



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Navigating Accreditation-related Programs Changes

Hosted by: CSWE's Department of Social Work Accreditation

May 17, 2022 | 2:00-3:00pm ET | Zoom

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

Mission: *To advance excellence and innovation in social work education and research by providing leadership, ensuring quality in teaching and learning, and strengthening the capacity of our member institutions.*

CHEA-recognized Accrediting Body:
CSWE's Commission on Accreditation (COA)

As of the February 2022 COA meeting, there are:

- 542 accredited baccalaureate programs
- 309 accredited master's programs
- 13 baccalaureate programs in candidacy
- 27 master's programs in candidacy
- 4 baccalaureate programs in pre-candidacy
- 11 master's programs in pre-candidacy
- 4 accredited post-master's social work fellowship programs
- = 910 programs served

Housekeeping

- This slide deck is available for download at:
<https://www.cswe.org/accreditation/training/accreditation-powerpoints/>
- Future interactive webinar sessions will be communicated to programs as they are scheduled 😊
- Accreditation consultations are available year-round to the program's primary contact via e-mail, phone, and Zoom!

Webinar Purpose & Goals

Purpose: Clarify and provide supports for navigating accreditation-related program changes.

Goal #1: Identify program changes that require reporting

Goal #2: Explain changes that do not require reporting

Goal #3: Explore tips for submitting a substantive change proposal when planning to offer a new online or location-based program option

Webinar Scope

- Provide an intentional learning space for interactive questions & answers (Q&A) based on the topics discussed
- Present an overview of the program change policy
- Not cover EPAS / interpretation



Agenda

Overview of Program Changes Policy

Notifications

Substantive Changes

- Definitions
- Review Process
- Proposal Template & Review Brief
- Common Errors & Citations
- Substantive Change FAQs
- Failure to Report

Timetable Changes

FAQs

Accreditation Services

- Collaborative Framework
- Services & Supports

Q&A

Popular Terms

- **Commission on Accreditation (COA):** The sole accrediting body for social work education in the US and territories; a commission under CSWE's shared governance structure.
- **Reaffirmation:** The 8-year regularly scheduled multi-step peer-review process to reaffirm or reaccredit social work programs.
- **Candidacy:** The multi-step peer-review process for new or existing social work programs seeking initial accreditation. The process is based on achieving compliance through 3 phased benchmarks, culminating in an initial accreditation self-study and decision.
- **EPAS:** The *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* is the official published document by which the CSWE's COA evaluates baccalaureate and master's programs and bases their compliance decisions upon.

What are the most common program changes?

- Database / [directory listing](#) updates
 - 1780 responses to the [Program Database Record Verification and Updates Form](#) since August 2020
- Substantive Change Proposals
 - 47 substantive changes reviewed during last full cycle (June 2021 – February 2022)
- Notification of changes that may impact program compliance with the EPAS

Overview of Program Changes Policy

Complete policies and procedures: section 1.2.4. *Program Changes* in the [EPAS Policy Handbook](#). The policy is comprised of 4 sections:

- **Section A:** Changes That Do Not Require Reporting
- **Section B:** Changes That Require Notification to the DOSWA
 - Changes to Key Personnel or the Program's [Directory Listing](#) / Database Record
- **Section C:** Substantive Change Proposals
 - Implementing a New Location-based or Online Program Option
- **Section D:** Failure to Report Changes

Section A: Changes That Do Not Require Reporting

- Revision of the program's mission and goals
- Revision of the curriculum, including:
 - Syllabi
 - Course sequencing
 - Required social work courses (including practice and field courses)
 - Electives
 - Prerequisites
 - General education and liberal arts requirements
 - Addition of a social work minor, associate degree, or dual / double major
 - Addition of a learning site or hybrid / blended curriculum design (review section C of this policy for definitions)

