STANDARDS
FOR ACCREDITATION

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CASWE-ACFTS STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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The mission of social work education, at Baccalaureate and Master levels, is to promote excellence in social work education, scholarship, and practice with a human rights and responsibility and social justice focus. To achieve these goals, social work education fosters learning objectives for students, statements of what students are expected to know and to be able to do, which link student learning objectives to the promotion of excellence in social work education, scholarship, and practice with a social justice focus.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education-Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (CASWE-ACFTS), through its Standards for Accreditation, accredits Baccalaureate and Master level social work programs. These standards are normative in nature and support academic excellence for professional education, as well as the relevance of education programs to professional practice. In linking social work theory, research, policy and practice, social work education is grounded by intended learning objectives for students defined in this document. This document is aimed at strengthening both education and the profession, a much needed development in a time when social work identity and domain have been increasingly challenged. However, these policies and standards are not aimed at uniformity of social work education; instead, they are intended to promote the uniqueness and diversity of social work programs across Canada and enable them to better respond to their respective contexts and partners.

The Structure of this Document: Principles, Preambles and Standards
This document is structured as follows. First, the principles guiding the accreditation of social work education programs are stated. The accreditation standards are then presented, organized in four domains:

1. Program mission and goals;
2. Program governance, structure and resources;
3. Program content: Curriculum and field education; and

In addition, each domain is accompanied by a brief preamble that outlines the principles of social work education programs in a specific domain

Principles Guiding Accreditation of Social Work Education Programs
1. The purpose of Standards for Accreditation is to ensure excellence in social work education and continuing quality improvement in social work curriculum and pedagogy across Canada. All programs must address the principles that follow.

2. Guided by the principles of fundamental human rights and responsibilities and respect for human diversity, social work seeks to facilitate well-being and participation of people, promote social and economic justice, address structural sources of inequities, and eliminate
conditions that infringe human and civil rights. Grounded in reflective practice and engaged in persistent inquiry into theoretical and research bases in the field, social work employs professional approaches and interventions to enhance individual, family, group, community, and population well-being.

3. Social work education links together the interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge base of social work and professional practice.

4. Core learning objectives for students link student learning objectives to the promotion of excellence in social work education, scholarship, and practice with a social justice focus and guide both curriculum design and the delivery of field education.

5. The integration of knowledge, values and skills in the context of field education is a critical and distinctive aspect of social work education; therefore, field education is considered the central component of social work education.

6. Within the framework of accreditation standards, social work academic units have flexibility to deliver programs that highlight their uniqueness and respond to particular socio-cultural and political-economic contexts.

7. All social work program locations and formats, e.g., on-campus, decentralized, intensive, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-driven approaches, are encompassed by the standards.

8. Social work programs encompass a range of theoretical perspectives and encourage critical thinking, discussion and debate. Social work core values and ethical practices are explicitly articulated in Canadian social work programs.

9. Standards encourage and support diversity and social justice in all aspects/domains of social work programs. Diversity throughout this document refers to a range of characteristics including, but not limited to: age, colour, culture, disability/non-disability status, ethnic or linguistic origin, gender, health status, heritage, immigration status, geographic origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, political orientation, gender and sexual identities, and socioeconomic status.

10. Social work programs acknowledge the importance and complexity of Canadian society, including the dynamics affecting Anglphone, Francophone, Indigenous peoples, and newcomer populations.

11. Social work programs acknowledge and challenge the injustices of Canada's colonial history and continuing colonization efforts as they relate to the role of social work education in Canada and the self-determination of the Indigenous peoples.

12. Francophone people are specifically highlighted as constituents of Canadian history and identity and social work education programs ensure representation of related concerns and issues.
13. Partners/constituents include but are not limited to: social work students, social work educators, alumni, employers, practitioners, professional associations, regulators, service users and community members.

14. Standards identify a clear distinction between the intended learning objectives for students of Baccalaureate level (BSW) and Master level (MSW) university education.
Domain I
Program Mission and Goals

1.1  Mission Statement and Goals

Preamble
Social work academic units have a formal written statement that outlines the overarching purpose and goals of their program and the principles that guide and shape the program structure and content. Congruent with the values of social work and social work education, the mission statement reflects the unique context in which the program operates.

