities (such as CSWEANZ, ANZASW and TWSWA)
- ākonga who are currently enrolled in the programme
- relevant social work employers and mana whenua/iwi groups.

A proposal to revoke prescription is provided to the TEO in writing, including a full explanation of the reasons.

The TEO is invited to respond to the proposal to revoke prescription within 20 working days of receiving the proposal. The response and all other feedback is considered by the SWRB Board before a final decision is made.

When the Board makes a final decision to revoke prescription of a qualification, it removes that qualification from the list of prescribed qualifications published in the New Zealand Gazette. The qualification and date until which it was prescribed is added to the schedule of historical qualifications.

Ākonga who graduated with the qualification while it was prescribed by the SWRB remain eligible to apply for social worker registration in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ākonga who graduate after prescription is revoked are not eligible for registration.

Ensuring continuity for affected ākonga is outside the SWRB's legislative mandate. However, we strongly encourage and will support TEOs in this situation to arrange a cross-credit agreement to provide a pathway for ākonga to continue their journey towards social worker registration. More information is provided in section 4.10 (Guaranteed credit agreements).

## 4.8 Internal reviews and appeals

A TEO can request an internal review of a decision to decline or revoke prescription of a qualification by lodging a request for review with the SWRB's Chief Executive. The TEO must lodge a review request within 20 working days of the receiving the prescription decision. The request must state the grounds on which it is based.

Grounds for internal review are normally limited to errors of fact or breach of policy, Standards and/or procedures set out in the SWRB Prescription and Monitoring Framework.

The Board considers the request and may appoint a review panel of not fewer than one experienced academic and one experienced practising social worker to investigate the process and decision and advise the Board. A regulatory and/or evaluative professional may also be appointed to the review panel.

If the Board does not change its decision as a result of the review, the TEO can appeal the Board's decision to the District Court under section 88 of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. Such appeals must be brought within 20 working days of the Board's final decision. If a TEO wishes to explore this option, the SWRB strongly advises it to seek independent legal advice.

## **4.9 Discontinued programmes**

If a TEO decides to discontinue delivery of a prescribed programme, they must advise the SWRB and NZQA (for wānanga, PTEs, ITPs) or CUAP (for universities) as soon as practicable. The SWRB will offer advice to support the development of an acceptable guaranteed credit agreement to enable ākonga to transfer to another prescribed qualification with minimal disruption to their course of study. More information is provided in section 4.10 (Guaranteed credit agreements).

When discontinuation is confirmed, the SWRB removes the qualification from the list of prescribed qualifications published in the New Zealand Gazette and adds it to the schedule of historical qualifications leading to social worker registration in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **4.10 Guaranteed credit agreements**

A guaranteed credit agreement (GCA) may be made between two TEOs to provide a pathway for ākonga to transfer from a qualification that is being revoked or discontinued. Before a GCA is implemented, it must be approved by the SWRB. This is to ensure that graduate outcomes remain consistent with the Education Standards.

The SWRB will provide advice and support for the development of GCAs. There is no fee for this activity. The GCA must be approved in writing by the SWRB before ākonga enrolments are transferred.

## **4.11 How the SWRB works with other statutory bodies**

NZQA and CUAP are responsible under New Zealand legislation for the approval and accreditation of degree programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Their assessment and monitoring roles to ensure compliance and quality assurance complement SWRB's role in prescribing and monitoring social work qualifications. The SWRB Education Standards are concerned with matters specific to social worker education and require TEOs to meet all other relevant obligations including those set by NZQA and CUAP.

The SWRB has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NZQA to support integrated assessment and monitoring processes and information sharing. Under the MoU, SWRB and NZQA may convene joint panels for assessing/monitoring proposed and existing social work qualifications, with panellists nominated by both parties.

When the SWRB forms a joint panel with either NZQA or CUAP, the SWRB provides two to three panel members. These members are selected in consultation with NZQA or CUAP and the TEO to ensure a balance of expertise. Further detail on the SWRB's approach to assessment panels is provided in section 6.

