



Social Workers Registration Board

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

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*

**SWRB Programme
Recognition Standards:
Kōrero tuku iho document**

February 2022

Contents

The purpose of this Kōrero tuku iho document – honouring mana tipuna	3
Brief overview.....	3
Programme Recognition Standards over time	3
Positioning the PRS review within a bi-cultural frame.....	4
The 2012 Programme Recognition Standards review.....	4
The 2016 Programme Recognition Standards review	6
Related documentation.....	7
Background on the legal mandate for programme recognition standards.....	8
Background on the professional mandate for programme recognition standards	9
Summary.....	9
References and background reading.....	10
Appendix 1: Timeline of social work education and programme recognition processes	11

The purpose of this Kōrero tuku iho document – honouring mana tipuna

The purpose of the Kōrero tuku iho document for the 2022 Programme Recognition Standards (PRS) review is to honour *mana tipuna*, the pathways that have led us to this point. By understanding and acknowledging past work on our PRS, we will be better informed to make decisions about the future direction for the PRS that will support social work education for years to come.

Brief overview

The SWRB first developed programme recognition standards for social work qualifying programmes in Aotearoa in 2005, following the introduction of the Social Workers Registration Act (SWRA) 2003. However, the history of accreditation or approval for social work courses began with the New Zealand Social Work Training Council (NZSWTC), which was later replaced by the New Zealand Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS). When NZCETSS was replaced by Te Kai Awhina Ahumahi (TKA) Industry Training Organisation, accreditation of courses was largely left with the educational institutions. The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) approval processes for social work programmes began in 2002, which increased the opportunity for professional social work input into the quality of social work programmes.

The current PRS contain six standards that have remained constant since their initial articulation by SWRB in 2005: subsequent reviews have revised their clauses and wording, without altering the architecture. This document includes commentary on the reviews that took place in 2012 and 2016, as well as presenting the legal mandate, the professional mandate and aspects of the historical context.

Programme Recognition Standards over time

In Aotearoa, accreditation or approval for social work courses was initially undertaken by the New Zealand Social Work Training Council (NZSWTC), which was later replaced by the New Zealand Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS) (Hunt, Staniforth & Beddoe, 2019, p. 895). NZCETSS was replaced by Te Kai Awhina Ahumahi (TKA) Industry Training Organisation, but TKA left accreditation of courses largely with the educational institutions. In 2002, the ANZASW began approval processes for social work programmes. This increased the opportunity for professional social work input into the quality of social work programmes. The ANZASW approvals process was aligned with the ANZASW ten practice standards (McNabb, 2014).

The SWRB first developed programme recognition standards for social work qualifying programmes in Aotearoa in 2005. This was initiated through the legal mandate of the Social Workers Registration Act (2003) – which is also covered below in the consideration of the legal mandate – and the SWRB proposal in 2004 that the baseline social work qualification should be a minimum of a 3-year Bachelor's degree. The SWRB Steering Group notes for the 2012 PRS review from 2012 suggest that 'at the time the SWRB was set up [in 2004] the articulated programme recognition standards were based on existing guiding documents, broad and aspirational'. A research article by Hunt, Staniforth and Beddoe (2019) described stakeholder views that the initial consultation processes in 2004 had had tight policy-driven timeframes that restricted comprehensive consultation, with

some participants feeling that the process potentially breached s.99 of the SWRA (2003) and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

PRS reviews should occur every four years. Sets of SWRB documentation from the 2012 and 2016 reviews were accessed for preparation of the Kōrero tuku iho document. Ballantyne (2016b) suggests that there is an intrinsic relationship between the core competence standards (that identify minimum standards of practice for the profession), the graduate profile (that indicates that graduating students should meet these competencies at a beginning practitioner level) and the PRS themselves. What a beginning (or advanced, or expert) level of competence might look like is not clearly identified within the 2012 and 2016 documentation.

Ballantyne (2016b) underscored the importance of the programme recognition standards review process, indicating that this is the mechanism by which reform of social work education can be implemented. Programme recognition was described as applying:

... three sets of criteria that relate to the social work curriculum: these include the ten *core competence standards* that must be assessed before completion of the final student placement; a *graduate profile* of fourteen (not eleven, as stated above) attributes that graduates must achieve (and that programme learning outcomes must be mapped to); and ten *curriculum indicators* (Ballantyne, 2016b).