Standards
SB/M 1.1.1 The mission statement:
   i.  Is consistent with the values of social work (as outlined in the preamble of the document);
   
   ii. Identifies any uniqueness of the program;

   iii. Includes program goals which describe more specific program features deriving from the program’s mission.

SB/M 1.1.2 The social work academic unit demonstrates an ongoing process of reviewing its mission through consultation with partners.
2.1 Program Governance and Structure

Preamble
The social work program takes a leadership position in respect to social work education. To this end, the governance and structure facilitate collaborative relationships with partners while retaining a clear identity within the university and autonomy in respect to program delivery.

Standards

**SB/M 2.1.1** The social work program is implemented through a distinct academic unit which has a clear identity within the university.

**SB/M 2.1.2** The academic unit is under the direction of a full-time director with demonstrated scholarly, professional and administrative competence in social work education.

**SB/M 2.1.3** The degrees conferred are distinctive social work degrees awarded by a degree granting institution recognized by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

**SB/M 2.1.4** Within the policies and standards of its parent university, the academic unit has a decisive voice in:
   i. Determining structure,
   ii. Decision-making policies,
   iii. Initiating, administering, extending or curtailing its own programs, and
   iv. Hiring faculty and professional staff.

**SB/M 2.1.5** The academic unit provides partners with opportunities to participate in policy formulation, program development and program evaluation.

**SB/M 2.1.6** The academic unit ensures that students, faculty, staff and field instructors are informed about existing university policies and procedures regarding harassment, appeals, discrimination, disability accommodation and codes of conduct.

**SB/M 2.1.7** Within the policies and standards of its parent university, the academic unit provides for faculty participation in the development of its mission, goals and objectives, and in the development and operation of its programs.

2.2 Financial and Physical Resources

Preamble
It is recognized that the manner in which social work education is offered is constantly evolving and that there is no ideal model of delivery. Regardless of delivery strategy, academic units will be sufficiently resourced to deliver social work education in a manner that is comparable to social
work academic units of similar size and configuration in a way that meets normative expectations across the country.

**Standards**

**SB/M 2.2.1** The academic unit has access to a budget and resources, including community resources, adequate for the achievement of its mission and delivery of its programs, and congruent with the requirements of excellence in professional social work education, both within the university and practicum settings.

**SB/M 2.2.2** Where the academic units increase accessibility of their programs to a range of students through all forms of program delivery, all iterations of the program achieve the same standards of academic proficiency and professional competence.

**SB/M 2.2.3** The academic unit has access to sufficient physical space to realize its goals. This includes private office space for faculty and adequate office space for professional staff, administrative personnel, as well as space for students, sessional and part-time instructors, community meetings, and for student socialization.

**2.3 Faculty and Professional Staff**

**Preamble**
The overall quality of the program is fundamentally dependent upon the quality of the faculty and professional staff. They are fully competent to fulfill their duties, represent a range of experience and perspectives and have recognized competence and/or expertise in their respective areas.

**Standards**

**SB/M 2.3.1** The academic unit has sufficient numbers of qualified tenured/tenure track, permanent faculty, professional staff and field instructors to plan, administer and deliver its programs.

**SB/M 2.3.2** In faculty and professional staff recruitment, the academic unit seeks to reflect diversity.

**SB/M 2.3.3** Social work faculty members are normally expected to engage in teaching, research, scholarship, publication, and service to the university, the profession, and the community. Faculty teaching and administrative workloads are constructed to permit time for each of these pursuits.

**SB/M 2.3.4** Faculty and professional staff engage in continuing professional development particularly in new areas of importance in the community, regional, national, and contexts.

**SB/M 2.3.5** The academic unit encourages excellence and innovation in teaching, scholarship, research and community participation.

**SB/M 2.3.6** Faculty/student ratios are consistent with social work academic units of similar size and configuration across Canada.
SB/M 2.3.7 Class sizes are consistent with social work academic units of similar size and configuration across Canada.

SB/M 2.3.8 The number of tenure track faculty in relation to the student body is consistent with social work academic units of similar size and configuration across Canada.