While NZQA and the SWRB take a collaborative approach to assessment and monitoring, each organisation has a distinct function and legislative mandate. Following any joint panel assessment (in collaboration with NZQA or CUAP) the SWRB produces an independent report. The SWRB report is shared with the other relevant monitor.

### 4.12 Monitoring process

#### Overview

- Prescribed qualifications are monitored by the SWRB. All qualifications are monitored annually at a minimum.
- Custom monitoring (virtual or on-site) may also be required as indicated by a TEO’s prescription outcome.
- Monitoring outcomes may include a change to the matrix score (outlined in Appendix B) or scheduled date of next prescription confirmation.
- The SWRB has discretion to monitor against all Standards or a selected number, according to identified risk factors.

### 4.13 Proportionate monitoring

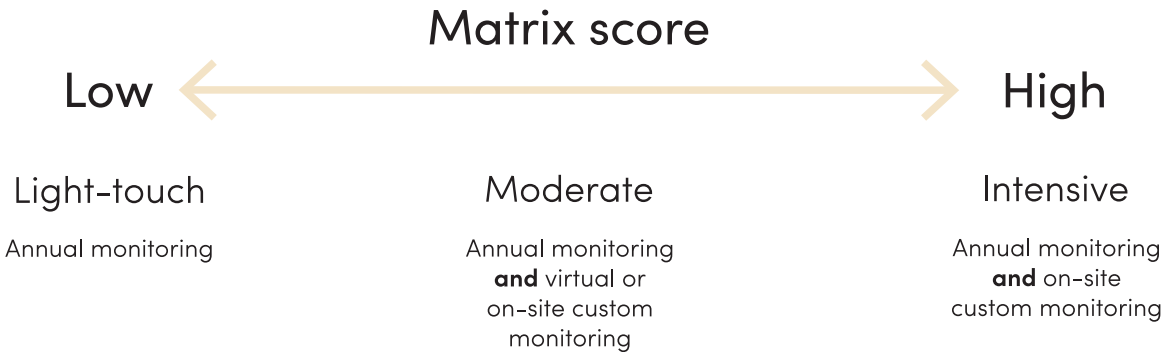
When a TEO commences delivery of a prescribed qualification, the SWRB begins a cycle of annual monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance with the Standards. Monitoring is proportionate to risk and specific to the individual programme. Appendices B and C provide more detail on how the SWRB assesses risk.

All TEOs are monitored annually. Additional custom monitoring may be scheduled depending on the prescription outcome.

The type and frequency of custom monitoring is determined on a case-by-case basis according to the nature of the requirements to achieve compliance with the Education Standards.

Figure 3 illustrates the scope of monitoring options that may be applied.

**Figure 3: Proportionate monitoring**



### 4.14 Annual monitoring

All TEOs delivering prescribed social work qualifications are monitored annually. In a year that a TEO undergoes prescription confirmation an annual monitoring submission is not required. Three elements form part of each annual monitoring event.

## 1. TEO annual monitoring submission

The SWRB provides TEOs with a template for the annual monitoring submission. This requires the provision of evidence on how the Standards continue to be met and reflection on progress against requirements and recommendations (if applicable).

## 2. Ākonga survey

The SWRB provides a link to an online ākonga survey to be shared with ākonga via the TEO's learning management system. Ākonga are invited to complete the survey. Receiving honest feedback from ākonga is important so the survey is confidential and anonymous. The survey is complemented by face-to-face interviews and focus groups with ākonga during site visits.

## 3. Environmental scan

The SWRB conducts an environmental scan using data collected across the academic year. The environmental scan could include:

- accumulated news reports
- media information
- ākonga or other stakeholder complaints
- mandatory reports
- other relevant data.

The SWRB conducts a desk review of the above information and considers whether any changes to the planned custom monitoring schedule are indicated. If custom monitoring is required, key lines of enquiry are identified by the SWRB, and the TEO advised prior to the custom monitoring event.

**NB:** The information requested in annual monitoring is not replicated in the SWRB's annual education data return.

## 4.15 Custom monitoring

Custom monitoring is designed to ensure that requirements identified at initial prescription or prescription confirmation are being actively progressed to align with the Education Standards. A newly prescribed qualification will have custom monitoring in the first year of delivery. After prescription confirmation, custom monitoring will only be required where a TEO has a matrix score of 3 or higher (see Appendix B for explanation).