Section A: Changes That Do Not Require Reporting

- Changes in qualified faculty or the composition of faculty, students, or both
- Changes in the program's policies and procedures relative to admission, transfer, advisement, grievance, or termination
- Changes to the explicit and implicit curriculum assessment plans

Section B: Changes That Require Notification to the DOSWA

- *May impact compliance*
- Examples include, but are not limited to:
- Changes to key personnel or the program's directory listing / database record
 - Completed via a form sent directly to our database manager
- Reduction in resources
- Changes to faculty composition or leadership that may impact faculty-related accreditation standards
- Closing a program option
- Change of institution's name

Section B: Changes That Require Notification to the DOSWA

- Changes to the institution's accreditation or recognition status with any entities resulting in the issuance of an adverse action or investigation
- Temporary closure of the program or host institution in event of a manmade / natural disaster, other public health emergency, or circumstances beyond the control of the educational environment

How Do I Report Changes to Key Program Faculty or Administrators?

- Complete the [Program Database Record Verification and Updates Form](#) sent directly to our database manager
- Only the relevant sections of the form need to be completed and submitted; leave the remainder of the form blank
- Unsure what information we have on file at CSWE? Check the [Directory of Accredited Programs](#) and update all inaccurate fields via the form linked above
- Each program may only select one primary contact
 - Responsibilities of the primary contact are detailed in the [EPAS Handbook](#), policy *1.2.7 Information Sharing and Release of COA Decision Letter*

Notification Review Process

- **Reviewer:** Accreditation Specialist
- **Due Date:** No later than 30 days after implementation of the change
- **Review Timeline:** Within 30 days after receipt
- **Action Options:**
 - Accept the notification
 - Request clarifying information or supporting documentation
 - Refer the change to the COA
- **Program Notified:** Via email by Specialist
- Noncompliance issues are referred to the special compliance review process

Programs Found Out of Compliance Between Reviews

- Findings from a program changes review may initiate a [special compliance review](#)
- Learn more about this process: Section 1.2.12. *Programs Found Out of Compliance Between Reviews* in the [EPAS Policy Handbook](#)

Section C: Substantive Change Proposals | Purpose

Purpose: *Verify significant program changes are **consistent** with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) and ensure that the planned expansion of program options **does not adversely impact the integrity and quality of the current program operations, resources, offerings, and capacity of the social work program to **comply with the EPAS.*****

Substantive Change Proposals | Definition & Types

Definition: *A substantive change is a significant modification, high-impact change, and / or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited program.*

Two types of substantive changes:

1. Adding a Location-based Program Option
 2. Adding an Online Program Option
- Mergers are also processed via this policy

Program Option Types | Definitions

Definition: *Various **structured pathways to degree completion** by which social work programs are delivered including specific methods and locations such as on campus, off campus, and virtual instruction ([2015 EPAS](#), pg. 22).*

Program Option Types | Majority Rule

- CSWE's COA uses a **majority (51% or more) threshold** to define program options

Thus, **if** 51% or more of the social work curriculum is planned to be offered in a new location or online, **then** a substantive change proposal is required in advance of implementation.

Program Option Types

Program option types are divided into 2 categories:

1. In-person / Face-to-Face / Traditional
 - Main / Primary Campus
 - Branch / Satellite Campus
2. Distance Education
 - Online
 - Broadcast Site
 - Correspondence

Program Option Type #1 | In-person / Face-to-Face / Traditional

Any **physical location** in which the **instructor(s) and student(s) are concurrently in-person together**. This allows for **live synchronous interaction** between instructors and students.

- 1 a. Main / Primary Campus
- 1 b. Branch / Satellite Campus

1a. Main / Primary Campus

A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is delivered in-person at a **primary physical location**, such as a main campus.

1b. Branch / Satellite Campus

A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is delivered in-person at a location **physically detached from the main campus.**

Program Option Type #2 | Distance Education

Any curriculum delivery method in which there is a **separation, in time or place, between the instructor(s) and student(s).**

This includes both **synchronous (real-time)** and **asynchronous (self-paced or pre-recorded)** education models.