The current (2022) PRS review was initially scheduled to occur in 2020 but was postponed due to the exigencies of pandemic response. Some adjustments to the PRS have been made in relation to pandemic response <https://swrb.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SWRB-PRS-position-at-Levels-three-and-four-2021.pdf>.

Positioning the PRS review within a bi-cultural frame

The SWRA 2003 was amended by the Social Workers Registration Legislation Act in 2019. Section 100 of the SWRA (2019) obliges the Board to consult with Māori. Initially, social work programmes in Aotearoa were largely based on imported knowledge, mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States (McNabb & Connolly, 2017), with variable acknowledgment of indigenous knowledges and practices. Bicultural – and in some instances, predominantly tangata whenua/by Māori for Māori – perspectives have increasingly been adopted and recognised by the SWRB, ANZASW and educational bodies. This has been a slow but largely accepted process of decolonising the curriculum and its delivery. Consultation processes during periods of legislative and policy review have increasingly been shaped through recognition of te Tiriti principles and the importance of equitable co-design of both process and content. Indicative of where tangata whenua and tauwiwi relational processes are now positioned are the focus on matauranga Māori within the Te Pūkenga degree development; the SWRB consultation process for the Scope of Practice; the adoption of He Arapaki within the SWRB and the emphasis on Māori-led consultation during this current review of the SWRB Programme Recognition Standards.

The 2012 Programme Recognition Standards review

The 2012 PRS review took a year from its instigation in December 2011 to submission to the Board in November 2012. The format for the review was to establish a programme recognition steering committee to ensure a process whereby stakeholders were consulted;

and to engage an external project manager to manage the review process. Nominations for sector representatives for the steering group were invited from the three education sector groups (universities, polytechnics & ITPs, accessed via CSWEANZ), the two professional associations (ANZASW and TWSWA), three major employer groups (CYF, Health, and Social Service Sector), APASWE, Universities New Zealand and NZQA.

A discussion document addressing current issues in the social work education literature and the SWRB programme recognition standards was sent to all steering committee members in February 2012. The preamble to the discussion document states that:

The programme standards for recognised social work programmes in New Zealand are set out in Section 3 of the Policy Statement “The Process for Recognition/Re-recognition of Social Work Qualifications in New Zealand” which was last reviewed August 2011. There are six major areas under which standards are specified: Governance (6 measures); Curriculum (11 measures); Student Centredness (6 measures); Professional and stakeholder collaboration (4 measures); Resources (8 measures); and Quality Assurance (11 measures). These map closely to standards articulated internationally such as the IASSW/IFSW Global standards for Education and Training of the Social Work Profession, and standards from most of the English-speaking countries where New Zealand overseas registered social workers were educated.

This discussion document drew heavily on the document prepared by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) for the review of their standards. The steering committee members then took responsibility for eliciting feedback about the PRS from their respective sectors, and the steering group took responsibility for redeveloping the graduate profile and graduate attributes. Responses to the discussion document were circulated to the steering group members with the expectation that following consultation, they would forward comments on to the project manager who would then draft the revised PRS.

Observations can be made about the 2012 PRS review process: The discussion document circulated to the steering group in 2012 indicated a high level of reliance on mapping the RPS according to established global standards and international models (Australia, UK, USA and Ireland), with little attention to tangata whenua, te Tiriti and to bicultural practice within the context of Aotearoa. There was considerable emphasis on the selection of representatives for each stakeholder group, who were then tasked with liaising with their entire sector in order to elicit feedback regarding the redevelopment of the PRS, graduate profile and so on. The role of the project manager to collate and draft any changes to the programme recognition standards carried considerable responsibility to gauge the relative merit of feedback.

Commentary on the revised PRS (approved in 2012)

McNabb and Connolly’s 2017 consideration of the SWRB (and the Australian Association of Social Workers) recognition of social work programmes in relation to the IASSW/IFSW Global Standards contains the following critique of the programme recognition standards in 2015:

- Re equity: ‘The GS were strong on the expectation that programmes as a whole reflect social work principles, equity in particular (GS 1.3). The SWRB was limited in its expectations of programmes in this regard, and it minimally

discussed equity within its standards. The SWRB only mentioned service users as a broad-level stakeholder in programme review (SWRB 4.1). Student involvement in the programme is limited in both the AASW and SWRB standards. It is notable that students are not specifically included in governance of the programme as 'consumers', whereas service users or public consumers are specifically included' (p.42).