2.4 Student Development

Preamble
The academic unit ensures that all students, regardless of their background or the program delivery method, have equal opportunity to be involved in all aspects of the program. The program has high expectations for academic and professional performance.

Standards
SB/M 2.4.1 The academic unit clearly states the academic and professional requirements and admission policies for its programs, including any equity provisions consistent with the mission of the school and to the mission of CASWE-ACFTS.

SB/M 2.4.2 Student recruitment efforts seek to reflect a diverse population with a particular consideration for students of various ethnic, cultural and racial and other diverse populations that may be under-represented and under-served.

SB/M 2.4.3 Within the policies and standards of its parent university, the academic unit provides for and encourages the participation of all students, in school governance and in the evaluation of teaching and learning in classroom, field, and other educational settings.

SB/M 2.4.4 The academic unit has a policy requiring that the performance of professional responsibilities of social work students be in accordance with the relevant social work codes of ethics.

SB/M 2.4.5 The academic unit has a policy regarding the professional suitability of the student for the profession of social work. Students are made aware that serious or repeated violations of the Code of Ethics put them at risk of exclusion from the program on the basis of professional unsuitability.

SB/M 2.4.6 The academic unit has a policy regarding ethical use of all forms of social media to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the academic unit and its field practicum community and demonstrates how the policy and procedures are consistent with the relevant human rights legislation, with the mission of CASWE-ACFTS, and with the mission of the academic unit concerned.

SB/M 2.4.7 The academic unit provides academic advisement and support for all students regarding their program and progress and particularly where students have been recruited as a result of equity-based initiatives.
Domain III
Program Content: Curriculum and Field Education

3.1 Curriculum

Preamble
The social work curriculum is organized around specific learning objectives for students which link student learning objectives to the promotion of excellence in social work education, scholarship, and practice with a social justice focus. These learning objectives for students reflect the values, knowledge and skills that social work students are expected to acquire and demonstrate upon completion of the social work program and are applicable to social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social work programs use learning objectives for students in designing and delivering their curricula and field education.

The curriculum at the Baccalaureate level (BSW curriculum) provides students with knowledge and skills for generalist practice, while the curriculum at the Master level (MSW curriculum) provides knowledge and skills in research/scholarship, professional leadership, social work supervision and advanced practice and/or areas of specialization. Schools use the core learning objectives for students as points of reference for both BSW and MSW programs. Learning objectives for students applicable only to MSW programs are specified to reflect an advanced level of knowledge and skills in selected major areas of social work practice as mentioned above.

The Core Learning Objectives for Students are as follows:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and adopt a value perspective of the social work profession

   i) Social work students develop professional identities as practitioners whose professional goal is to facilitate the collective welfare and wellbeing of all people to the maximum extent possible.

   ii) Social work students acquire ability for self-reflection as it relates to engaging in professional practice through a comprehensive understanding and consciousness of the complex nature of their own social locations and identities. Students develop an awareness of personal biases and preferences to advance social justice and the social well-being of social work service users.

2. Adhere to social work values and ethics in professional practice

   i) Social work students have knowledge of the relevant social work codes of ethics in various professional roles and activities and institutional contexts, with a particular emphasis on professional responsibilities towards vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

   ii) Social work students acquire skills to monitor and evaluate their own behaviours in relation to the relevant codes of ethics.
3. **Promote human rights and social justice**

   i) Social work students understand their professional role in advancing human rights and responsibilities and social justice in the context of the Canadian society and internationally.

   ii) Social work students have knowledge of the role social structures can play in limiting human and civil rights and employ professional practices to ensure the fulfillment of human and civil rights and advance social justice for individuals, families, groups and communities.

4. **Support and enhance diversity by addressing structural sources of inequity**

   i) Social work students recognize diversity and difference as a crucial and valuable part of living in a society.

   ii) Social work students have knowledge of how discrimination, oppression, poverty, exclusion, exploitation, and marginalization have a negative impact on particular individuals and groups and strive to end these and other forms of social injustice.