- 2a. Online
- 2b. Broadcast Site
- 2c. Correspondence

2a. Online

A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is **delivered online.**

2b. Broadcast Site

A majority, 51% or more, of the curriculum is **broadcasted** via television, audio, telephone, internet radio, livestream, computer-based video, or other modes of technology **to students collectively convened in-person** at program-established classroom location(s) **physically detached from the main campus.**

Each physical classroom location to which the curriculum is broadcasted is considered a separate program option.

2c. Correspondence

The whole curriculum delivered through **mailing materials** (videos, texts, assignments, etc.) electronically or through the post to students.

Where do we find a list of our approved program options?

- The accreditation team consistently tracks program options in the [Directory of Accredited Programs](#)
- Search for your program and review the “All Locations” field

Substantive Change Review Process

- **Reviewer:** Associate Director of Accreditation Services (ADAS)
- **Due Date:** Submitted and reviewed on a rolling basis using a queue system
- **Review Timeline:** Typically, 3-6 months from submission to approval
- **Action Options:**
 - Approve
 - Defer 1 meeting and request clarifying info (can select the next level of reviewer: ADAS or COA)
 - Order a modified site visit
- **Program Notified:** Formal letter via email within 30 days following the approval
- Approval reported to COA at their next meeting

Understanding Staff Reviews vs. COA Compliance Reviews

- This is a review of **plans** for compliance only:
 - A full compliance review by COA will occur during the program's regularly scheduled reaffirmation review
 - Commissioners' reviews focus on the compliance (candidacy and reaffirmation)
- Staff cannot determine compliance; that sole authority rests with the COA
- One main reviewer increases uniformity / consistency
- Staff may defer the decision to COA if proposal content reveals that an expansion of scope may adversely impact the program's ability to maintain compliance with the EPAS

Template & Review Brief | Section 1

Substantive Change Proposal Template

Section 1: General Info

- Program accreditation status by CSWE's COA
- Institutional accreditation status by CHEA-Recognized regional accreditor
- Levels of approvals secured (if applicable)
- Current CSWE's COA-approved program options
- Check boxes & fillable fields

Template & Review Brief | Section 2

50-page narrative limit!

Section 2: Substantive Change Info

- New program option overview
- Rationale for change
- Check boxes & fillable fields
- Impact statements
 - Based upon the EPAS
 - Ensure that the planned expansion of program options does not adversely impact the integrity and quality of the current program scope
 - Ensure that the program's compliance plans for the new program option align with the EPAS
 - Require narrative responses

Template & Review Brief | Section 3 & 4

Section 3: Program Assessment Outcomes

- Program attests to begin assessing and publishing competency-based student learning outcomes delineated by program option and in aggregate publicly on their website

Section 4: Documentation

- Required documents / forms
 - Institutional-level organizational chart inclusive of social work program
 - Revised program-level organizational chart
 - Updated [Faculty Summary Form](#)
 - Updated [Budget Form](#)
- Optional documentation (if applicable)
 - Institution and / or program's environmental scan, needs assessment, or other research conducted

Template & Review Brief | Section 5 & 6

Section 5: Proposal Authorization

- Contact info and signatures from:
 - Program's primary contact
 - Institution's president / chancellor

Section 6: Review Brief

- Evaluative form for staff or COA to review proposal

Most Common Errors & Citations

Logistical:

- Failing to initiate the process before the implementation date or at least with **3-6-months** in advance
- Failing to **complete the proposal**, including all fields, check boxes, impact statements, required signatures, and documentation

Most Common Errors & Citations

Content:

- **Unclear or inadequate compliance plan(s)** in response to impact statements
- **Insufficient resources** (e.g., faculty, administrative assigned time, technology, field education supports, etc.) to support expansion of scope

Most Common Errors & Citations

Storytelling:

- Assuming staff are comparing the proposal to the program's last self-study or other previously submitted accreditation documents
 - This is a **distinct review process** and all relevant narrative and supporting documentation materials must be contained within the proposal
- Explaining current program options / operations rather than the **plan for the new option**

Substantive Change FAQs

Do noncompliance issues at 1 program option impact the accreditation status of the entire program?