- The SWRB standards were less prescriptive of curricula than were the AASW standards.
- In terms of staffing, the GS required a statement of equity-based policies for staffing with considerations of gender, ethnicity, race and other forms of diversity (GS 5.4). Neither the AASW nor SWRB had an explicit policy on this. Having adequate administrative staff (GS 7.8) was not directly addressed by the SWRB.
- Indigenous rights– 'the SWRB and AASW feature indigenous rights and interests as a central feature of their policies. Conversely, there is limited coverage of indigenous rights and interests in the GS. [...] Global social work indigenous policy has been expanded in the recently revised global social work definition (IFSW and IASSW, 2014), which included indigenous knowledge as foundational, something that was previously absent in the definition' (p.43).
- Political action – 'The GS tenth core purpose is to 'engage in social and political action' [...] While the SWRB's graduate profile addresses the imperative to engage in social change, it does not extend to the more direct activism within the notion of 'social and political action'. This feature has been addressed by some commentators who are concerned that social work activism has been dampened by the effects of regulation and by the direction of professional associations generally (O'Brien, 2013). Better alignment of the GS with social action would require that both the SWRB and the AASW be more explicit about programmes evidencing engagement in social and political action within the curriculum and in wider practice.'

Overall, McNabb and Connolly considered that SWRB PRS did not specify methods of instruction in any detail.

The 2016 Programme Recognition Standards review

For the 2016 review, the SWRB hired a consultant, Marion Clark (formerly of the Nursing Council). She sent stakeholders a survey which included questions on the graduate profile; the curriculum; requirements for fieldwork placement; admission criteria; modes of delivery; and staffing requirements. The survey was informed by a literature review which leaned heavily on AASW documentation. The survey was followed by a workshop with about 46 attendees from education and other stakeholder groups, including employers, and a second round of targeted consultation (e.g. with educators and with field educators) following construction of draft revised standards.

The 2016 first consultation survey asked:

1.1 Are these attributes fit for purpose? Do they ensure that a newly graduated social worker is competent to practise in all settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand? Should they be more specific?

1.2 If not, please provide details of additional attributes you would like to see and the rationale for their inclusion. Should any be deleted? If so, which?

Ballantyne (2016a) critiqued the potential effectiveness of the survey method:

An opinion survey is a quick and relatively inexpensive way of providing a snapshot in time of survey participants' current satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a state of affairs. However, in relation to the reform of a nation's requirements for social work education it will leave some fundamental questions unanswered. A stakeholder opinion survey teaches us nothing about the strengths and weaknesses of the current social work curriculum, the differences between curricula, the impact of current curricula on social work students, or the readiness to practise of students.

SWRB documentation indicates that the initial survey (sent to key associations rather than to individual providers) elicited an overall 57% response rate and that several key stakeholders (such as Child, Youth and Family (CYF)) did not contribute responses.

Ballantyne added a further critique of the 2016 review, suggesting that to invite survey respondents to comment on the graduate profile, without recognising the relationship between the graduate profile and the core competence standards was a mistake, and that the separation of academic and practice measures of competence was a flawed process.

The workshop with educators (2.9.16) was critiqued by participants as it began with a presentation by CYF managers on the *Investing in Children* report, creating a perception of influence by statutory child protection over the PRS review process: overall, the content and process of the workshops indicated a low level of Tiriti partnership in acknowledgement of kawa, tikanga and the tangata whenua voice.

Related documentation

Documentation related to the **Kōrero tuku iho** of the Programme Recognition Standards (PRS) and the 2021–22 review are the following, the content of which may suggest potential principles and guidelines for the review:

- SWRB Ten Core Competence Standards
- SWRB Graduate profile
- SWRB Code of Conduct
- Scope of Practice – ‘In accordance with Part 1A section 5A, of the Act, a General Scope of Practice (“Scope”) has been developed as a high-level description of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand, for registered social work practitioners working across the breadth of social work roles’ (<https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2021-gs111>). The Scope of Practice suggests that relevant documents underpinning social work practice are ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi [1840], the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Joint Global Definition of Social Work [2014] and Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles [2018], the Aotearoa New Zealand Social Workers Association’s Code of Ethics [2019] and the Social Workers Registration Board’s Code of Conduct [2016] and Core Competence Standards [2015]’.
- Internal SWRB documentation regarding the construction and review of PRS.

