



# CASWE-ACFTS

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA FORMATION EN TRAVAIL SOCIAL

## PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITATION<sup>123</sup>

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## **PART 1**

### **OVERVIEW OF PROCESURES FOR ACCREDITATION**

#### **1.1 OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION AND KEY TERMS**

Accreditation of professional social work education Programs in Canada is a function of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education - Association canadienne pour la formation en travail social (named CASWE-ACFTS throughout this document), a national association of university and college faculties, schools, departments, modules, and individuals offering professional education in social work at the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels.

The subject of accreditation is a Program of study (named Program throughout this document), as opposed to an institution, such as school, faculty, or department (the term 'School' is used throughout this document and refers to Module, Department, School or Faculty). The CASWE-ACFTS accredits professional social work education Programs in Canada at bachelor and master levels. Currently, there is no accreditation scheme for doctorate Programs.

Accreditation of social work Programs is guided by the CASWE-ACFTS Educational Policies, Standards for Accreditation and the Procedures for Accreditation that are periodically revised through consultation with CASWE-ACFTS members and approved by the Board of Directors.

#### **1.2 COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION**

The CASWE-ACFTS' Commission on Accreditation ('COA' or 'Commission' throughout this document) is responsible for all activities as part of the accreditation process, including communicating with the Program, informing on the CASWE-ACFTS Educational Policies, Standards for Accreditation and the Procedures for Accreditation, organizing Site Visits, conducting reviews, and making decisions on the accreditation status. The COA in its activity ensures that social work Programs adhere to the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and Educational Policies. A simple majority of COA members constitutes a quorum for the transactions and decisions of the COA.

#### **1.3 THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

**The accreditation process involves the following key activities:**

1. Self-Study and an Application for Accreditation, including Pre-Accreditation, First Accreditation, or Re-Accreditation (by the School)
2. Review of a Self-Study Report and Application (by the COA)
3. Site Visits (by the COA)
4. Review of Site Visit Reports (by the COA)
5. Decision making (by the COA)

The accreditation process begins with a Program's self-evaluation, which results in a Self-Study Report submitted to the COA for review. After the Self-Study Report has been received, the COA organizes a review of the documents and a Site Visit to conduct an assessment of the specific aspects of the Program in its immediate environment. Upon the completion of a Site Visit, Site Visit Team members submit a written report of their findings to the School for comments; both the report and the School's comments are submitted to the COA for a final review. The COA makes decisions regarding accreditation of the Program.

New Programs which have not been accredited, or those whose accreditation status has expired, may consult with the COA prior the initiation of a formal application process. These Programs are eligible for informational and technical support from the COA regarding the CASWE- ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, Procedures for Accreditation, and Educational Policies.

#### **1.4 TYPES OF ACCREDITATION STATUS GRANTED BY THE COA**

**The COA may grant one of the following types of accreditation status:**

- **Pre-Accreditation;**
- **First Accreditation;**
- **First Accreditation with Conditions;**
- **Re-Accreditation; or**
- **Re-Accreditation with Conditions.**

**Pre-Accreditation** is granted to a new Program as soon as it is in operation and before it has admitted any students. A school must apply for Pre-Accreditation for all new programs, even if it has a current accredited program. For example, if a school offers an accredited MSW program, and wants to implement a BSW program, that school must apply for Pre-Accreditation for the BSW program. Pre-Accreditation may be granted if the COA review indicates that such a Program will be able to meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and will be able to achieve the Core Learning Objectives for Students within the designated period of time. Pre-Accreditation is granted for a maximum of four years. During this period, the Program is required to report to the COA annually and must apply for the First Accreditation not later than the end of the third year.

**First Accreditation** is granted in two circumstances:

1. To a Program holding Pre-Accreditation, which at the time of the given review has adequately met the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. A Program is granted First Accreditation status for eight years.
2. To an established, non-accredited Program that has graduated students.
3. An existing BSW or MSW program that was established before 2013, may apply for First Accreditation.

**First Accreditation with Conditions** is granted to a Program holding Pre-Accreditation or an established non-accredited Program, which at the time of the given review has met the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, with minor or moderate concerns/deficiencies that do not jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. These concerns/deficiencies

may be addressed within a period of time that is less than four years. A Program is granted First Accreditation with Conditions for up to four years, depending on the nature of concerns and is provided with a clear statement of conditions to be met in order to retain its First Accreditation with Conditions. During this period, the Program is expected to address the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA within the designated time frame.

**Re-Accreditation** is granted to an accredited Program that has adequately met the CASWE- ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. Re-Accreditation is granted for eight years.

**Re-Accreditation with Conditions** is granted to an accredited Program that has met the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation with minor or moderate concerns/deficiencies that do not jeopardize the Program’s ability to achieve the Core Learning Objectives for Students. These concerns may be addressed within a period of time that is less than four years. The Program is granted Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years and is provided with a clear statement of conditions to be met in order to retain its accreditation. During this period, the Program is expected to address the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA to become eligible for retaining its accreditation status for an additional four to six years, not to exceed eight years in total. If conditions are not met within the timelines, the Program must submit an application for re-accreditation within six months and have a Site Visit within a year.

## **1.5 RECONSIDERATION AND APPEAL**

A Program may request reconsideration of decisions of the COA related to the type of the accreditation status granted to the Program, conditions to be met in reporting, the frequency of reporting requirements, the interpretation of the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and the Procedures for Accreditation, the duration of the period of accreditation that has been granted, or the denial of accreditation.

