



**Social Workers  
Registration Board**  

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**Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro**

# **ENTITLEMENT TO REGISTRATION GRADUATE 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.

Entitlement to registration of New Zealand-qualified social workers requires the Board to be satisfied that an applicant's competence to practise social work has been found satisfactory.

The programme of competence assessments that the Board may set are defined in Part Three, section 42 (1) – (4) of the SWR Act.

### 42 Competence assessments

- (1) The Board may from time to time set programmes for the purpose of helping it decide whether people—
  - (a) have the skill and knowledge required to practise social work in accordance with their registration (or proposed registration); and
  - (b) meet the professional standards reasonably to be expected of a social worker.
- (2) A competence assessment may comprise 1 or a combination of 2 or more of the following:
  - (a) components entirely set by the Board; or
  - (b) components set by some other person or body, and recognised by the Board without modification; or
  - (c) components set by some other person or body, and recognised by the Board in a modified form.
- (3) At least 1 competence assessment must apply to all social work.
- (4) Any other competence assessment—
  - (a) may apply to all social work; or
  - (b) may apply only to social work of a stated description; or
  - (c) may apply to all social work other than social work of a stated description.

## 2. Core Competence Components

As per section 5 of the Board's *Entitlement to Registration: Competence Policy Statement* the Board recognises core competencies that apply to all social work and reflect practice standards accepted in New Zealand (Section 42 (3)).

These core competencies 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 NZ<sup>1</sup>
- 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

### 3. SWRB Programme Recognition Standards

The Board noted in its *Entitlement to Registration: Qualifications in Social Work Policy Statement* in September 2004, that it would establish programme criteria and standards that will form the basis of the Board's programme recognition (s99 (1) (f) & (i). The Board stated that "this will also require a process to determine exit standards or initial competencies for beginning practitioners to meet the competency requirement for provisional registration under s14 (1) (a)."

Between September 2004 and June 2008 the Board has made significant progress through the development and implementation of a Programme Recognition Process. The SWRB Programme Recognition standards include an assessment of the programmes adherence to the core competencies as outlined in section 2 above.

The SWRB Programme Recognition Standards can be found on the Board's website at <http://www.swrb.org.nz/RecognisedQualifications.html> under Other Documents.

### 4. SWRB Graduate Competence Policy

The SWRB approved the following recommendation from the Board's Education and Practise Standards Committee in February 2008 as a result of consultation with the providers of current SWRB recognised social work qualifications:

That students who graduate after 1 August 2008 from SWRB NZ recognised social work qualification programmes that have completed a full SWRB recognition process be deemed to have graduate competence and therefore be eligible to apply for registration;

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<sup>1</sup>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.

and

That graduate competence is valid for a period of two years from the date of completing the recognised qualification.

## **5. Rationale**

The Board is satisfied that after consulting with the providers of social work education regarding the introduction of graduate competence and having assessed the majority of SWRB Recognised Social Work Qualifications through the SWRB Programme Recognition process that it is now in a position to implement “exit standards or initial competencies for beginning practitioners to meet the competency requirement for provisional registration under s14 (1) (a).” that the Board envisaged in the September 2004 *Entitlement to Registration: Qualifications in Social Work Policy Statement*.

It is the Boards intention to individually recognise each of the SWRB Recognised Social Work Qualifications on the current schedule, as assessed through the Board’s Programme Recognition Process, as a competence assessment under section 42(1) of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.

Graduates from these programmes will be eligible for provisional registration under section 14 (1) (a). The Practising Certificates issued to these provisionally registered social workers will require them to complete a competence assessment as determined by the Board within two years from the date of completing their recognised qualification.