Custom monitoring is additional to annual monitoring, and its purpose is to ensure progress is being made against requirements. Prior to each scheduled monitoring event the TEO must complete a monitoring submission. The format of this submission varies depending on what is being monitored. The SWRB provides specific information and guidance on the evidence that would demonstrate progress.

Where lighter-touch monitoring is indicated, the SWRB may determine that a virtual meeting is appropriate in the first instance. Where necessary, a custom monitoring on-site visit may be required. The number of panellists depends on the reason for custom monitoring and the expertise needed.

Custom monitoring may be scheduled or unscheduled.

### **Scheduled custom monitoring**

If required, custom monitoring events are scheduled at the time prescription is granted or confirmed. The frequency and format of custom monitoring depends on the nature of the requirements set out in the prescription outcome.

If monitoring finds that requirements have been achieved and a lower matrix score is justified, further scheduled custom monitoring events may be changed from requiring an on-site visit to a virtual meeting, or cancelled.

In multi-provider, unified degree situations, only TEOs with requirements are subject to scheduled custom monitoring. The lead and/or other partner TEOs is informed of custom monitoring requirements.

### **Unscheduled custom monitoring**

Additional monitoring may be required due to any of the following circumstances:

- Annual or scheduled custom monitoring finds an area/s of concern.
- The TEO does not submit their annual submission to the SWRB, or their submission is incomplete.
- The SWRB is notified of a potential breach of Standards.

If circumstances arise that lead to a TEO delivering a unified degree being subject to unscheduled custom monitoring, the SWRB may also ask questions of the lead TEO and/or other partner TEOs to determine if any of the other providers should also be subject to custom monitoring.

## **4.16 Breaches of the Education Standards**

Before commencing unscheduled custom monitoring, the SWRB makes preliminary enquiries in accordance with the principles of natural justice to confirm whether it is reasonable to suspect a breach has occurred. We contact the TEO concerned in the first instance. Therefore, a notification

The SWRB may identify a possible breach of the Standards in various ways, including:

- ākonga complaints to the SWRB or to the media
- adverse media reports on teaching, staffing, or course outcomes
- staff complaints
- concerns raised directly with the SWRB
- poor retention rates in comparison to other TEOs
- employer feedback
- mandatory reports.

Where a breach is identified, the SWRB may conduct custom monitoring (see section 4.15).

## **4.17 Monitoring outcomes**

Matrix scores may be adjusted as an outcome of monitoring if:

- a. evidence is provided to show requirements and/or recommendations have been met
- b. a breach of the Standards is discovered.

Depending on the nature of change to a matrix score, the SWRB may:

- a. cancel scheduled monitoring events or conduct them virtually instead of on-site
- b. require additional unscheduled monitoring events.

If the panel proposes additional monitoring events, we share the reasoning behind the proposal with the TEO and invite feedback. After considering the TEO's response, the SWRB makes a final decision on whether to schedule additional monitoring.

While monitoring may result in a change in matrix scores, it does not impact the prescription status published in the New Zealand Gazette and on the SWRB website. Prescription status is only updated at the time of prescription confirmation.

## **5 SWRB reporting**

The prescription and monitoring process aims to encourage continuous improvement by TEOs in the delivery and quality of prescribed social work programmes. The SWRB contributes to the continuous improvement of each TEO's programme through reporting on the prescription and monitoring of qualification delivery.

### **5.1 Prescription assessment and confirmation reports**

At the end of the final roundtable of the site visit, the panel lead gives the TEO executive and programme lead a verbal indication of the panel's preliminary recommendation to the SWRB Board.

If the SWRB has no further requests for information, a provisional prescription assessment or confirmation report is provided to the TEO within 20 working days of a panel visit. The report is a summary of findings and includes:

- the matrix score
- the prescription status
- any commendations, recommendations and requirements for the TEO, with rationale
- an outline of proposed custom monitoring (if any), with rationale
- the year in which the next prescription confirmation event is proposed (if qualification is prescribed).