### **1.5.1 Reconsideration**

1. The COA may undertake or refuse to consider a request for reconsideration. Where a request for reconsideration pertaining to the conditions to be met in reporting requirements, the frequency of reporting requirements or the interpretation of Standards for Accreditation and/or Procedures for Accreditation is granted, the request will be considered by all members of the COA acting as a ‘committee of the whole’. Where a request for reconsideration pertaining to the period of accreditation, in addition to other matters, is granted, a committee of two or three current or past members of the COA, other than those who served on the original Review Committee, shall be selected to conduct the review. Following receipt of the committee’s report, the COA may decide to revise or uphold its original decision.
2. The decision of the COA, following reconsideration is final and not subject to appeal, except where a Program alleges that the Commission’s decision is in disagreement with the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, Educational Policies and Procedures for Accreditation.

### **1.5.2 Appeal**

A Program may appeal to the CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors as provided in the CASWE-ACFTS Constitution, General By-Laws (Section 7.). Please refer to Part 4, Section 4.2 of this document, “Reconsideration and Appeal Procedures”.

## **1.6 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **1.6.1 Membership Dues and Accreditation Fees**

Programs applying for CASWE-ACFTS Pre-Accreditation or First Accreditation are required to be institutional members of the CASWE-ACFTS and pay annual membership fees. All accredited Programs are invoiced annually for institutional membership dues by the CASWE-ACFTS. Any type of Accreditation status granted to the Program shall be withdrawn for non-payment of fees within six months of invoice in accordance with the terms of the constitution. While no separate accreditation fees are charged to a Program seeking accreditation/re-accreditation, a share of their membership fees is allocated to support the CASWE-ACFTS’ accreditation activities.

### **1.6.2 Accreditation Costs**

1. Whenever a Site Visit is required, the Program under review is responsible for the travel and maintenance costs incurred by members of the Site Visit Team.
2. Direct expenses incurred by members appointed by the COA in the reconsideration of a decision on Accreditation or in the application of procedures arising from an appeal shall normally be the responsibility of the Petitioner institution. In circumstances where the reconsideration or appeal is successful and the reasons are attributed in whole or in part to errors made by the COA, the Program may submit a claim for reimbursement to the CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors. Reimbursement of such costs is limited to direct costs paid out by the Program to members of the Reconsideration Review Team or the Appeal Committee and shall be in proportion to the relative responsibility attributed by the Board of Directors to the COA for any errors made in the original decision.

## **1.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

1. A member of the COA is considered to be in a conflict of interest when the person:
  - i) is a faculty member of the School whose Program is being reviewed;
  - ii) was an employee of the School whose Program is being reviewed within the last five years;
  - iii) was a student of the School being reviewed within the last five years; or
  - iv) is currently affiliated with the School whose Program is being reviewed as an adjunct

professor or involved in a joint research/educational project.

2. If a conflict of interest is identified before the review, the COA member shall not participate in the Program review, Site Visit, or in the decision-making process pertaining to the Program under review.

## **1.8 CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. During the entire process of accreditation review, all documents, correspondence and communications between the COA, Program and Site Visit Team will be treated as confidential by the COA.
2. Following a decision of the COA and the completion of any reconsideration or appeal procedure, the decision on accreditation will be made public.
3. Statistical information on the Program's features (e.g., faculty/student ratios, class size, Program focus, field placement hours, faculty field liaison activities, administrative support, research activity, etc.) will be treated as public information following the COA's decision on accreditation. With this mechanism for data collection embedded in the accreditation process, a central database for social work Programs across Canada will be established, regularly updated, and made accessible to Programs.
4. At the discretion of the COA or the Co-Chairs acting on behalf of the COA, Self-Study documents and the COA's files on member Schools may be made available for research or reference purposes. In the event of a dispute arising concerning access to these records, the Board of Directors of CASWE-ACFTS will render the final decision.

## **1.9 LANGUAGE**

Schools may use either the English or French versions of the Standards for Accreditation, Educational Policies and Procedures for Accreditation as guidelines in preparing their documentation. Submission of documents and other communication with the COA will be in the official language of the School's choice.

## **1.10 STUDENT RELATIONS**

### **1.10.1 Student Status as a "Graduate from an Accredited Program"**

1. The status of a "Graduate from an Accredited Program" applies to any student who earned a degree in a Program, which held at the date of the student's graduation the status of "Pre-Accreditation", "First Accreditation", "First Accreditation with Conditions", "Re-Accreditation", or "Re-Accreditation with Conditions". Those who graduated from a Pre-Accredited Program that is subsequently accredited in the three years of graduation are also considered graduates from an accredited Program.
2. The status of "Graduate from an Accredited Program" does not apply to a student who earned a degree in a Program which at the date of the student's graduation did not hold



any type of the accreditation status recognized by the CASWE-ACFTS as listed in this document.

**1.10.2 Student Notification if the Program is Not Accredited**

The Dean or Director of a School, which has its accredited status denied or revoked by the CASWE-ACFTS, or whose period of accreditation has expired, is required to notify the students enrolled in the Program about this change in its accreditation status.

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## PART 2

### TYPES OF ACCREDITATION STATUS

#### 2.1 PRE-ACCREDITATION

##### 2.1.1 Eligibility for Pre-Accreditation

Pre-Accreditation is an entry-level accreditation status designed specifically for newly established Programs that have not admitted students (See 2.2.1 for criteria of Eligibility for First Accreditation). Pre-Accreditation provides such Programs with access to COA resources and technical support on matters related to accreditation. Every university intending to offer a new program leading to a BSW or MSW must apply for Pre-Accreditation status before enrolling students. Pre-Accreditation is a mandatory accreditation stage for all new programs. This includes new programs at schools that have a current accredited program.

