



**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

ENTITLEMENT TO REGISTRATION COMPETENCE

POLICY STATEMENT

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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 the registration of Social Workers. 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.

This policy paper addresses competence requirements described in sections 6(a) and (c) (i & ii); 7(c) (i & ii) and (f); 13; 38; 39; 42; 44; of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.

Competence, for the purposes of the SWRB, is primarily defined in s42 (1(a) (b)); s42(1)(a) skill and knowledge required to practise social work in accordance with their registration and (b) to meet the professional standards reasonably to be expected of a social worker.

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.

Other criteria for registration on;

- A fit and proper person
- Enough practical experience
- Recognized New Zealand qualification
- are contained in other policy statements published by the Board.

Section 13 enables the Board to register 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
 - is competent to practice social work with Maori; and
 - is competent to practice 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 (set by the Board) has been completed within the last five years. The Board must be satisfied that, as a result of a 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 competence assessment 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 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, 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 or the person 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.

Competence within the Social Work profession in New Zealand has been historically tied to competence 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 competence may be met.

2. Historic Competency Measure which meets current registration competency criteria

It is the view of the SWRB that social workers holding the following competence measure listed below, as at 1 October 2004, be recognised as meeting the competence requirement of registration.

- Those who hold a professional certificate of competence from ANZASW undertaken within the last 5 years, subject to them meeting a requirement by the Board that they demonstrate the attributes s42(1(a)(b)) .

Social Workers who do not fit into the above category will be required to complete a competence assessment, set by the Board, at the time of making an application to be registered.

It is anticipated that the SWRB, alongside providers of educational and training, will in the future set beginning competency measures to be assessed at the completion of a recognised qualification in social work. This beginning competency would allow the social worker to be provisionally registered and they would then be required to complete the first face to face competency assessment on completion of enough practical experience (2000 hrs) and thus be eligible for full registration

3. Subsequent assessments

Section 42 empowers the Board to set programmes for the purpose of helping decide whether people have the required skill and knowledge and are able to meet the professional standards expected of a social worker.

In the case of persons who have qualified with a recognised NZ qualification in the last 5 years the Board may require a person to demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements of s42(1(a)) at the point of gaining enough practical experience s6/7.

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

4. Rationale

The Board is concerned about the implications of a large volume of assessments from the date the provisions of the Act come into force (1 October 2004). It will introduce a method of staggering the dates on which 5 yearly competence assessments become due.

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

The Board recognises core competencies that reflect practice standards accepted in New Zealand (Section 42 (3)). These core competencies will apply to all competency processes that are set and approved by the Board.

The requirements of the Act, The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) definition of Social Work and the ANZASW standards of practice, have served to inform the Board in determining the following as initial core competencies that must apply to all social work: A registered social worker will

- Be competent to practice social work with Maori
- Be competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in NZ¹
- Promote social change
- Promote problem solving in human relationships
- Promote empowerment and liberation of people
- Utilise theories of human behaviour and social systems
- Utilise social work practice approaches
- Promote the principles of human rights and social justice
- Ensure systems of accountability are in place for their work
- Adhere to professional social work ethics

¹Components 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.

**The Registration Process
Social Workers Registration Board**

Application for Registration

Determination of Fit and Proper