5. **Employ critical thinking in professional practice**

   i) Social work students develop skills in critical thinking and reasoning, including critical analysis of assumptions, consistent with the values of the profession, which they apply in their professional practice to analyze complex social situations and make professional judgments.

   ii) Social work students are able to apply critical thinking to identify and address structural sources of injustice and inequalities in the context of a Canadian society.

   iii) MSW students are able to apply knowledge of a variety of social work theories and perspectives to critically analyze professional and institutional practices.

6. **Engage in research**

   i) Social work students acquire knowledge and skills to critique, apply, or participate in social work research.

   ii) Social work students at both levels of university education are prepared to apply social work knowledge, as well as knowledge from other disciplines, to advance professional practice, policy development, research, and service provision.

   iii) MSW students acquire knowledge and skills in conducting social work research and competence in evaluating professional practices.
7. **Participate in policy analysis and development**
   
   i) Social work students have knowledge of social policies in relation to the wellbeing of individuals, families, groups and communities in Canadian and global contexts.

   ii) Social work students have knowledge and skills to identify negative or inequitable policies and their implications and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged and oppressed groups, and to participate in efforts to change these.

   iii) MSW students have knowledge and skills to contribute to the development and implementation of new and more equitable social policies.

8. **Engage in organizational and societal systems’ change through professional practice**
   
   i) Social work students acquire knowledge of organizational and societal systems and acquire skills to identify social inequalities, injustices, and barriers and work towards changing oppressive social conditions.

   ii) Social work students develop ability to critically assess the social, historical, economic, legal, political, institutional and cultural contexts of social work practice at local, regional, provincial, national, and international levels.

   iii) MSW students are prepared to take leadership roles in organizational and societal systems and to work towards changing oppressive social conditions.

9. **Engage with individuals, families, groups, and communities through professional practice**
   
   i) Social work students are equipped with knowledge and skills to competently perform various interactive practices such as engagement, assessment, intervention, negotiation, mediation, advocacy, and evaluation.

   ii) Social work students have relevant knowledge and skills to actively promote empowering and anti-oppressive practice.

   iii) Social work students acquire skills to practice at individual, family, group, organization, community and population levels including advocacy and activism.

   iv) Social work students are prepared for interprofessional practice, community collaboration and team work.

   v) MSW students develop knowledge and skills in advanced practice, and/or in specialized practice with individuals, families, groups, and/or communities.
Standards

BSW Curriculum

SB 3.1.1 The BSW curriculum equips students with knowledge in the humanities and relevant social sciences, including knowledge related to human development and human behavior in the social environment.

SB 3.1.2 The four-year BSW curriculum reflects a balance of general education (at least 40 percent) and professional education (at least 50 percent) and a field practicum of at least 700 hours. The Quebec three-year programs essentially cover professional social work education and the field practicum, while liberal arts are principally covered at the CEGEP level.

SB 3.1.3 The curriculum for a second undergraduate degree program provides professional social work content equivalent to that in a four-year BSW.

SB 3.1.4 The foundation component of the MSW curriculum is equivalent to the content of the BSW curriculum.

MSW Curriculum

SM 3.1.1 The academic unit specifies the particular areas of specialization and/or advanced study which characterize the program within the context of the academic unit’s mission. The MSW curriculum includes theories, policies and practices relevant to the student's selected major area of social work practice (i.e., research/scholarship, professional leadership, social work supervision and advanced practice and/or areas of specialization).

SM 3.1.2 Students with a first level accredited social work degree may be admitted to a one-year graduate social work program. Students without a first level social work degree may be admitted to a two year graduate social work program.

SM 3.1.3 Programs for students admitted with a first level social work degree include a specialized or advanced study component of at least 18 credit hours of coursework, a practicum of at least 450 hours and/or a thesis or memoire, as defined by the program’s university, such as to provide an opportunity for the integration and demonstration of advanced social work skills in practice, and/or policy analysis and/or research.

SM 3.1.4 Programs for students admitted without a first level social work degree include two components:

i) A foundation component of at least 8 one-semester courses or equivalent, and a field practicum of at least 450 hours such as to achieve a level of preparation sufficient to equip the student to engage in MSW studies at a level equivalent to their counterparts with the BSW; and

ii) An advanced study component of at least 6 one-semester courses or equivalent, a practicum of at least 450 hours and/or a thesis or memoire, as defined by the program’s university, such as to provide for the
integration and demonstration of advanced social work skills in practice and/or policy analysis and/or research.