**A Program must apply for Pre-Accreditation if it meets the following requirements:**

1. The Program is new and has not admitted any students;
2. The Program at the time of application, has secured sufficient resources, and hired faculty;
3. Such a Program will be able to meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and meet the Accreditation Standards within the four-year timeframe;
4. The Program's host University/College is an active member of Universities Canada;
5. The Program has been approved by the University/College, following consultation with appropriate bodies, and the process by which the University/College approved the Program is included in the Application.

##### 2.1.2 Application for Pre-Accreditation and Self-Study Requirements

1. A Program seeking Pre-Accreditation must submit to the COA an Application for Pre-Accreditation consisting of 1) a letter of intent and 2) a Self-Study Report. The letter of intent to apply for a Pre-Accreditation should be submitted to the COA at least six months in advance of the anticipated submission date.
2. A Self-Study Report results from a comprehensive self-assessment conducted by the School in accordance with the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and Procedures for Accreditation (Please refer to the Part 3, Section 3.1 of this Document, for Self-Study Procedures). The Self-Study Report should identify the Program areas/domains where the Standards have been met and the areas where work remains to be completed. While it is understood that the Program applying for Pre-Accreditation is new and therefore it may not be able to demonstrate that it has met the Standards for

Accreditation at the time of the application, such a Program is expected to make substantial progress toward meeting the Standards for Accreditation and prepare for its First Accreditation within a four-year period.

### **2.1.3 Timing for the Application for Pre-Accreditation**

1. A Program advises the COA in advance of its intent to submit an application for Pre-Accreditation. If the application is to be submitted by November 1, advance notification must be received by May 1 of that year. If the application is to be submitted by April 1 advance notification must be received by October 1 of the previous year.
2. An application must be received by the COA on November 1, if the application is to be reviewed at the January meeting, or on April 1, if the application is to be reviewed at the May meeting.

### **2.1.4 Review of the Application for Pre-Accreditation**

1. Upon receipt of an Application for Pre-Accreditation, the COA designates one or two COA members to review the application. The results from this review are presented to the COA at its next scheduled meeting.
2. The COA may make a decision regarding Pre-Accreditation at this meeting, request supplementary information from the Program, and/or arrange for a Site Visit, if available information is not sufficient for making the decision. If a Site Visit deems necessary, the COA sends a letter to the School outlining the issues to be addressed by Site Visitors.
3. The date of the Site Visit is negotiated between the Chair of the Review Team and the Dean/Director of the Program. To enable the Review Team to complete its work in time, the Site Visit should normally be scheduled not later than two months prior to the COA meeting at which the Program is to be reviewed. The content and schedule of the Site Visit has to be finalized at least two weeks prior the Site Visit
4. If a Site Visit occurs, the Site Visitors submit a written report to the School within four weeks of the Site Visit. A copy of this report is also provided to the appropriate Co-Chair of the COA. Within three weeks of receiving the report, the School may submit comments on the report to the COA. The readers' reports, the report of the Site Visitors and the response of the School are reviewed by the COA in making a decision on the application for Pre- Accreditation.

### **2.1.5 The COA's Decisions on the Application for Pre-Accreditation**

At the meeting at which the application for Pre-Accreditation is considered, the COA makes one of the following decisions:

1. To grant Pre-Accreditation  
The Program has no major deficiencies and demonstrates a capacity to meet the Accreditation Standards within the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation. A Program is granted Pre- Accreditation for four years, effective from the date the completed application was deemed to have been received by the COA (i.e., November 1 or April 1).
2. To defer Pre-Accreditation  
The Program has major deficiencies that negatively affect its capacity to meet the Accreditation Standards within the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation. These deficiencies have to be addressed before considering the Program for Pre-Accreditation. The final decision will be made after these deficiencies have been addressed, reported to the COA and reviewed by the COA;
3. To deny Pre-Accreditation  
The Program has major deficiencies that negatively affect its capacity to meet the Accreditation Standards within the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation. These deficiencies are not feasible to address within the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation.

#### **2.1.6 Communicating the COA's Decision**

The final decision of the COA, with a statement of the reasons supporting this decision, is communicated in a letter from one of the Co-Chairs of the COA to the President of the University/College with a copy to the School Dean/Director.

#### **2.1.7 Reporting Requirements**

1. During the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation, the School submits Annual Progress Reports. The Annual Progress Report is a condensed summary of the progress accomplished towards meeting the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, with particular reference to the recommendations that the COA may have made at the time it granted Pre-Accreditation.
2. Before preparing its Annual Progress report, the Program should review the CAWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. The Annual Progress Report should be structured according to the major sections/domains of the Standards for Accreditation. The report should provide a review of progress as well as a list of areas where work remains to be completed in relation to each domain/section of the standards.
3. The COA reviews Annual Progress Reports to provide formative feedback to the Program, assists the Program with the interpretation of the CASWE-ACFTS Educational Policies, Standards for Accreditation, and the Procedures for Accreditation, and advises on matters relevant to an Application for First Accreditation.

4. The Program must apply for the First Accreditation twelve months before the end of the four-year period of Pre-Accreditation. No extension of Pre-Accreditation is granted beyond the four-year period.

## **2.2 FIRST ACCREDITATION**

### **2.2.1 Eligibility for First Accreditation**

The Program can be considered for First Accreditation if the following requirements are met:

1. The Program is Pre-Accredited, fully operational and has students graduated or will have students graduated from the Program in two years or less;
2. The Program is not accredited and has students graduated from the Program;
3. An existing BSW or MSW program that was established before 2013, may apply for First Accreditation.
3. Such a Program will be able to meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and meet the Accreditation Standards within the four-year timeframe;
4. The Program's host University/College is an active member of Universities Canada;
5. The Program has been approved by the University/College, following consultation with appropriate bodies, and the process by which the University/College approved the Program is included in the Application.