The TEO has 20 working days from receipt of the provisional report to clarify any factual errors. After the 20 working days have passed, the report is presented at the SWRB Board's next scheduled meeting for decision. The final report is released to the TEO within 20 working days of that Board meeting.

### **5.2 Monitoring reports**

The SWRB provides a monitoring report to the relevant TEO within 20 working days of every custom monitoring event.

A monitoring report is only provided following annual monitoring if custom monitoring plans are changed. This may happen if:

- a TEO provides evidence of significant improvement in meeting requirements. In this case, scheduled monitoring may be conducted virtually instead of requiring an on-site visit, rescheduled to a later date, or custom monitoring events may be cancelled as they are no longer required.
- concerns arise about a possible breach of the Standards. In this case, custom monitoring may be scheduled or upgraded from virtual to on-site visit according to the nature of the monitoring findings.

Monitoring reports include the updated matrix score and rationale for the change. If a raised matrix score would result in additional unscheduled monitoring events, a provisional report is provided before

the final report. The TEO has 20 working days to provide feedback before the matrix score and report are finalised.

### **5.3 Thematic reporting**

Every year, the SWRB produces an annual prescription and monitoring report on the aggregated analysis of trends emerging from within the social work education sector.

These 'learnings from' reports are collated from education visits and other engagement activities across the academic year (January to December), including the annual SWRB ākongā survey. This report provides a broad overview of issues, trends, innovations, and challenges. It also collates requirements, recommendations, and commendations. This report is shared directly with TEOs and other key stakeholders, and is made available to the public via the SWRB website. Wherever possible, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, learnings and case study examples are shared, with the agreement of the TEO, as notable practice examples.

### **5.4 Publication of prescription reports**

When a decision to prescribe a new qualification is made, the prescription status of the qualification is gazetted and published on the SWRB website. This information is updated as any changes occur.

Our intent is to move towards publishing reports in full for each TEO's prescription assessment and confirmation. Reports will not contain any personal or commercially sensitive information. TEOs are expected to ensure that current and prospective ākongā are aware of the current prescription status of their programme(s).

## **6 Prescription and monitoring panels**

Prescription and monitoring panels provide expert advice and recommendations to the SWRB Board on:

- whether proposed and currently prescribed social work qualifications meet the SWRB Education Standards
- prescription status
- proposed monitoring programmes.

Panels assess the evidence provided, obtain feedback from other sources including stakeholders, and make recommendations to the SWRB Board on any proposed or existing social work qualification leading to registration.

Under the Act, the Board is ultimately responsible for social work qualification prescription and monitoring.

### **6.1 Panel composition and monitoring decisions**

The SWRB appoints a panel to assess each qualification being proposed or confirmed. If required, a panel may also be appointed for custom monitoring.

Panels are constituted to ensure inclusion of social work, tertiary education, te ao Māori, regulatory, and evaluative experience. Panel members are selected to ensure these areas of experience (and others as needed) are available to provide robust independent judgement on whether a qualification meets the SWRB Education Standards. Panel leads are appointed to direct panel activities.

The selection of panel members will be notified to the Board. All panellists will be training and inducted according to SWRB prescription and monitoring requirements.

## **Essential panel membership**

A panel for new qualification prescription and prescription confirmation is comprised of a minimum of three to a maximum of six people with evaluative, monitoring and assessment experience. The other areas of expertise required on each panel are:

- panel chairing
- social work education, including a registered social worker with social work academic experience
- te ao Māori, including at least one panellist who is tangata whenua.

Panel members are likely to bring expertise from more than one area.

For custom monitoring, panel membership may be less than three people depending on the reason custom monitoring is required. This is discussed in section 4.15.

## **Additional panel membership**

In some instances, panels may include additional members with regulatory and/or educational evaluative experience and expertise. Where the inclusion of additional panellists is deemed necessary, the SWRB will inform the TEO of the rationale. Additional panellists may bring expertise in areas such as:

- non-social work academia/education
- international social work academia
- employing social workers and/or providing field education placements
- being a recent social work graduate (less than 5 years since qualification).

