

Entitlement to Registration: Criteria

Enough Practical Experience

A position paper

June 2004

**Social Workers Registration Board
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Entitlement to Registration: Enough Practical Experience

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1. Introduction

The Act requires the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) to establish clear criteria for registration under the provisions in the Act:

- Section 6 entitles a person who has a recognised NZ qualification to be registered subject to meeting competency, being a fit and proper person, being competent to practice social work with Maori and different ethnic and cultural groups and that “*he or she has **enough** practical experience in practicing social work.*” (Section 6 d). The determination of the criteria for qualification, competency, and ‘fit and proper’ will be defined by the SWRB in other papers.
- Further Section 7 (e) in referring to registration of a person with an overseas qualification also requires that “*he or she has **enough** practical experience in practicing social work*”.
- In addition Section 13 (b i) empowers the SWRB to fully register an applicant with neither a recognized NZ qualification nor an overseas qualification equivalent to a recognized NZ qualification where the Board is satisfied that “*his or her practical experience is **enough** to compensate for the lack of such a qualification*”. Criteria such as fit and proper, competence and competence to practice social work with Maori and different ethnic and cultural groups in NZ still apply.

In this discussion paper the Board will set out its current thinking on these issues.

2. Enough practical experience for Social Workers

The Act empowers the SWRB to develop a framework to determine and define the concepts of “**enough**”. The SWRB proposes the following framework be applied:

- For applicants for registration under Section 6 or 7, who have been practicing as social workers for 2 years or more as at 1 October 2004. (Note: it is expected that this practice be more than 25 hours per week.)
- For applicants for registration under Section 6 or 7 who have been practicing for a period of less than two years, as at 1 October 2004.
- For applicants for registration under Section 6 or 7 who are new graduates with a NZ recognized qualification in social work or equivalent as at October 1 2004 or later.
- For applicants who are eligible for registration under Section 13.

2.1 Enough practical experience gained prior to 1 October 2004

The Board considers that

- For a social worker in practice on 1 October 2004 who applies for registration under Section 6 or 7 “**enough**” practical experience will be defined as a minimum of two years practice of more than 25 hours per week.
- For a social worker in practice on 1 October 2004 but who has not completed two years practice, then “**enough**” practical experience will be defined as the period when the Social Worker has practiced for two years at more than 25 hours per week, or has completed 2000 hours supervised practice, which ever is the sooner.

Note: A Social Worker may be provisionally registered under Section 14 (i) until “**enough**” practical experience is gained.

Note: Practical experience does not include fieldwork experience.

2.2 Enough practical experience after 1 October 2004 –Benchmark

The Board considers that

- “enough” practical experience for a Social Worker who graduates with a recognised NZ social work qualification or equivalent on October 1 2004 or later, will be 2000 hours supervised practice post-qualification.

- Evidence of both the number of hours worked and the supervision arrangement will be required when providing proof of practical experience. It is expected that the supervision criteria will meet acceptable professional criteria.

Note: (2000 hours has been calculated as a full time new graduate social worker working 30 hours per week actual hands on practice @ 40 - 45 weeks per year. = 1200 – 1350 hours per annum)

(NB: 40 - 45 weeks per annum takes into account annual leave, sick leave, course and conference leave.)

2.3 Rationale

- Supervised practice experience is considered paramount for competence to practice.
- A period of supervised practice following qualification complements the knowledge, skills and practical experience gained during the programme of study
- The Board will accept previous experience in years as opposed to hours. The number of years has been set at two, which is more than 2000 hours if working full time and around 2000 hours if working 25 hours per week, but does not account for the exact number of hours one has worked each week.
- New social workers who hold a recognised NZ social work qualification or equivalent may be granted provisional registration for two years if they are competent and fit and proper. Enough experience set at 2000 hours is less than two years full time employment so full registration can be gained within two years of commencing practice.
- The required number of hours fits within a range when benchmarked with other professions: The New Zealand Teacher's council expects applicants for full registration to have completed a minimum of a total of two years teaching within the five year period up to the date of application. The Physiotherapy Board expects applicants for full registration to have completed at least 1000 supervised clinical hours.
- The required number of hours extends the benchmark set by the Social Work profession: Applicants for full membership of ANZASW are expected to demonstrate experience as a social worker within the competency assessment

process and this is to be completed within one year of joining ANZASW as a provisional member.

3. Enough practical experience to compensate for the lack of a NZ qualification or equivalent (Section 13)

The Board considers that registration under Section 13 may be utilised in certain cases, as long as the SWRB is satisfied that the social worker is competent, fit and proper, competent to practice social work with Maori and competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand. The decision to register, or not, will be made by the Board on a case by case basis taking into account the following criteria:

- The social worker concerned has been employed as a social worker in New Zealand for a minimum of 10 years **and**
- It is not reasonable or possible to expect the social worker to complete a formal recognized New Zealand qualification in social work by the probable end of their working life as a social worker **or**
- The social worker has completed a tertiary qualification in social work, but this qualification has been identified as a second qualification, does not include social work placement experience and other requirements of first qualifications, and is excluded from the SWRB schedule of current and historic qualifications **and**
- The social worker concerned has the support from three fully registered social workers) to be registered under Section 13 **and**
- The social worker concerned can demonstrate that their work as a social worker is of an acceptable quality in terms of supervision, training and professional development which compensates for a formal recognized qualification.

3.1 Rationale

- The legislation recognises that there will always be some instances where social workers have never gained formal qualification and cannot be reasonably expected to, but who are competent in their practice, and have years of practical experience and are fit and proper people, that is, they meet all other elements required for registration. Giving greater recognition on occasion to practical experience does not mean the standard expected of social work is

relaxed. A social worker registered under this section of the Act becomes accountable for their practice under the provisions of the Act. Such accountability is one of the prime purposes of the Social Workers Registration Act.

- The SWRB believes it should recognise those who have worked as Social Workers for many years in New Zealand and have demonstrated their competence in terms of practice, supervision, professional development and other contributions to the profession.

4. Feedback

This paper has been circulated to key stakeholders.

The SWRB invites comment on the following:

- Enough practice experience for social workers.
- Enough practice experience in certain cases to compensate for a lack of qualification.
- The nature of supervised practice.
- Any other matters relating to the recognition of enough practical experience.

A list of respondents will be kept on record.

Either:

Please post your feedback to us at

**Social Workers Registration Board
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P.O. Box 10-150,
The Terrace,
Wellington 10-014.**

Or

Email to: swrb@clear.net.nz

Date for feedback: 16 July 2004