### **2.2.2 Application for First Accreditation and Self-Study Requirements**

1. A Program seeking First Accreditation must submit to the COA an application for First Accreditation and a Self-Study Report. A letter of intent to apply for a First Accreditation should be submitted to the COA at least six months in advance of the anticipated submission date.
2. A Self-Study Report results from a comprehensive self-assessment conducted by the School in accordance with CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and the Procedures for Accreditation (Please refer to the Part 3, Section 3.1 of this Document for Self-Study procedures).

### **2.2.3 Timing for the Application for First Accreditation**

An application for First Accreditation must be received by the COA on November 1 if the application is to be reviewed at the winter meeting or on April 1 if the application is to be reviewed at the spring meeting.

#### **2.2.4 Review Teams**

1. The Co-Chairs of the COA appoint the Chair of the Review Team and assign members to the Team. Programs are informed about the composition of the Review Team and have the opportunity to comment on the suitability/unsuitability of these reviewers. Such comments may include possible conflicts of interest and/or the request for reviewers with specific expertise. These comments must be received within ten (10) working days of the Program receiving notification of the reviewers. The Co-Chairs make reasonable efforts to appoint mutually acceptable Review Team members.
2. A Review Team is established for each accreditation process, depending on the size and complexity of a Program. The Review Team includes at least two members: a Chair of the Review Team, who is the COA member and a Review Team member who does not have to be a COA member if s/he is a respected social work educator and a CASWE-ACFTS member. Schools with multiple sites, or multiple Programs (e.g., BSW and MSW Programs), or complex issues under review, often require Review Teams expanded to three or four members. In Review Teams with more than two members, at least half of the team shall be COA members.
3. Generally, members of the Review Team will act both as “Readers” and as “Site Visitors”, that is, they both review the Self-Study Report and conduct the Site Visit. However, these roles may be separated in the following situations:
  - i) A Review Team member who has reviewed the Self-Study becomes unexpectedly unavailable for the Site Visit;
  - ii) The size and complexity of the Program requires additional Site Visitors who may not have been Self-Study Report Readers;
  - iii) The two initial Review Team members have very divergent views about the Program, and the third Reader is assigned to balance disparate views.

#### **2.2.5 Review of the Application for First Accreditation**

1. The Review Team members assess the Program’s Self-Study materials independently and prepare two independent reports on their findings focusing on the Program’s strengths and challenges that can be determined based on the written material and identifying areas where additional information and/or clarification is required. The Review Team’s reports are distributed to the COA members at least two weeks before the next scheduled COA meeting.
2. The Review Team’s reports are also provided to the Program by the Chair of the Review Team, along with a letter specifying the specific issues/Program areas to be

explored during the Site Visit and the mechanisms of data collection in relation to these issues. The Program is encouraged to identify specific issues/areas upon which it wishes feedback from the Site Visit Team.

3. After review of all relevant materials, including independent Readers' reports completed by two members of the COA, the COA decides:
  - i) To conduct a site assessment; In this case, the COA identifies issues/Program areas to be assessed during the site-visit and provides the Review Team members with specific questions to guide discussions during the Site Visit; or
  - ii) To request additional information from the School before finalizing a decision to proceed; or
  - iii) To reject the Application. In this case, the COA provides reasons supporting its decision based on CASWE-ACFTS Accreditation Standards and Educational Policies.
4. The date of the site-visit is negotiated between the Chair of the Review Team and the Dean/Director of the Program. To enable the Review Team to complete its work in time, the Site Visit should normally be scheduled not later than two months prior to the COA meeting at which the Program is to be reviewed. The content and schedule of the Site Visit has to be finalized at least two weeks prior the site-visit.

**2.2.6 Site Assessment** (Please refer to the Part 3, Section 2 of this document, “Self-Study and site-visit Guidelines”).

**2.2.7 The COA’s Decisions on the Application for First Accreditation**

At the meeting at which the application for First Accreditation is considered, the COA makes one of the following decisions:

1. To grant First Accreditation  
The Program has adequately met the CASWE-ACFTS Accreditation Standards. A Program is granted First Accreditation status for eight years, effective on the date when the COA makes this decision.
2. To grant First Accreditation with Conditions
  - i) The Program has met the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation with minor or moderate concerns/ deficiencies that do not jeopardize the Program’s ability to meet the accreditation standards. They can be addressed within a period of time that is less than four years. A Program is granted First Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years, depending on the nature of concerns and is provided with a clear statement of conditions to be met in order to retain accreditation. During this period, the Program is expected to address the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA to become eligible for retaining its First Accreditation Status for additional four to six years, not to exceed eight

years in total.

- ii) The Program holding First Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years has only partially addressed the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA as evident during accreditation review at the end of this period of time. First Accreditation with Conditions is granted for another two to four years, not to exceed six years in total.
  - iii) The Program holding First Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years has adequately addressed the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA, but other moderate deficiencies/concerns have been identified during the accreditation review at the end of this period of time. First Accreditation with Conditions is granted for another two to four years, not to exceed six years in total.
3. To deny the First Accreditation  
The Program has major deficiencies identified against the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. These deficiencies jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards.

### **2.2.8 Communicating the COA's Decision**

The decision of the COA, with a statement of the reasons supporting this decision, is communicated in a letter from one of the Co-Chairs of the COA to the President of the University/College with a copy to the Dean/Director of the School.

