**Council on Social Work Education**

**2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Competency-based education is an outcomes-oriented approach to curriculum design. The goal of the outcomes approach is to ensure that students are able to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In EPAS, social work practice competence consists of nine interrelated competencies and component practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes

Using a curriculum design that begins with the outcomes, expressed as the expected competencies, programs develop the substantive content, pedagogical approach, and educational activities that provide learning opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is an essential component of competency-based education. Assessment provides evidence that students have demonstrated the level of competence necessary to enter professional practice, which in turn shows programs are successful in achieving their goals. Assessment information is used to improve the educational program and the methods used to assess student learning outcomes.

**Social Work Competencies for Bachelor of Social Work Programs**

The nine Social Work Competencies are listed below. Each competency describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that comprise the competency at the generalist level of practice, followed by a set of practice behaviors that integrate these components. Practice behaviors represent observable components of the competencies, while the preceding statements represent the underlying content and processes that inform the behaviors.

**Competency 1-- Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior**

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession’s history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. Social workers:

1a.  Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;

1b.  Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;

1c.  Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;

1d.  Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and

1e.  Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

**Competency 2-- Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, physical and mental ability, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. Social workers:

2a.  Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;

2b.  Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences;

2c.  Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies; and

2d. Provide contextually-relevant services and promote the improvement of service delivery systems, focusing on services to urban and rural Alaska.

**Competency 3-- Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. Social workers:

3a.  Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and

3b.  Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Competency 4-- Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice**

Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. Social workers:

4a.  Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;

4b.  Apply critical thinking to engage in critical analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and

4c.  Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

**Competency 5-- Engage in Policy Practice**

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro and macro levels and how social workers may effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Social workers:

5a.  Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;

5b.  Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice; and

5c. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services.

**Competency 6-- Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment and their utility to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers:

6a.  Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and

6b.  Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

**Competency 7-- Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment and the implications of those theories for the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

7a.  Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;

7b.  Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;

7c.  Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and

7d.  Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

**Competency 8-- Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers recognize that a beneficial practice outcome may require collaboration with professionals from other disciplines. Social workers:

8a.  Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;

8b.  Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;

8c.  Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;

8d.  Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies; and

8e.  Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

**Competency 9-- Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

9a.  Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;

9b.  Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes;

9c.  Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;

9d. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes.

1. Excerpts from CSWE (2015). Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)