



2015 and 2022 EPAS Regional Accreditor Standards for Faculty Qualifications

Context

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Department of Social Work Accreditation, has received questions from programs who are accredited by different regional accreditors recognized by the [Council on Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#), regarding regional accreditor faculty qualifications to teach at the graduate level. The primary issue raised by regional accreditors' is that master's level social workers are teaching courses at the graduate level that do not have a doctoral degree. The goal is to support programs as they navigate the question of faculty qualifications for baccalaureate and master's social work programs.

Current CSWE Standards

CSWE's Board of Accreditation (BOA) reviews programs using the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit baccalaureate and master's social work programs. CSWE's accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's program faculty recognize the master's degree in social work as a qualification for teaching in a social work program.

The CSWE-BOA accredited baccalaureate social work degree remains the requirement for BSW-level field instructors ([2015 EPAS](#) Accreditation Standard (AS) B2.2.9; [2022 EPAS](#) AS B3.3.6) and admission in advanced standing status MSW programs ([2015 EPAS](#) AS M3.1.3; [2022 EPAS](#) AS M4.1.3).

The CSWE-BOA accredited master's social work degree remains the requirement for teaching social work practice courses ([2015 EPAS](#) AS 3.2.2; [2022 EPAS](#) AS 4.2.2), MSW-level field instructors ([2015 EPAS](#) AS M2.2.9; [2022 EPAS](#) AS M3.3.6); credentials of the minimum number of BSW or MSW faculty required ([2015 EPAS](#) AS B/M3.2.4; [2022 EPAS](#) AS B/M4.2.1); credentials of the BSW or MSW program director ([2015 EPAS](#) AS B/M3.3.4(a); [2022 EPAS](#) B/M 4.3.4(b)); and admission into a professional practice doctoral program ([Accreditation Standards for Professional Practice Doctoral Programs in Social Work](#), AS 3.0.2).

Regional Accreditor Expectations

Regional accreditors typically expect teaching faculty to have earned the "terminal degree for the discipline" or at the very least, to have earned a degree one level higher than the level in which they teach (i.e., a master's degree to teach at the baccalaureate level, a doctoral degree to teach at the master's level). Institutional accreditation standards by regional accrediting bodies typically supersede CSWE standards that may specify different qualifications regarding a terminal degree for teaching in a university or college.

CSWE encourages programs to provide a clear link between faculty qualifications and the courses assigned to each person, both full and part time faculty. More doctoral-prepared faculty are available to teach in graduate programs; hence, regional accreditors may question the use of master's prepared faculty to teach at the master's level. More important than the degree, however, is the expectation that institutions justify the decision to have specific persons teach specific courses. That justification may include years of experience, awards and honors, special licensing or training in an area of the curriculum or other criteria that the program deems important. Ultimately, it is the program's responsibility to explain and document the qualifications of their faculty for teaching all courses in their programs.

What CSWE Can Provide

In the past, regional accreditors have been satisfied with a letter from CSWE declaring that the MSW is considered the terminal degree for practice. As some regional accreditors are looking at teaching faculty credentials more closely, CSWE continues to value the MSW for teaching in baccalaureate and master's degree programs. While the MSW and years of practice experience are specified in the EPAS for teaching practice and field courses, the CSWE-BOA also values the MSW for teaching any course in the social work curriculum as determined by the program.

CSWE's Department of Social Work Accreditation on behalf of CSWE's BOA will, upon request, provide letters to support programs as their institutions undergo regional accreditation reviews. The letter will emphasize that our current accreditation standards recognize the master's degree in social work as a sufficient and qualifying degree to teach in a social work program. Please contact your program's accreditation specialist if you are in need of a letter for your institutional accreditation review.