### **2.2.9 Reporting Requirements**

1. A Program holding First Accreditation with Conditions is required to submit to the COA a Progress Report one year after the decision was made to grant a two-year First Accreditation in Conditions.
2. A Program holding First Accreditation with Conditions is required to submit to the COA a Progress Report two years after the decision was made to grant a four-year First Accreditation in Conditions.
3. A Progress Report should be limited to information about the actions taken on conditions or recommendations specified by the COA in granting First Accreditation with Conditions. The Progress Report should provide the following:
  - i) The letter from the COA outlining the concerns, recommendations, and Program areas to be addressed to adequately meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation;
  - ii) The progress made in meeting each of the Standards to be addressed, with appropriate supplemental documentation;



- iii) Any issues that have arisen in meeting these Standards in the specified time period;
  - iv) Any major change made to the Program (see subsection (d) below for more on reporting a major Program change);
  - v) Any requests for feedback, if applicable, from the COA; and
  - vi) Updated statistical information on such Program features as faculty/student ratios, class size, Program focus, field placement hours, faculty field liaison activities, administrative support, research activity, etc.
4. A Program is required to report a major Program change:
- i) A major change is any amendment in one or more domains of the Program that may affect the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. A major change may involve a change in admission requirements, funding, faculty composition, substantive changes in content of curriculum or field education, reorganization of Program governance and structure, modifications to the Program's target population, or shifting to alternate forms of Program delivery (e.g., off-campus, distance education).
  - ii) While the introduction of a major change in accredited Programs does not require approval from the COA before implementation, the Program needs to be sensitive to how this change may affect the Program's adherence to the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation.
  - iii) Such change shall be identified in the Progress Report (for Programs holding First Accreditation with Conditions), as well as in the Self-Study Report (for Programs applying for Re-Accreditation) to be evaluated by the COA during the next Re-Accreditation review process.

## **2.3 RE-ACCREDITATION**

### **2.3.1 Eligibility for Re-Accreditation**

1. An accredited Program is reviewed at eight-year intervals. The CASWE-ACFTS COA sends notifications to Schools two years in advance of the commencement of the regularly scheduled review process.
2. A Program that has been holding the Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two-four years and has addressed the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA review may apply for Re-Accreditation in order to obtain full Re-Accreditation status for additional

four-six years (eight years in total).

3. In some cases, earlier reviews may be requested by either Schools or the COA. When an earlier review is completed, this will initiate a new eight-year review period (Please refer to Part 4, Section 2 of this document, “Special Review of Accredited Status).
4. As a rule, no extension of an eight-year period is granted. However, in exceptional circumstances and upon the School’s request, the COA may approve an extension of the eight-year accreditation status. Such a decision is at the sole discretion of the COA and made on a case-by-case basis. An extension shall not exceed twelve months. If Re-Accreditation is subsequently granted, its effective date will be from the original expiration date of the previous accreditation term.

### **2.3.2 Application for Re-Accreditation and Self-Study Requirements**

1. The School submits to the COA an Application for Re-Accreditation and Self-Study Report at least a year before the expiration date of its Program’s accreditation status, to ensure sufficient time for the accreditation review, site-visit, and decision making.
2. The COA acknowledges an Application, designates the Review Team members, and informs the Program about the composition of the Review Team within one week of consideration at the next meeting of the COA.

### **2.3.3 Timing for the Application for Re-Accreditation**

1. Schools submit their applications for Re-Accreditation to the COA either by November 1 or April 1, taking into consideration the preferences of the Program, the dates of the previous (Re) Accreditation, and scheduling needs within the COA.
2. Applications submitted by November 1 are reviewed at the COA’s winter meeting, and applications submitted by April 1 are reviewed at the spring meeting.

### **2.3.4 Review Teams**

1. A Review Team is established for each Re-Accreditation process, depending on the size and complexity of a Program. The Review Team includes at least two members: a Chair of the Review Team, who is the COA member and a Review Team member who does not have to be a COA member if s/he is a respected social work educator and a CASWE-ACFTS member. Schools with multiple sites, or multiple Programs (e.g., BSW and MSW Programs), or complex issues under review, often require Review Teams expanded to three or four members. In Review Teams with more than two members, at least half of the team shall be the COA members.
2. Generally, members of the Review Team will act both as “Readers” and as “Site Visitors”, that is, they both review the Self-Study Report and conduct the Site Visit. However, these roles may be separated in the following situations:

- i) A Review Team member who has reviewed the Self-Study becomes unexpectedly unavailable for the Site Visit;
- ii) The size and complexity of the Program requires additional Site Visitors who may not have been Self-Study Report Readers;
- iii) The two Review Team members have very divergent views about the Program, then the third Reader is assigned to balance disparate views.

