



CASWE-ACFTS

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

May 23rd, 2023

CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors Statement on Proposed “entry to practice” exam in Ontario.

The CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors wishes to voice its opposition to the proposed entry to practice exam in Ontario. We understand that the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers is seeking to implement these exams in 2027.

Findings that have emerged from both the United States and Canada (British Columbia and Alberta) show that historically oppressed and marginalized groups have lower success rates on entrance to practice exams.

The overall ASWB findings from 2018-2021 showed an approximate 80% first-time pass rate for White graduates and approximately 40% first-time pass rate for Black graduates. Indigenous graduates passed at an approximate 60% rate their first try and both Asian and Latinx graduates fared only slightly better.

In Canada, the findings show that in both British Columbia and Alberta, across BSW, master’s and clinical exams, first time pass rates for White graduates were above 90%. The exam generated consistently lower pass rates for Indigenous, Black and Asian graduates. This is systemic racism. Indeed, the exam functions as a systemic barrier to marginalized communities seeking greater representation among the social work profession that disproportionately serves them.

While we respect and acknowledge the perspective of our colleagues who support implementation of the exam, as educators we are compelled to oppose a practice that would add an additional layer of systemic racism to an already racist system. The proposed exam does not align with the Canadian Social Work Accreditation Standards which seek to de-centre eurocentric perspectives and recognize and honour the voices and experiences of Indigenous, Black, Asian and other racialized groups.

We need to intentionally confront a practice that serves as a conduit to perpetuating discrimination and social injustice. We must be cognizant that each racialized group is unique, with unique ways of knowing and doing. Their cultural ways of knowing must not be discounted. Such diverse attributes have a rightful place in the evaluation process. Our racialized colleagues’ unique bodies of knowledge and lived socio-cultural experiences must be treated as integral components in their ability to practice effective and efficient social work. Their admission into the profession cannot be based exclusively on an overwhelmingly eurocentric, 4-hour long multiple-choice exam. We have a special concern with regards to the financial burden that students would potentially face. Exam fees and associated costs represent yet another structural barrier which could prove even more oppressive and stressful if students must write the exam multiple times to secure a pass.



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Persistence with the exam implies that there is no clear intent to rid the social work education system of bias and create the distinct anti-oppressive change that social justice demands. Such persistence means that there will be serious ongoing implications for all racialized groups - denial of personhood and passion; denial of place in the social work profession; denial of professional development; denial of collegial alliances and relationship-building; denial of opportunities for multi-faceted student learning outcomes; and denial of economic security.

The CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors urges full recognition of this plight that *IS* the denial of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

We would like to invite ASWB to remain in conversation and pause to consider alternative competency measures and assessments of readiness to practice. The CASWE-ACFTS Board of Directors is deeply invested in ensuring all graduates from social work programs are proficient social work professionals who will centre their practice around the best interest of the diverse populations they have vowed to support.

This is also the reason why as an organization we have grave concerns about the use of exams as a tool to assess professional readiness. As a profession that supports anti-oppression and decolonial social justice, CASWE-ACFTS must advocate against such discriminatory practices.

We encourage everyone to read the open letter (link below) and sign in solidarity.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd_JfB9w7GfSQUfCWk7FTMvtkjZXGiX2_wJF5Wu3xOz9H9H9w/viewform

Jason Albert
CASWE-ACFTS Interim President

Carole Carpot
CASWE-ACFTS Executive Director