- **Yes.** Programs must maintain compliance across all program options.
- If one program option is noncompliant, the accreditation status of **the entire program is affected.**

Substantive Change FAQs

Can my program implement a new program option during the candidacy or reaffirmation process?

- **No.** Programs are not permitted to implement a new program option during the candidacy or reaffirmation process.
- However, programs may request approval during an active review process to *start* the new program option *after* the COA issues their final compliance decision.

Substantive Change FAQs

Can my program market, advertise, and recruit for our planned program option in advance of receiving approval?

- **Yes.** However, the program cannot not state, or imply, that approval has been granted or that the program option is “CSWE-accredited” in any written materials or verbal exchanges.

Substantive Change FAQs

What if we offer 50% or less of the curriculum online or at a separate location?

- **Great!** Learning sites and hybrid curricula are defined as 50% or less of the social work curricula offered at separate location or online.
- These models are not considered separate program options and do not require reporting.
- Programs may use these models to pilot limited portions of the curriculum below the majority threshold.

Substantive Change FAQs

Is there an expedited review process?

- **No.** The program should expect approximately **3-6 months** between proposal submission date and decision date.
- This timeline is subject to change depending on the outcome of the review.
- The program is solely responsible for planning the implementation timeline in accordance with the 3-6-month review process.

Section D: Failure to Report Changes

- Solely program's responsibility
- **Results:** may adversely impact...
 - The program's accreditation status
 - Students and their future licensing, employment, educational enrollment, or other post-degree pursuits
- Staff can only confirm accredited status of approved program options in the [directory](#)

Section D: Failure to Report Changes

Next steps:

- 60 days to submit proper notification documentation, database update form, or substantive change proposal
- May be referred to COA for adverse action for continued failure to adhere to policies and procedures
 - Adverse actions may be appealed via section 1.2.6.
Appeals of COA Decisions in the [EPAS Policy Handbook](#)

Timetable Changes | Accredited Programs

- Due dates are firm
- Accredited programs have the option of requesting:
 - 1-meeting adjustment (4 months)
 - 2-meeting postponement (8 months)
 - 1-year postponement to *temporarily* delay COA review
- A program may request 1 adjustment and 1 postponement per reaffirmation cycle
- Must meet specified criteria

Timetable Changes | Accredited Programs

- Return to the original reaffirmation agenda date for the next reaffirmation review cycle
- Example:
 - June 2023 (original agenda date)
 - June 2024 (1-year postponement)
 - June 2031 (next review date) | 8 years after June 2023 (original agenda date)

Timetable Changes | Accredited Programs

- Policies 1.2.2 *Postponement of Reaffirmation Review* and 1.2.3 *Agenda Adjustments* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) detail the process and criteria for requesting additional time
- Contact your program's accreditation specialist to discuss options for an agenda adjustment or postponement and submit the [required form](#)

Timetable Changes | Permanent Alignment

- Institutions with both accredited baccalaureate and master's social work programs have the option of permanently aligning their COA review dates
- Are issued a new and customized agenda date for the next reaffirmation review cycle
- Policy *1.2.2 Postponement of Reaffirmation Review* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) details the process and criteria for requesting an aligned review date
- Contact your program's accreditation specialist to discuss options for a permanent alignment and submit the [required form](#)

Timetable Changes | Candidacy Programs

- Due dates are firm
- Candidacy programs have the option of requesting:
 - 1-meeting adjustment (4 months) to *permanently* delay COA review
- Must meet specified criteria
- Issued a new agenda date for the next benchmark(s) review cycle
- Example:
 - October 2023 (original agenda date)
 - February 2024 (1-meeting adjustment)
 - February 2025* (next benchmark review date) | 1 year after February 2024 (permanent adjustment date)