### **2.3.5 Review of the Application for Re-Accreditation**

1. The Co-Chairs of the COA appoint the Chair of the Review Team and assign members to the Team. Programs are informed about the composition of the Review Team and have the opportunity to comment on the suitability/unsuitability of these reviewers. Such comments may include possible conflicts of interest and/or the request for reviewers with specific expertise. These comments must be received within ten (10) working days of the Program receiving notification of the reviewers. The Co-Chairs make reasonable efforts to appoint mutually acceptable Review Team member.
2. The Review Team members (at least two persons) assess the Program's Self-Study materials independently and prepare two independent reports on their findings focusing on the Program's strengths and challenges that can be determined based on the written material and identifying areas where additional information and/or clarification is required. The Review Team's reports are distributed to the COA members at least two weeks before the next scheduled COA meeting.
3. The Review Team's reports are also provided to the Program by the Chair of the Review Team, along with a letter specifying the specific issues/Program areas to be explored during the Site Visit and the mechanisms of data collection in relation to these issues. The Program is encouraged to identify specific issues/areas upon which it wishes feedback from the Site Visit Team.
4. The COA reviews the application for Re-Accreditation and the Review Team reports and determines the following:
  - i) To request additional information from the School before finalizing a decision to proceed with a site assessment, or
  - ii) To conduct a site assessment. In this case, the COA identifies issues/Program areas to be assessed during the Site Visit and provides the Review Team members with specific questions to guide discussions during the Site Visit.
5. The date of the site-visit is negotiated between the Chair of the Review Team and the

Dean/Director of the Program. To enable the Review Team to complete its work in time, the Site Visit should normally be scheduled not later than two months prior to the COA meeting at which the Program is to be reviewed. The content and schedule of the site-visit has to be finalized at least two weeks prior to the Site Visit.

**2.3.6 Site Assessment** (Please refer to the Part 3, Section 2 of this document, “Self-Study and site-visit Guidelines”).

**2.3.7 The COAs Decisions on the Application for Re-Accreditation**

At the meeting at which the application for Re-Accreditation is considered, the COA makes one of the following decisions:

1. To grant Re-Accreditation

- i) The Program has adequately met the CASWE- ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. The Program is granted Re-Accreditation for eight years, effective on the date when previously granted accreditation expires.
- ii) The Program under review is holding Re-Accreditation with Conditions and the current review indicates the Program has successfully addressed previously identified concerns/ deficiencies and now adequately meets Standards for Accreditation. Re-Accreditation is extended for additional four to six years (not more than eight years in total, effective on the date Re-Accreditation with Conditions was granted).

2. To grant Re-Accreditation with Conditions

- i) The Program has met the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation with minor or moderate concerns/deficiencies that do not jeopardize the Program’s ability to meet the accreditation standards. They can be addressed within a period of time that is less than four years. The Program is granted Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years and is provided with a clear statement of conditions to be met in order to retain accreditation. During this period, the Program is expected to address the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA to become eligible for retaining its accreditation status for an additional four to six years, not to exceed eight years in total.
- ii) The Program holding the Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years has only partially addressed the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA as evident during the accreditation review at the end of this period of time. Re-Accreditation with Conditions is granted for another two to four years, not to exceed six years in total.
- iii) The Program holding the Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years has adequately addressed the concerns/deficiencies identified by the COA, but other moderate deficiencies/concerns are identified during the accreditation review at the end of this period of time. Re-Accreditation with Conditions is

granted for another two to four years, not to exceed six years in total.

3. To deny Re-Accreditation

- i) The Program has major deficiencies against the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. These deficiencies jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the Accreditation Standards and are not feasible to address during the two - four year period.
- ii) The Program under review is holding the Re-Accreditation with Conditions for six years and the current review at the end of that period indicates the Program has not adequately addressed previously identified concerns/ deficiencies. No further period of Re-Accreditation is granted.

**2.3.8 Communicating the COA's Decision**

The decision of the COA, with a statement of the reasons supporting this decision, is communicated in a letter from one of the Co-Chairs of the COA to the President of the University/College with a copy to the Dean/Director of the School.

**2.3.9 Reporting Requirements**

1. A Program holding Re-Accreditation with Conditions for two to four years has to submit a Progress Report in the final year of a four year or two year period, whichever was granted by the COA.
2. A Progress Report should be limited to information about the actions taken on conditions or recommendations specified by the COA in granting Accreditation. The Progress report should provide the following:
  - i) The letter from the COA outlining the concerns, recommendations, and Program areas to be addressed to adequately meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation (when applicable);
  - ii) The progress made in meeting each of the Standards to be addressed, with appropriate documentation (when applicable);
  - iii) Any issues that have arisen in meeting these Standards in the specified time period;
  - iv) Any major change made to the Program (see subsection (c) below for more on reporting a major Program change);
  - v) Any requests for feedback, if applicable, from the COA.

3. A Program must report a major Program change:

- i) A major change is any amendment in one or more domains of the Program which may affect the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. A major change may involve a change in admission requirements, funding, faculty composition, substantive changes in content of curriculum or field education, reorganization of Program governance and structure, modifications to the Program's target population, or shifting to alternate forms of Program delivery (e.g., off-campus, distance education).
- ii) While the introduction of a major change in accredited Programs does not require approval from the COA before implementation, the Program needs to be sensitive to how this change may affect the Program's adherence to the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation.
- iii) Such change shall be identified in the Progress Report (for Programs holding Re-Accreditation with Conditions), as well as in the Self-Study Report (for Programs applying for Re-Accreditation) to be evaluated by the COA during the next Re-Accreditation review process.

## **PART 3**

### **SELF-STUDY AND SITE VISIT GUIDELINES**

#### **3.1 SELF-STUDY PROCEDURES**

##### **3.1.1 Definition of Self-Study**

The term *Self-Study* refers to the Program's process of self-examination resulting in a Self-Study Report, as well as to the Self-Study document itself. Self-Study is an essential and integral part of the CASWE-ACFTS COA's accreditation review process.

**The purposes of the Self-Study are as follows:**

1. To provide the School with an opportunity to assess its various Program components in relation to the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation and Educational Policies;
2. To identify the Program's challenges and deficiencies;
3. To outline the Program's unique features and strengths; and
4. To make a case for specific approaches to Program delivery.

