

Entitlement to Registration: Criteria

Competency

A position paper

June 2004

**Social Workers Registration Board
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro
P O Box 10-150
The Terrace
Wellington 10014**

Competency

Contents

1. Introduction and Obligations of the Board
2. Historic Competency Measures which meet current registration competency criteria
3. Subsequent assessments
4. Rationale
5. Core Competencies
6. Feedback
7. Flow Chart: Competency Criteria for registration application

1. Introduction and Obligations of the Board

The Social Workers Registration Act 2003 requires the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) to establish clear criteria for registration. Section 6 entitles a person who has a recognised NZ qualification to be registered if the Board is satisfied

- a) that his or her competence to practice social work has been found satisfactory under Part 3; and
- b) that he or she is a fit and proper person to practice social work; and
- c) that (whether because of the inclusion of an appropriate component in that qualification, or else as a result of his or her satisfactory completion of a separate course or courses of training) he or she is:
 - i) competent to practise social work with Maori; and
 - ii) competent to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand; and
- d) that he or she has enough practical experience.

A recognized New Zealand qualification, fit and proper, enough practical experience are defined in other position papers.

This paper addresses competence under section 6(a) and (c)(i & ii), section 7(c)(i & ii) and (f) and section 13 of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.

Section 7 of the Act outlines the entitlement to registration of overseas-qualified social workers. To be registered the Board must be satisfied that the overseas qualification is equivalent to a recognised New Zealand qualification (whilst

recognising that it may not include a component which ensures that its holder is competent to practice social work with Maori and with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand). Additionally, the Board must be satisfied the applicant seeking registration can speak, write and understand spoken and written English reasonably well and intends to live and practice social work in New Zealand. The applicant must meet all the other criteria for registration in Section 6.

Section 13 enables the Board to register fully an applicant if

- (a) he or she has neither a recognised NZ qualification in social work nor an overseas qualification equivalent to a NZ qualification in social work but
- (b) the Board is satisfied that
 - i) his or her practical experience in practising social work in NZ is enough to compensate for the lack of such a qualification and
 - ii) his or her competence to practice social work has been found satisfactory under part 3; and
 - iii) he or she is a fit and proper person to practise social work; and
 - iv) that (whether as a result of his or her satisfactory completion of a course or courses of training, or because his or her practical experience in practising social work in NZ is enough to compensate for not having completed such a course) he or she
 - (A) is competent to practise social work with Maori; and
 - (B) is competent to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in NZ.

Section 38, (1) of the Act, requires the SWRB to find a person's competence to practice social work satisfactory for the purposes of the Act only if a competence assessment (as required by the Board) has been completed, or if a competence assessment has been completed within the last five years. The Board must be satisfied that as a result of competence assessment the applicant has the skill and knowledge required to practice social work and meets the professional standards reasonably to be expected of a registered social worker.

Section 39 permits the Board to review a registered social worker's competence at any time including after being notified of a determination of complaint under section 71(1) (a).

Section 42 outlines the expectations of what may be assessed in any competency processes.

Section 44 outlines the requirement for registered social workers who wish to retain their practising certificate to complete a competence assessment on a 5 yearly cycle.

Sections 12 and 14 of the Act outline the criteria for full and provisional registration. In both cases competence is one of the pre requisite criteria.

The Board must decide an applicant should be registered **fully** if, and only if, he or she meets the criteria in section 6 or 7.

The Board must decide that an applicant should be registered **provisionally** if and only if, satisfied-

- a) that the applicant's competence to practise social work has been found satisfactory under Part 3; and
- b) that he or she is a fit and proper person to practice social work, meets some of the other criteria in section 6 or section 7; and
 - i) is in the process of working towards meeting the rest of them; or
 - ii) if in the Board's opinion subsection (2) applies to him or he intends to work towards meeting them within a time frame set by the Board.

Section 15 outlines the criteria for temporary registration. Demonstrated competence to practice is not among the criteria required for temporary registration.

Competency within the Social Work profession in New Zealand has been historically tied to competency assessment programmes promoted by

- Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW),
- some employers,

- implication through completion of an acceptable course of study, that is, NZ recognised qualifications in social work that include practicum placements.

This discussion paper sets out the Board's current thinking about how the requirement for competency may be met.

2. Historic Competency Measures which meet current registration competency criteria

It is the view of the SWRB that social workers holding one of the competency measures listed below as at 1 October 2004, be recognized as meeting the competency requirement of registration.

- Those who have a recognised New Zealand qualification according to the SWRB schedule and who qualified within the last 5 years.
- Those who hold a professional certificate of competency from ANZASW undertaken within the last 5 years.
- Those who hold a workplace competency undertaken within the last 5 years (still to be identified and recognised by the SWRB).

Social Workers who do not fit into the above three categories will have to complete a SWRB approved competency assessment as part of applying for registration.

3. Subsequent assessments

Section 44 outlines the expectation that competency to practice be demonstrated in 5 yearly cycles. It is the view of the SWRB that the first assessment under a SWRB approved process would be a "face to face" panel assessment. Subsequent SWRB approved reassessments could be paper-based.

4. Rationale

There is intent to recognise existing measures of competency and develop a process that will avoid large volumes of assessments from the date the provisions of the Act come into force (1 October 2004).

Subsequent reassessments would also be spread over a 5 yearly cycle avoiding a peak at the 5 yearly anniversary of the Act's commencement.

Competence to practice social work with Maori and with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand is accepted as demonstrated by the inclusion of explicit practice standards or courses of study which directly relate to these criteria.

5. Core Competencies

It is intended that the Board recognise core competencies that reflect practice standards accepted in New Zealand (Section 42 (3)). These core competencies will apply to all competency processes that are approved in the future by the Board and will be the basis of a request for proposal (RFP) inviting organisations and groups to become approved competency providers.

Using the requirements of the Act, drawing from the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) definition of Social Work and the ANZASW standards of practice, the Board has listed the following as initial core competencies that must apply to all social work:

- Competent to practice social work with Maori¹
- Competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in NZ¹
- Appropriately promotes social change
- Promotes appropriate problem solving in human relationships
- Appropriately promotes empowerment and liberation of people

¹ Components would include 1. Awareness of self and openness to cultural difference; 2. Knowledge of social and political historical context, intercultural communication, specific cultural content; and internalised culture and 3. Ability to translate the above two components into skills (Ka Tat Tsang, A & George, U 1998 Towards an integrated framework for cross-cultural social work practice. *Canadian social work Review*, 15(1), 75-93.)

- Utilises appropriate theories of human behaviour and social systems
- Utilises appropriate social work practice approaches
- Appropriately promotes the principles of human rights and social justice
- Ensures appropriate systems of accountability are in place for their work

6. Feedback

This paper has been circulated to key stakeholders.

The SWRB invites comment on the following:

- The use of historical accepted measures of competency
- Identification of any current or historic workplace competency assessment processes
- The proposed core competencies

Either:

Please post your feedback to us at

**Social Worker Registration Board
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro
P O Box 10-150
The Terrace
Wellington 10014**

Or

Email to: swrb@clear.net.nz

Date for feedback: 16 July 2004

7. Competency Criteria for Registration Application