Additional panellists are only used if specialised expertise is required. The SWRB will only select an international social work academic if they are already in Aotearoa New Zealand and hold a current New Zealand practising certificate.

Cost to the TEO is a key consideration. Panels are constituted with the minimum number of people the SWRB considers necessary to effectively evaluate whether the qualification and programme delivery meets all regulatory requirements.

## **Conflicts of interest**

Panel members must disclose any conflict of interest (known or perceived) upon invitation to join a panel. The TEO is advised of the proposed panellists and asked to declare any conflict of interest (known or perceived) before the panel membership is finalised for a particular prescription or monitoring event.

## **Observer**

An observer may be included on the panel. The observer does not participate in making recommendations to the SWRB Board but is included to build capability in regulatory evaluation of social work programmes. An observer may be asked for their observations on the panel process or findings after a report is completed, supporting the SWRB's commitment to continuous improvement.

If an observer is proposed for a panel, they and the TEO will be asked to declare any conflict of interest before the observer is confirmed. There is no cost to the TEO for an observer included on a panel.

## **Prescription and monitoring panel activities**

The activities undertaken by each panel vary depending on the purpose (new prescription, prescription confirmation, or monitoring) and current matrix score (in the case of monitoring).

Panels follow the SWRB methodology for prescription and monitoring, applying the SWRB values and Regulatory Strategy.

Activities may include:

- desk reviews of documentation submitted by TEOs
- planning key lines of enquiry for site visits, virtual monitoring, and requests for further information
- virtual interviews – may be a selection of panel or whole panel
- site visits – if required, up to 3 panel members may attend a site visit. The panel lead will decide which panel members should attend, based on key lines of enquiry for the visit
- producing a report to the SWRB Board including advice and recommendations on prescription status, custom monitoring and timing of next prescription confirmation

## Appendix A: Weaving kaupapa Māori into the future of social work education and regulation

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### He ara pūkenga, he ara tauwhiro, hei whakamana mātā waka

The many pathways of knowledge, the many pathways of social work, upholding the dignity of all

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The purpose of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act) is to protect the safety of the public and enhance the professionalism of social workers. To this end the Board has designed the SWRB Education Standards 2024 to ensure that graduates of prescribed social work programmes have the knowledge, skills and competence to practise social work safely.

Section 100 of the Act requires the Board to ensure the aims and aspirations of Māori are an ongoing priority. Tangata whenua advisors and some key Māori models have guided and informed the development of the Education Standards and prescription and monitoring methodology.

He Arapaki, the SWRB Māori Development Strategy and Action Plan, aligns closely with the key principles and responsibilities set out in the Act. He Arapaki embeds kaupapa Māori into the SWRB's approach, drawing on important frameworks such as Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū, Tukutuku Rau, and the Kaitiakitanga framework.

These frameworks, along with other Māori models, ensure that social workers' competencies are grounded in Māori knowledge systems and values, reinforcing the Board's obligations under section 100 of the Act to prioritise Māori aspirations and involvement in the regulatory framework.

The SWRB whakatauākī captures the connection between Māori values and the SWRB's regulatory role in setting educational standards.

- He Ara Pūkenga – drawing on ancient Māori knowledge and teachings
- He Ara Tauwhiro – embedding Māori esoteric knowledge into core business functions
- Hei Whakamana Mātā Waka – ensuring the SWRB is a modern regulator through active partnering with Māori.

'Pathways of knowledge' and 'pathways of social work' reflect the Board's regulatory responsibilities to ensure that TEOs develop qualifications that produce social work graduates who are qualified to apply for registration under the Act.

These pathways are aligned with the SWRB's core values – matatika, manaaki, mahitahi, and māia – which correspond to the Pou of the Education Standards: rangatiratanga, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, all bound together by the unifying principle of whakawhanaungatanga.