* *subject to change based on the COA's review and approval to proceed to the next benchmark*

Timetable Changes | Candidacy Programs

- Policy 1.2.3 *Agenda Adjustments* in the [EPAS Handbook](#) detail the process and criteria for requesting additional time
- Contact your program's accreditation specialist to discuss options for an agenda adjustment and submit the [required form](#)

FAQs

How do I report changes that occur during the self-study writing process?

- Self-study typically captures the year prior to submission
- However, the program must be cognizant to update accreditation documents to reflect all changes that strengthen compliance before submission
- **Framing:**
 - Consider the self-study / benchmark as a **rolling snapshot** of current program operations / offerings; not reflecting previous or outdated information
 - Programs discuss the current educational environment; rather than explaining how elements of the program have changed since the last accreditation review cycle

FAQs

The **most frequent changes listed below** are not exhaustive, so it is important to ensure that all information, personnel, operations, program options, and data are captured in the self-study are current, accurate, and aligned with the EPAS.

- Composition of faculty, students, and staff / other personnel
- Adding / removing program options
- Updated assessment data
- Updated policies or procedures
- Enhancements made to program operations to strengthen compliance with any standard in the EPAS

FAQs

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The self-study / benchmark **reflects the most current program faculty and personnel at the time of submission**
- This ensures the commissioner / site visitor has access to current faculty and personnel information reflecting those with whom the visitor will meet during their visit
- *Discuss any planned changes with the program's accreditation specialist that may impact the program's ability to clearly demonstrate and document compliance with the EPAS*

FAQs

Are we required to report a change in accreditation status to our constituents?

- **No.** It is not a requirement that programs share, market, or communicate their accreditation status with their stakeholders.
- What, how, and with whom programs share their accreditation status is within their own purview.
- However, the CSWE-COA is required to publicly post accreditation decisions on the [CSWE website](#) 30-days after each meeting concludes.



Accreditation Services Collaborative Framework

- Staff work **collaboratively** with COA to offer **transparent, equitable, and consistent level of service** to all stakeholders (COA, programs, students, volunteer site visitors, public, etc.)
- Staff **evolve services** in alignment with COA and department goal of a **supportive and engaging peer-review accountability process** that benefits programs, institutions, faculty, staff, students, communities, and clients / constituents served by the social work profession
- Staff provide **proactive resources** for programs to engage in an **intensive self-reflective and continuous quality improvement process**

Services & Supports

Programs are supported via mass education opportunities and 1:1 consultations:

Services:

- Reaffirmation workshops
- Webinars
- Presentations at CSWE's annual conference
- Year-round consultations via email, phone, and video chat available via a scheduling app in each specialist's email signature



Closing

CSWE, commissioners, and social work programs share the same goal / commitment:

Ensuring quality social work education and competent social work practitioners.

Call to Action:

Engage with accreditation processes and CSWE services to best meet your accreditation goals and ensure an excellent and engaging educational experience.

We love to hear from you and collaborate with you!

Interested in becoming a CSWE site visitor for 2022 EPAS?

Must be a full- or part-time faculty member at a CSWE-accredited program with at least 3 years of teaching experience.

To get started, contact:

Alyson Durant

Volunteer Coordinator

adurant@cswe.org

Interested In Becoming a Commissioner?

Calls for applications for commissions and councils are sent to all CSWE members each spring. CSWE is actively recruiting commissioners with Spanish fluency. Composition of the COA shall be consistent with the CSWE's diversity, equity, and inclusion policy and plan. Applicants must have completed at least 3 site visits under the 2015 EPAS in order to be appointed to the Commission.

Current site visitor and meet the qualifications? Contact Megan Fujita at mfujita@cswe.org to learn more.