**BSW/MSW Curriculum**

**SB/M 3.1.5** Credit transfer is a mechanism of the recognition of degrees and accumulation of credits to accommodate for student and worker mobility across Canada and internationally. Social work academic units set up clear and transparent policies with regard to transfer credit between schools, college programs, schools of social work, nationally and internationally, within the context of general university regulations.

### 3.2 Field Education

**Preamble**

Field education is considered a central component of social work education because the integration of knowledge, values and skills in the context of field education is a critical and distinctive aspect of social work education. The purpose of field education is to connect the theoretical/conceptual contributions of the academic setting with the practice setting, enabling the student to acquire practice skills that reflect the learning objectives for students identified in the Standards. Each program may vary its delivery of the field education component according to the nature and objectives of program and the influences of its university and local context.

**Standards**

**Field Education Curriculum**

**SB/M 3.2.1** The curriculum is consistent with the program’s mission and goals and reflects the values of the relevant Social Work Codes of Ethics.

**SB 3.2.2** BSW programs provide students with a minimum of 700 practice hours, not including time spent in integrative activities. Where academic credit is given for previous work and/or relevant experience in lieu of the practicum, the academic unit has written policy that specifies clear criteria and procedures used to assess skills and knowledge normally obtained through the practicum. Academic credit for previous work and/or relevant experience may be provided for a maximum of one half of the required hours of practicum specified in the program (e.g., 350 hours of 700 required hours).

**SM 3.2.2** A one-year MSW program provides a minimum of 450 practicum hours, not including time spent in integrative activities, and/or a thesis or memoire. A two year MSW program provides a minimum of 450 practicum hours plus an additional 450 practicum hours not including time spent in integrative activities, and/or a thesis or memoire.

**SM 3.2.3** All students enrolled at the second university level who do not have a first level social work degree must complete a minimum of one practicum of at least 450 hours, not including time spent in integrative activities, during their program.

**SB/M 3.2.4** The field education curriculum provides opportunities (integrative activities) for students to acquire, apply, and demonstrate knowledge and skills congruent with
social work values and with the core learning objectives for students as defined in this document (Preamble 3.1).

i) The program provides activities for the integration of field and classroom education.

ii) While simulations and labs may form an acceptable part of direct practice teaching, they are not substitutes for direct responsibilities in real practice situations.

iii) The academic unit has a written policy on field placements within a student’s workplace. In the case of field placements in the student’s workplace, there is an educational focus with a clear differentiation between work duties and student learning assignments.

iv) Appropriate resources are made available to the field education component of the program to ensure that the educational purpose is achieved.

**Students**  
**SB/M 3.2.5** Each program develops practicum objectives, learning objectives for students, procedures, expectations, administrative structures and evaluation processes that are published in a field education manual.

**SB/M 3.2.6** Each program has a clearly outlined policy statement on allegations of harassment in the field placement and a clearly outlined set of procedures for informal and formal resolution of allegations of harassment in the field placement.

**SB/M 3.2.7** The academic unit ensures that students with disabilities are accommodated in field placements and have options for a wide variety of placements.

**SB/M 3.2.8** Social work programs ensure adequate liability coverage for students in the field placement.

**SB/M 3.2.9** In keeping with social work’s commitment to the principle of confidentiality, social work programs develop guidelines for confidentiality to be followed by all students in the practicum program by:

i) Clearly outlining guidelines to protect the confidentiality of service users, settings, social workers and students in assignments, process recordings, audio and video tapings, case examples, or any other learning situations, including use of all forms of social media.

ii) Requesting the necessary signed letters of consent for any case material used by a student where there is a possibility of identification of service users.
iii) Contracting with settings regarding the use of process recordings, audio
and videotapes and social media, and clearly identifying ownership of
such material.

Field Education Faculty
SB/M 3.2.10 The program is responsible for providing clearly defined criteria for the selection
of field education faculty.