The Pou of the SWRB Education Standards represent the structural elements of a wharehenui (meeting house). They symbolise the broader cultural and social responsibility to protect, guide, and uplift the profession, in a way that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The SWRB Education and Training Framework not only meets the SWRB's legal and regulatory obligations but also guides a culturally responsive and inclusive approach to social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Te Pou Tūhono**

Te Pou Tūhono reflect the centrality of people and relationships in social work education:

- Rangatiratanga | Governance
- Manaakitanga | The ākongā journey
- Kaitiakitanga | Curriculum and field education.

The Pou of Whakawhanaungatanga is embedded throughout.

The SWRB is committed to ensuring that there is tangata whenua representation on all prescription and monitoring panels.

# Appendix B: How the SWRB assesses risk in prescription and monitoring

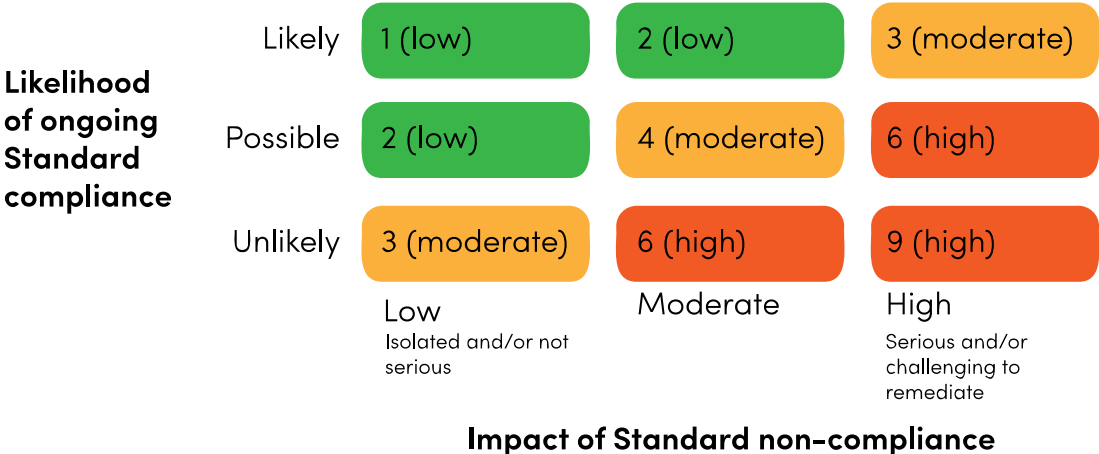
The SWRB uses a risk assessment model to prescribe and monitor according to need, rather than employing a one-size-fits-all methodology. The SWRB uses a three-by-three matrix (Figure B1) which is a standard tool used across business, assessment and regulation. Using this matrix, we map the likelihood of each Standard continuing to be met against the severity of impact if the Standard is not met during the prescription period. Appendix C provides information on how the matrix is applied.

The prescription and monitoring panel scores each qualification against the relevant Standard. The panel then considers the matrix scores for all Standards and makes an on-balance decision to reach the overall matrix score. Scores for each Standard are not averaged as there are many variables which can be weighted differently.

The panel uses regulatory judgement to arrive at the overall matrix score which determines the prescription status of a qualification. Evidence provided by the TEO, and the rationale applied to that evidence for the score given, is clearly stated in prescription and monitoring reports.

In multi-provider, unified degree situations, each partner TEO is assessed and assigned the appropriate matrix score which informs the final prescription status of the unified degree.

**Figure B1: Risk matrix**



To inform the overall matrix score, the panel considers the requirements that must be met to keep a TEO compliant with the Education Standards. Requirements that are simple to achieve in a short timeframe carry less weight and may result in a lower overall matrix score. Complex requirements that are expected to take a longer time to achieve carry more weight and may result in a higher overall matrix score. Commendations are also considered as they are usually a strong indication that a Standard will continue to be met.

The extent and frequency of monitoring activities and the time before the next prescription confirmation may vary depending on a TEO’s overall matrix score and the factors that contribute to it.

Table B1 provides a high-level view of how prescription outcomes are determined by the overall matrix score.