##### **3.1.2 The Self-Study Report**

Self-Study Reports vary in length but schools should make attempts to be succinct and still attend to all standards. Schools are also encouraged to consult with the Accreditation Coordinator. The Self-Study Report contains the following sections plus appendices:

1. Executive Summary
2. Explanation of how the Program addressed the recommendations made by the COA at the time of the last review
3. The description and analysis (with completed template forms and supplemental documents, when applicable) discuss various Program areas in relation to the CASWE-ACFTS Accreditation Standards. This description and analysis should be congruent with the structure of the CASWE-ACFTS Accreditation Standards in order to reflect on the following domains of the Program:

## **Domain I - Program Mission and Goals**

1. A School's formal written statement outlines the Program's purpose and goals and the principles which guide and shape the Program's structure and content;
2. Along with reflecting the values of social work and social work education, the mission statement reflects the unique context in which the Program operates and communities the Program serves or is intended to serve. *Supplemental documents:* a statement indicating the support and or agreement of relevant professional and other community constituencies.

## **Domain II - Program Governance, Structure and Resources**

1. The Self-Study Report describes the governance structure and administrative procedures to demonstrate that the School has a clear identity within the University/College and autonomy in respect to social work Program delivery. *Supplemental Documents:* the statement of the University/College's official commitment to support the Program indicated by a letter from the President of the University/College (optional if a budget and the administrative structure provide sufficient evidence).
2. The description and analysis discuss financial and physical resources available to the Program and all its components/forms of delivery in comparison to schools of similar size and configuration and normative expectations across the country. That includes budget, physical space, library, research facilities, technological resources, and interdepartmental collaboration.
3. The Report provides information regarding the number and quality of faculty and professional and support staff available for the Program delivery in relation to Program objectives (i.e., the composition of the faculty, their qualifications, appointment status and teaching assignments). *Supplemental Documents:* faculty CV's.
4. The description and analysis describe the Program's policies and practices on student development, including recruitment, admission, advisement, evaluation, and participation against the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation on Student Development. That includes information on the students admitted to the Program to date; the admission policy, recruitment practices, and anticipated size and composition of the student body.

## **Domain III - Program Content: Curriculum and Field Education**

1. The Program describes the content of its curriculum and discusses how the Core Student Learning objectives are interpreted and operationalized. In this area, Programs are encouraged to develop creative and unique approaches relevant to their specific contexts and objectives. *Supplemental Documents:* course syllabi.



2. The description and analysis describes how the Program delivers its field education, including field education curriculum, faculty, instructors, placement, and student policies. *Supplemental Documents*: Field Education Manual, Student Handbook.

## **Domain IV - Program Evaluation/Assessment**

1. The Self-Study Report provides a summary of the School's ongoing and regular evaluation of the Program delivery and relevance to the partners. *Supplemental Documents*: Evaluation/assessment reports, e.g. course evaluation, student satisfaction, alumni feedback, partners' consultations, etc.
2. Any major Program change since the last accreditation review should be described in the Self-Study Report within the respective Program domain. A major change is any amendment in one or more domains of the Program that may affect the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. A major change may involve a change in admission requirements, funding, faculty composition, substantive changes in content of curriculum or field education, reorganization of Program governance and structure, modifications to the Program's target population, or shifting to alternate forms of Program delivery (e.g., off-campus, distance education). While the introduction of a major change in accredited Programs does not require approval from the COA before implementation, the Program needs to be sensitive to how this change may affect the Program's adherence to the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation. Such change shall be identified in the Self-Study Report (for Programs applying for Re-Accreditation) to be evaluated by the COA during the next Re-Accreditation review process.
3. Appendices: Statistical information on the Program's features, including: faculty/student ratios, class size, field placement hours, faculty field liaison activities, administrative support, research activity, etc. To facilitate and simplify statistical data collection, schools will be provided with templates and/or reporting forms developed by COA.
4. *Supplemental Documents*: Any other supporting documentation the Program deems relevant.

### **3.1.3 Submission of the Self-Study Report**

The Self-Study Report should be mailed to the CASWE-ACFTS office in two formats, one printed copy and one digital copy on a removable media device (e.g., CD, DVD, USB flash drive in PDF format). The supplemental information should be in complete documents and may be submitted as a digital copy. In addition, one printed copy of the first volume of the Self-Study Report and a digital copy of supplemental documentation should be sent directly to each reader of the Self-Study. The COA officially acknowledges the receipt of the application documentation. Should a mechanism for a secure electronic submission be established by the CASWE-ACFTS, this option will be made available to Schools applying for (re)accreditation.

### 3.2 SITE VISIT PROCEDURES

1. The purpose of site-visits is three-fold. First, site-visits provide the Review Team members with an opportunity to assess the Program in its immediate environment. Second, site-visits provide the Program with an opportunity to make a case for the choices made in terms of its structure, priorities, and specific approaches to Program delivery as well as to get a peer feedback and advice on strengthening the Program. Third, site-visitors are advocates for Program aspirations and goals. The site-visit affords the opportunity for the unique contributions of the social work Program(s) to be conveyed to the University/College and the broader community.
2. The central focus of the site-visit is to explore specific issues/Program areas identified by the COA, as well as to assess specific issues/areas in which the Program requested the Site Visit Team's feedback.
3. The Program will arrange for the site-visit Team to talk directly to various constituent groups (e.g., students, field instructors) and will provide site-visitors with a description of the process used to convene these groups. To the maximum extent possible, meetings of constituent groups should be extended to all members of these groups (e.g., all field instructors, all students enrolled in the Program, etc.).
4. During the site-visit, the site-visit Team arranges to meet with the Dean/Director, faculty, representatives of the University/College administration, and other groups and individuals who are in a position to contribute information regarding the issues that have been identified by the COA. The members of the site-visit Team follow the agreed upon content and the schedule of the site-visit. The Program provides all the necessary logistical and administrative support to the site- visit Team's work.
5. Site-visits may range from two to four days. Normally a site-visit occurs over two full days. When multiple Programs/multiple sites are under review, or when complex issues are assessed, a site-visit may be extended. Additional information after the site-visit can be submitted not later than one week after the site-visit.
6. The site-visit Team submits a written report of its findings to the School, with a copy to the appropriate Co-Chair no later than four weeks after the site-visit. The School is invited to respond in writing to the appropriate Co-chair within three weeks of receiving the report.
7. Two weeks prior to the COA meeting at which the Program is to be reviewed, the CASWE-ACFTS office sends to each COA member, the site-visit Team's report, the School's response, and any other relevant information.