SB/M 3.2.11 Each social work program designates at least one position, preferably a faculty
position, with responsibility for field education development, coordination,
administration and monitoring. The field education director or field education
coordinator is in a position to carry out the mandate of the role with credibility,
authority, influence, and with adequate resources.

SB/M 3.2.12 Those individuals designated as field education coordinator/director and faculty
field liaison will normally have as a minimum qualification an MSW degree.

SB/M 3.2.13 The field education coordinator/director facilitates appropriate matches between
students, field instructors and field placement/settings.

SB/M 3.2.14 In determining teaching assignments, workload credit is given for the field
education roles and activities of coordination, liaison, and instruction.

SB/M 3.2.15 Each social work program designates individuals to assume faculty field liaison
responsibilities in order to maintain close, reciprocal and ongoing relationships
with field instructors; exchange important information; monitor the student's
educational experience; and consult and collaborate with the field instructor and
student regarding student progress or problems.

Field Placements
SB/M 3.2.16 Field placements provide multiple opportunities for developing and refining a
range of practice skills.

SB/M 3.2.17 The field placement/setting accepts students without discrimination as defined
by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation;
the field placement/setting is free of discriminatory practices both in personnel
practices and in delivery of services.

SB/M 3.2.18 The field placement/setting assures that the field instructor has sufficient time
and resources within the work schedule to develop planned learning
opportunities and tasks, to prepare for educational supervision with the student,
to attend school-sponsored workshops and to prepare reports and evaluations.

SB/M 3.2.19 The field placement/setting provides adequate facilities, equipment and learning
materials appropriate to the student's responsibilities and in keeping with
available resources.
SB/M 3.2.20 The academic unit shows evidence that field instructors are competent to help students to meet the objective of learning to work effectively and appropriately with service users from diverse ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds.

Field Instructors
The title "Field Instructor" is used to designate the individual who has primary responsibilities for field instruction and evaluation of students in the field placement.

SB 3.2.21 Field instructors at the BSW level or at the foundation of a two year program:

i) Normally hold, at a minimum, a BSW degree from an accredited social work program;

ii) Have two years of social work practice experience after graduation with a degree from an accredited social work program.

iii) Are interested in social work education; and

iv) Have support from the setting to permit adequate time for assuming field instruction responsibilities.

SM 3.2.21 Field Instructors in a one year MSW program or in the second year of a two year MSW program:

i) Normally hold, at a minimum, a MSW degree from an accredited social work program;

ii) Have two years of social work practice experience after graduation with a degree from an accredited social work program.

iii) Are interested in social work education; and

iv) Have support from the setting to permit adequate time for assuming field instruction responsibilities.

SB/M 3.2.22 When the field instructor does not have a social work degree, it is expected that the school plays a greater role in the monitoring and supervision of the field experience to ensure that a social work focus is sustained and that the student has access to a qualified social worker. Alternatively, a faculty member may be designated as the field instructor.

SB/M 3.2.23 The program provides a formal opportunity for the preparation and orientation of new field instructors, and provides opportunities to experienced field instructors for continuing professional education.

SB/M 3.2.24 Field instructors are provided with instructional materials, field manuals, course outlines and other relevant materials.
SB/M 3.2.25  The program has a mechanism for providing feedback to the field instructor and other personnel in the setting (as appropriate) regarding the field experience.

SB/M 3.2.26  Each program has guidelines and procedures for the evaluation of the field placement and the field instructors.
Domain IV
Program Evaluation/Assessment

4.1 Program Evaluation/Assessment

Preamble
Employing reflection as a critical factor in safeguarding program quality and relevance, social work programs engage in regular formative evaluation/assessment to ensure ongoing program development and renewal in response to social change and new knowledge.

Standards

**SB/M 4.1** The social work program has implemented mechanisms to effectively evaluate its program on an ongoing basis.

**SB/M 4.2** Such evaluation includes a systematic review of the academic unit’s mission, curriculum, learning objectives for students, admission policies and processes, and adequacy of available resources.

**SB/M 4.3** Program evaluation includes regular data collection about the program context and partners’ feedback on the relevance and quality of the program.

**SB/M 4.4** The program demonstrates how the results of prior evaluations, including but not limited to CASWE-ACFTS and university reviews, have impacted their program.