**Table B1: Translating matrix scores to prescription outcomes**

Matrix score	Prescription outcome
1 or 2 (low risk)	Prescribed with commendation
3 or 4 (moderate risk)	Prescribed
6 (high risk)	Prescribed with requirements
9 (severe risk)	May be declined or revoked <b>or</b> May be prescribed with requirements*

\*Where there is a reasonable expectation that Standards can be met within specified time without posing unacceptable risk

# Appendix C: How the SWRB uses the matrix

We look at each Education Standard using a three-step process.

## Step 1: Evidence review

The panel reviews their findings from the documentation provided by the TEO and the site visit. They analyse their collated findings and comments alongside any agreed commendations, recommendations and requirements for that Standard.

## Step 2: Ongoing compliance assessment

We then consider the likelihood of the Standard continuing to be met during the prescription period. This determines which row the matrix score sits in.

## Step 3: Impact assessment

We consider the likely impact if the Standard is not met to decide which column the matrix score sits. Where the row (likelihood of ongoing compliance) and column (impact of non-compliance) meet determines the TEO’s matrix score for that Standard.

## An example application of the matrix

The following hypothetical example illustrates assessment against Education Standard 3.3 Field education placement requirements.

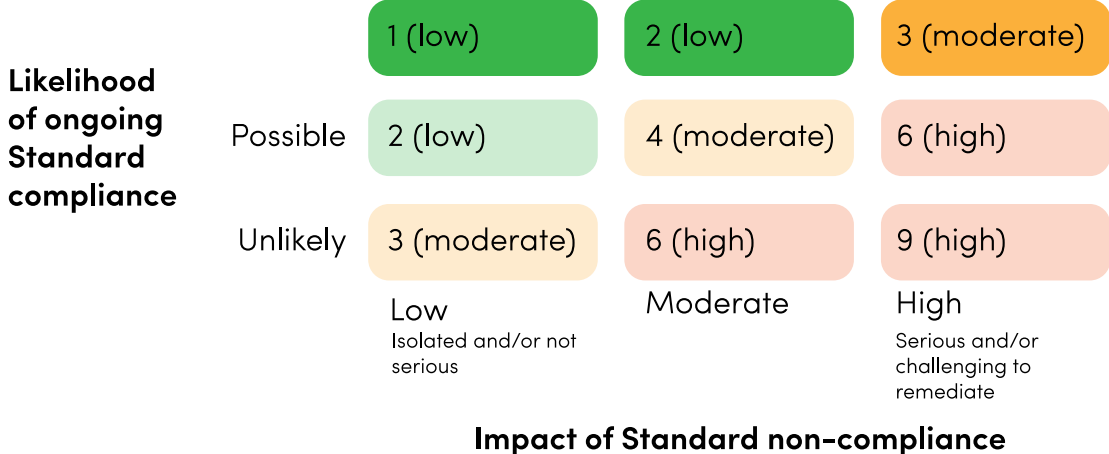
### Step 1: Evidence review

After reviewing the TEO’s evidence and conducting a site visit, the panel agrees that the TEO meets all aspects of Standard 3.3 and demonstrates exemplary practices in exceeding the requirements of 3.3.6 relating to field education supervision. The panel agrees that the TEO should receive a commendation for Standard 3.3.

### Step 2: Ongoing compliance assessment

The panel considers the likelihood that this TEO will continue to meet Standard 3.3 until their next prescription confirmation. The panel find that the TEO’s policies and processes are robust, so agree that it is likely that Standard 3.3 will continue to be met. Because this Standard is **likely to be met**, the score will be in the top row of the matrix (highlighted in figure C1).