- In addition to SWRB, professional, and national documents of relevance to the PRS review process, several academic projects have contributed summary, challenge and debate to the content and process of programme recognition standards and their review. Of particular note for the Kōrero tuku iho document are the contributions of:
 - The series of publications by the *Enhancing the Readiness to Practise of newly qualified Social Workers on Aotearoa New Zealand (Enhance R2P)* team, culminating in the *Professional Capabilities Framework* (Ballantyne et al., 2019). This project focused on the social work curriculum but is linked to other contributions by the lead authors of Ballantyne and Beddoe that are cited in this document, and which extend critique into the regulation and recognition of social work education. It is noted that some social work programmes, including Te Wananga o Aotearoa and Te Wananga o Raukawa, elected not to participate in this project. Therefore, the unique position that wānanga hold within social work education was not reflected in the scope, findings and outcomes of the project.
 - Doctoral studies regarding the development of the social work profession, registration and education in Aotearoa by leading social work academics in Aotearoa, namely Mary Nash, David McNabb and Sonya Hunt, who have published out of their research and often with their supervisors. These texts are acknowledged in the reference list at the end of this document.

Background on the legal mandate for programme recognition standards

Social work's governing legislation, the Social Workers Registration Act (SWRA) 2003, provides the legal mandate for programme recognition standards in Aotearoa. The SWRA (2003) established the SWRB with functions to protect the safety of the public by registering social workers and developing mechanisms to ensure that registered social workers are competent to practise, and accountable for their practice. The Board also has a mandate to promote the benefits of registration and enhance the professionalism of social workers. The SWRA 2003 was amended by the Social Workers Registration Legislation Act 2019. Changes to the Act commencing 27 February 2021 included the introduction of mandatory registration for social workers, protection of the title "social worker", and implementation of a Scope(s) of Practice to describe social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand (<https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2021-gs111>).

The SWRA (2003, s.99(f & i)) required the SWRB to recognise New Zealand qualifications for social work, and to promote and set standards to ensure that graduating social workers are at a beginning level of competence. Amendments enacted from 27 February 2021 made redundant the use of the term 'recognised' qualification, and convention now refers to 'prescribed' qualifications. Consultation on the PRS must take place with providers of social work education and the bodies that set standards for higher education qualifications, namely the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), which has delegated authority for programme approval from Universities New Zealand, and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Sections 100 and 101 respectively set out the Board's obligations for Māori, and for obtaining the views of ethnic and cultural groups.

Background on the professional mandate for programme recognition standards

The SWRB *Programme Recognition Standards* in its various iterations in 2012 and 2016 can be seen as a regulatory contribution to the professionalisation of social work through monitoring the quality of social work education that have been developed over a number of years and on a range of platforms. (A timeline for the development of social work education and of programme recognition processes is provided in Appendix 1.)

The PRS is therefore a key process (along with quality processes of approval, accreditation, monitoring and review from statutory and institutional bodies) that both standardises and ensures quality of social work education programmes. Reviews of the PRS are an important means of generating change in both curriculum process and content, and governance of social work programmes and have the opportunity to represent current best practice in social work education in Aotearoa.

Summary

SWRB Programme Recognition Standards (PRS) are the latest iteration of processes designed both to standardise and ensure the quality of social work education programmes in Aotearoa. Responsibility for the standards now rests with the SWRB as Crown regulator of the profession, but their antecedents have variously been located within employment and professional association domains. The current six standards have remained constant since their initial articulation in 2005: subsequent reviews have revised their clauses and wording, without altering the architecture. The form and content of the PRS, whilst evolving over time, was initially influenced by overseas models from Anglophone countries and some commentaries (e.g. McNabb & Connolly, 2017) suggest that they underemphasise service user and student perspectives, and the importance of the role of activism in social work. The PRS do include reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to bicultural practice and competence to work with Māori but can be critiqued for an under-recognition of foundational indigenous knowledge, practice and values, and the significant developments within social work education represented by the two wānanga.

PRS reviews are now mandated by the SWRA (2003 and 2019) on a four-yearly basis. Critique of previous review processes has suggested that these have been time- and policy-driven, and that the methodology of review has been hierarchical, perhaps influenced by pre-determined assumptions, less effective in terms of reach and response, and less consultative than some stakeholders would like. Neither process nor content have significantly reflected an active Treaty partnership, and this has emerged as a key factor that is now shaping the 2021-22 PRS review and its processes of consultation.

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Appendix 1: Timeline of social work education and programme recognition processes

1949 – establishment of first social work education programme (Diploma in Social Sciences) at VUW.