**PART 4**  
**SPECIAL MATTERS IN ACCREDITATION**

**4.1 SPECIAL REVIEW OF ACCREDITED STATUS**

**4.1.1 Special Reviews of Accredited Status**

The COA may initiate an earlier, or special, review of an accredited Program before the eight-year period of accreditation expires. Such a review would be in order in the following circumstances:

1. A report from an accredited Program indicates serious concerns/deficiencies that may severely jeopardize the Program's capacity to meet the accreditation standards.
2. A written complaint addressed to the COA makes a convincing and well documented case that the Program might have serious concerns/deficiencies that may severely jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards.
3. A School requests an earlier review of its accredited Program and provides a justification to the COA, for instance, a School has introduced or experienced a major change into its Program, or the School wishes to get reviews of different Programs (BSW & MSW) synchronized.

**4.1.2 Site-visit Permitted**

Should an earlier review be required, the COA may decide to undertake a site-visit.

**4.1.3 Decisions Following a Special Review**

1. At the conclusion of such a review, the COA may make one of the following decisions:
  - i) The Program adequately meets the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation;
  - ii) The Program overall meets the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation with the exception of minor concerns/deficiencies that do not jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. Therefore, the COA does not consider it necessary to alter the accredited status of the Program; however, the Commission identifies the issues of concern and outlines the conditions to be addressed by the Program within the designated time frame.
  - i) The Program does not adequately meet the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation due to major concerns/deficiencies that jeopardize the Program's ability to meet the accreditation standards. Therefore, the Commission identifies the issues of concern and outlines the Conditions which the Program must address within a specified period of time in order to retain its accredited status. If the Program does not address these conditions within the designated time

frame, the accredited status will be withdrawn.

2. The decision of the COA, with a statement of the reasons supporting this decision, is communicated in a letter from one of the Co-Chairs of the Commission to the President of the University/College with a copy to the Dean/Director of the School.
3. Where the COA withdraws the accredited status of a Program, the Program has the right to request a reconsideration of the decision and to appeal the decision consistent with Part 4, Section 4.2 of these procedures, “*Reconsideration and Appeal Procedures*”.

## **4.2 RECONSIDERATION AND APPEAL PROCEDURES**

### **4.2.1 Reconsideration of the COA’s Decisions**

1. A Program may request reconsideration of decisions of the COA related to the type of the accreditation status granted to the Program, conditions to be met in reporting, the frequency of reporting requirements, the interpretation of Standards and/or Procedures, the duration of the period of Accreditation that has been granted, or the denial of Accreditation. Any request for reconsideration must be filed within thirty days of receipt of notice of the Commission’s decision.
2. The COA may undertake or refuse to consider any request for reconsideration.
3. Where a reconsideration request is granted and the nature of the request is limited to the conditions to be met in reporting requirements, the frequency of reporting requirements and the interpretation of Standards and/or Procedures, the request will be considered by all members of the Commission acting as a ‘committee of the whole’.
4. Where a reconsideration request is granted and the nature of the request involves reconsideration of the period of accreditation granted, in addition to other matters, a committee of two or three current or past members of the COA, other than those who served on the original Review Committee, shall review all relevant documents, meet with the Program, as required, and report to the Commission. Following receipt of the committee’s report, the Commission may decide to revise or uphold its original decision.
5. The decision of the COA, with a statement of the reasons supporting this decision, shall be communicated in a letter from one of the Co-Chairs of the Commission to the President of the University/College with a copy to the Dean/Director of the School.
6. The decision of the COA, following reconsideration, is final and not subject to appeal, except as outlined in Section 4.2.2 Appeal below.

#### **4.2.2 Appeal**

1. A decision of the COA following reconsideration or the denial of a request for reconsideration may be appealed if the School alleges that the Commission's decision is in disagreement with the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, Educational Policies, and the Procedures for Accreditation. The School may then appeal to the Board of Directors of CASWE-ACFTS as provided for in the Constitution and By-Laws (Section 7.2).
2. An Appeal Committee, appointed by the Board of Directors of CASWE-ACFTS, comprises three experienced and reputable social work educators who are not current members of the COA or the BOD and were not members of these bodies in the past two years. The Appeal Committee re-examines the case, guided by the CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation, Educational Policies and the Procedures for Accreditation, and by recommendations made by the Board of Directors. The Appeal Committee has the authority to review relevant documents, hold hearings, consult representatives of the School, Faculty, Department or Module concerned, and the Commission on Accreditation, and takes whatever other actions it deems necessary to reach a decision on the appeal. The Appeal Committee makes a decision by majority vote and reports to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors validates this decision as a final decision on the issue and communicates this decision to the School concerned and the COA.