Figure C1: Mapping the likelihood that Standard 3.3 will continue to be met

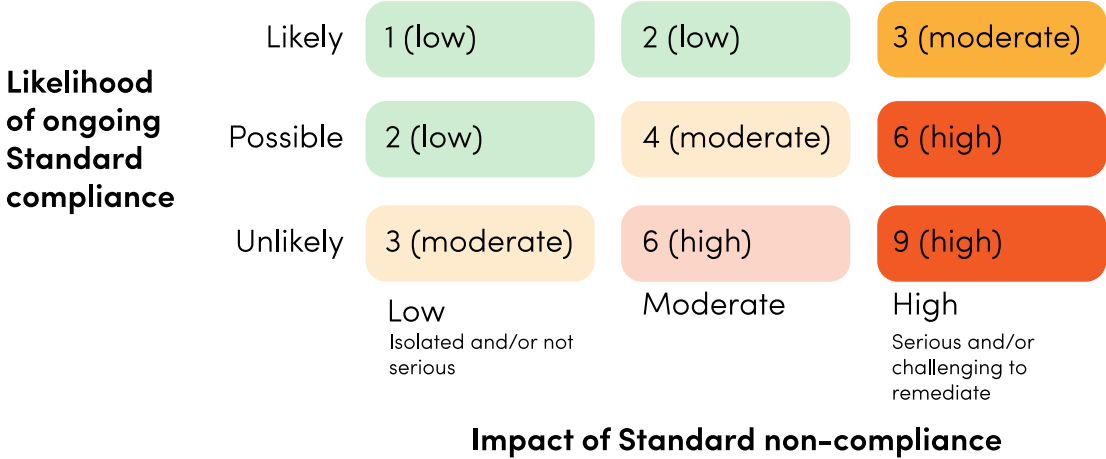


**Step 3: Impact assessment**

The panel considers what the impact would be if something went wrong that resulted in Standard 3.3 not being met during the prescription period. The success of field education is vital to achieving the outcome of graduates being competent to practise social work safely. An issue in delivering field education is likely to impact all ākonga which makes it widespread. It is also likely to be challenging to remediate in time to ensure all ākonga have the quality of field education experience they need to become safe, competent practitioners.

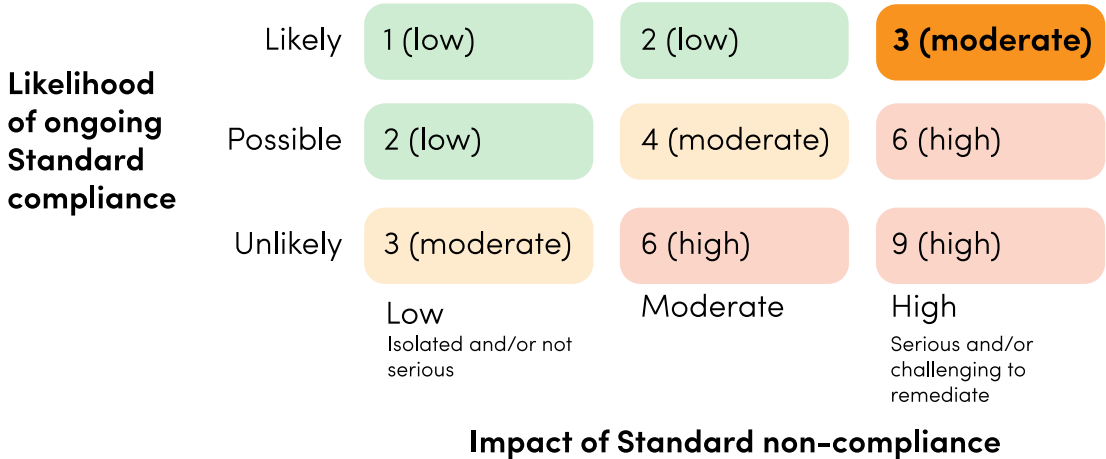
Because the impact of this Standard not being met is both **widespread** and **challenging to fix**, the score will be in the right-hand column of the matrix (highlighted in figure C2).

**Figure C2: Mapping the impact of Standard 3.3 being unmet**



Where the row from figure D1 and the column from figure C2 meet determines the matrix score (highlighted in figure C3). In this example, the matrix score for Standard 3.3 is 3 (moderate) because this Standard is **likely** to be met by the TEO and the impact if the Standard is not met is **significant**.

**Figure C3: Determining the matrix score**



The field education experience (including preparation for it) is critical to graduate outcomes, so the impact of Standard 3.3 being unmet will always be significant. The lowest possible score for this particular Standard is 3 (moderate). However, a TEO can still achieve an overall matrix score of 1 or 2 (low) if it performs well against other individual Standards.