1964 – most social workers still learning ‘on the job’ (*Training in social work in 1964: A New Zealand survey*, Paper presented at the NZASW Inaugural conference 1964, Auckland, New Zealand, cited in Hunt, Staniforth & Beddoe, 2019, p. 895).

1969 – only 14% of social workers held a social work qualification – Daniels, K. (1973). Social work education: A time of crisis. *The New Zealand Social Worker: News and Opinions*, 9(4), 43–55, cited in Beddoe (2014, p.19).

1976 – Four-year BSW at Massey commenced (followed by qualifications at the University of Canterbury in 1980, and the Auckland College of Education (ACE) in 1982).

1980s – from the 1980s, the tertiary education sector saw the establishment of the three wānanga that enable tertiary qualifications to be taught from a basis of matauranga Māori.

1981 – a large study of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand reported that only 12% of social workers held a social work qualification (Rochford & Robb, 1981, cited in Beddoe 2014)

1992 – the ANZASW constitution was revised to include a commitment to undertake social work in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi (Nash, 2001: 41)

2002 onwards – two wānanga (Te Wananga o Raukawa (TWOR) and Te Wananga o Aotearoa, TWOA) have provided recognised social work degrees developed from Te Ao Māori perspectives and values that have matauranga Māori as the core of their social work curriculum, acknowledging non-Māori knowledge where appropriate within a bi-cultural foundation. The TWOR Poumanawa Mātauranga Toiora Whānau (3 year degree) was first approved in 2002, with the Poutuarongo Toiora Whānau (4 year programme) recognised by SWRB in August 2013 with delivery beginning in 2014. The TWOA programmes began in 2004, with the three-year degree recognised by SWRB in 2008 and the four-year degree in 2015.

2003 – Social Workers Registration Act passed

2004 – Global Standards for social work education established. McNabb and Connolly (2017, p.37) described the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (2004) as consisting of nine sets of standards:

... the school's core purpose or mission statement; programme objectives and outcomes; programme curricula including fieldwork; core curricula; professional staff; social work students; structure, administration, governance and resources; cultural diversity; and social work values and ethics. They are based on the international social work definition and also on the 13 core purposes of the social work profession that have been developed.

2004 – SWRB proposed the new qualification benchmark be a minimum of a three-year bachelor's degree in social work – this benchmark was mandated in 2006.

2005 – programme recognition standards were developed by the Education and Practice Standards committee of the Board.

2012 – review of PRS

2012 – SWRB proposed that benchmark for Bachelor's degrees be 4 years.

2013 – SWRB sets out its programme recognition standards expectations (SWRB, 2013). Beddoe (2014, p.22) commented that these recognition criteria were 'generally not very prescriptive, compared to other jurisdictions, with the exception relating to the requirements for field placements' and that they generally aligned with ANZASW Practice Standards.

2014, July – **Global definition of social work** ratified by IFSW/IASSWE:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.

This is a layered definition with the intention of amplification at regional and national levels. (Aotearoa is in the Asia-Pacific region.)

2015 – Amplification of Joint Global Definition for Asia Pacific Region. Approved by IFSW-Asia-Pacific and APASWE on October 22nd, 2015, ratified at IFSW/IASSWE global conference, Seoul, 2016.

The Asia Pacific region represents many different communities and peoples. The region has been shaped by its migrations and indigenous and colonising histories. It contains some of the richest and some of the most economically deprived nations. It is a region where East meets West, and South meets North with differing religious, philosophic and political perspectives. It is a region that has been severely impacted by climate change, overuse of finite resources, natural, and human-made disasters, yet the strength and resilience of its peoples have been demonstrated over and over again.

Professional social work in the Asia Pacific Region has an emphasis on:

Realising the care and compassion of our Profession in ensuring that all people are provided with adequate social protection so that their needs are met and human rights and dignity safeguarded;

Recognising the importance of faith, spirituality and/or religion in people's lives and holding respect for varying belief systems;

The celebration of diversity and peaceful negotiation of conflict;

Affirming the region's indigenous and local knowledges and practices alongside critical and research-based practice/practice-based research approaches to social work practice and,

Encouraging innovative, sustainable social work and social development practices in the preservation of our environment.

2016 – review of PRS

2021, 27th February – introduction of mandatory registration for social workers, protection of the title “social worker”, and implementation of a Scope(s) of Practice to describe social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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