

Baylor School of Social Work  
Faculty Response to Proposed EPAS 2015

December 18, 2013

The faculty of the Baylor School of Social Work (BSSW) met at the invitation of the Evaluation and Accreditation Committee of the BSSW on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, to respond to the proposed EPAS changes for 2015. The following report details those items around which the faculty have consensus. Individual faculty members may address other individual concerns in their own responses to CSWE.

The BSSW faculty expressed the following:

1. Affirmation for the work that the new EPAS represent and appreciation for the process that invites feedback and comment. Specifically, the following are identified as strengths in the recommended changes:
  - a. The amount of work involved in this much change
  - b. A number of the new competencies and practice behaviors are written in simpler language
  - c. Several practice-related practice behaviors are elevated as competencies.
2. Concern that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) provides no evidence or rationale for the proposed changes. We affirm the requirements for evidence-informed practice and for the systematic evaluation of practice. We request that CSWE model affirmation for those requirements by implementing them. Some examples include:
  - a. What evidence has the council gathered that these changes are needed and are best practice to produce the desired outcomes?
  - b. What evidence is there for the effectiveness of outcomes and practice behaviors?
  - c. Why are particular practice behaviors and competencies removed?
  - d. What is the evidence that the competency of professional identity is unimportant in the profession or in social work education?
  - e. What is the evidence for combining ethics and professional behavior into one competency?
  - f. What is the evidence for replacing advanced practice and concentrations with areas of specialty?
  - g. What is the research supporting criteria for ratio of faculty to students, for years of practice, or for what constitutes practice?
3. Concern that the new competencies are largely stated as categories rather than actionable/measurable competencies. This use of categories is not a good change. Example: The new competency is Social Justice...the old preferred language is Advanced Social Justice.
4. Concern that significant change does not allow for longitudinal assessment. We have taken the competencies and practice behaviors seriously, developed an evaluation program, and begun to gather evidence that impacts change in our curriculum. To change

50% of the practice behaviors at this point makes longitudinal research/evaluation impossible and makes program assessment a moving target. Beyond that, this degree of change erodes confidence in the faculty that these changes are reasonable and meaningful. If CSWE wants to affirm the pessimism that these standards are always in flux and so do not really have meaning, CSWE is on the right path. If CSWE wants programs to take them seriously, this is too much change with not enough rationale and evidence.

5. Concern at the level of prescription rather than freedom for program innovation. We understood that the changes in 2008 were to allow more freedom for program innovation. We expect that programs will be able to define their innovations, define their operationalization of the competencies (practice behaviors) and connect competencies to the professional literature. We request that CSWE train consultants, site visits, committee members, etc. to think conceptually and broadly, and make room for programs to work on their own frameworks.
6. Specific concern about prescription with respect to requirements around faculty and practice experience. We recommend that CSWE use the Code of Ethics approach. The Code of Ethics includes the provision that social workers practice within their areas of competence. We recommend that the standard for social work education be that social work educators teach only within their areas of competence.
  - a. Faculty members are responsible for identifying courses they are competent to teach and provide evidence for that determination including education, training, and practice experience.
  - b. Faculty members are responsible for maintaining competence and providing evidence for that as well.
  - c. Administration is responsible for establishing criteria, monitoring faculty competence in teaching areas, and hiring faculty who can teach the courses needed in the program.
7. Affirmation that individual faculty in the BSSW will craft their individual responses to particular recommended changes and provide those to CSWE themselves.