



# Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS) 2012

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**Guideline 1.6:  
Guidance on  
new programs**

## Guideline 1.6: Guidance on new programs (Ref ASWEAS 6.2)

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This document is to be read in conjunction with the 2012 *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (ASWEAS 2012). ASWEAS 2012 spells out the principles, standards and broad requirements for accreditation by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) of professional social work education programs run by higher education providers (HEPs) and delivered by social work academic organisational units (SWAOUs).

This document provides guidance on the process and responsibilities of the SWAOU, the consultant and the AASW in an accreditation consultancy for new programs (ASWEAS 6.2) under the following headings:

### Contents

1. Accreditation consultancy participants and responsibilities
  - 1.1. Social work academic organisational unit
  - 1.2. Consultant
  - 1.3. Consultancy advisers
  - 1.4. AASW staff
  - 1.5. AASW executive
2. Accreditation consultancy process
  - 2.1. Stage 1: Planning
  - 2.2. Stage 2: Consultancy
  - 2.3. Stage 3: Decision making
3. Social work program proposal and consultant's report
  - 3.1. Report template
  - 3.2. Intellectual property
  - 3.3. Authorship and document control
4. AASW consultants and appointment of consultant
  - 4.1. AASW consultants
  - 4.2. Procedures for appointment as consultant
  - 4.3. Selection criteria for appointment as consultant
  - 4.4. Process for appointment of consultants and consultancy advisers to an accreditation consultancy
  - 4.5. Accountability of consultant and consultancy advisers
5. Annual Reporting

# 1. Accreditation consultancy participants and responsibilities

The participants principally involved in, and responsible for, the activities of an accreditation consultancy are as follows:

- social work academic organisational unit (SWAOU)
- consultant
- consultancy advisers
- AASW staff
- AASW executive

Their responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process are discussed in sections 1.1 to 1.5.

Other parties, including students, other relevant HEP units/bodies, AASW branches and other relevant organisations are expected to participate where appropriate in the process.

## 1.1. Social work academic organisational unit

The SWAOU is the unit within a higher education provider that is responsible for developing and delivering the teaching and learning elements of an AASW-accredited social work program.

The SWAOU's responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process include:

- declaring any conflict of interest prior to the consultancy
- concluding arrangements with AASW and the consultant for the consultancy
- entering into a contract with AASW to undertake an accreditation consultancy
- providing to the consultant all required information and supporting materials
- actively supporting and engaging with the consultant in the development of the social work program
- providing access to relevant stakeholders and resources as required
- meeting the costs associated with the consultancy, including the costs of review team travel, accommodation and meals and all reasonable costs associated with a site visit
- paying the accreditation consultancy fee to AASW
- adhering to the process and requirements established in this document.

## 1.2. Consultant

The consultant is a member of the AASW accreditation panel who has been appointed to act as an accreditation consultant.

The consultant's responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process include:

- declaring any conflict of interest prior to the consultancy
- entering into a contract with AASW to undertake an accreditation consultancy of a program
- undertaking the consultancy in a manner consistent with the process and requirements established in this document
- actively engaging and working with the SWAOU on the development of the social work program
- undertaking a rigorous examination and assessment of programs against the requirements of ASWEAS 2012
- providing detailed recommendations to the SWAOU and the AASW regarding the program and its satisfaction of ASWEAS 2012 requirements
- documenting with the SWAOU and individually the details of the program
- periodically consulting the consultancy advisers, providing them with reporting documents and accepting their feedback throughout the consultancy process
- developing and providing recommendations to the SWAOU towards meeting the requirements of ASWEAS 2012 and broader innovation and improvement to the program
- providing a final report to the AASW executive recommending one of the following:
  - a) The program should not be accredited. (Any recommendation against accreditation must be clearly based on the evidence provided in the final consultant's report.)
  - b) The program should be provisionally accredited for the duration of its first cohort.

## 1.3. Consultancy advisers

The two consultancy advisers are members of the AASW accreditation panel eligible to act as accreditation consultants.

The consultancy advisers' responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process include:

- declaring any conflict of interest prior to the consultancy
- entering into a contract with the AASW to provide advice and support to the consultant during the accreditation consultancy of a program
- maintaining knowledge of the process and program development through review of reporting and proposed content
- periodically providing advice and support to the consultant
- providing advice on the report and recommendations throughout the process.

## **1.4. AASW staff**

On behalf of the AASW executive, the staff are responsible for coordinating and managing the accreditation consultancy process consistent with this document and ASWEAS 2012.

The staff's responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process include:

- declaring any conflict of interest prior to the consultancy
- arranging details of the review, including the review team, and scheduling, reporting and delivery with the SWAOU and the review team
- concluding contract agreements with the SWAOU and the review team
- providing ongoing procedural and policy advice and support to the SWAOU and the review team
- managing delivery of the final review report
- managing and contributing to the AASW executive briefing to the AASW board of directors
- actioning a decision of the AASW board of directors for provisional accreditation.

## **1.5. AASW executive**

The AASW executive has overall responsibility for the accreditation consultancy process on behalf of the AASW board of directors.

The executive's responsibilities in the accreditation consultancy process include:

- overseeing the accreditation consultancy process
- briefing the AASW board of directors on accreditation consultancy activities.

## **2. Accreditation consultancy process**

The process of an accreditation consultancy is developmental. The SWAOU and the consultant are expected to work closely in an ongoing fashion to develop a program that will meet the requirements of ASWEAS 2012. Two consultancy advisers will provide additional advice and support directly to the consultant throughout the process. Should the process of accreditation consultancy continue beyond six months from the date of contract, additional fees may be charged by the AASW following negotiation with the SWAOU.

Successful demonstration of meeting the requirements of ASWEAS 2012 through the process outlined will result in a recommendation to the AASW board of directors for provisional accreditation. Provisional accreditation, if awarded, is for the first cohort at which time a reaccreditation review must be undertaken towards possible reaccreditation. The final decision regarding accreditation is made by the AASW board of directors.

The process for the accreditation consultancy is divided into three stages. Each stage may require a number of actions and products from each participant.

### **2.1. Stage 1: Planning**

The accreditation consultancy process starts with a written request from the SWAOU for the appointment of a consultant towards possible provisional accreditation of a social work program. This request must be received a minimum of 12 months before the program or degree is to be offered by the SWAOU.

The planning process initially involves the SWAOU and AASW staff. Once a consultant is appointed, the details of the accreditation consultancy are largely managed between the SWAOU and the consultant, consistent with this document, with AASW staff providing process and policy support and advice as needed.

At the conclusion of Stage 1, all parties will be contracted to the accreditation consultancy and the SWAOU and the consultant will work together to begin planning and development work. Work must be underway at least six months before the program is to be offered.

The Stage 1 process is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Stage 1 process**

<b>Party responsible</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time of activity</b>
<b>SWAOU</b>	Requests the AASW, in writing, to appoint an accreditation consultant	Minimum 12 months before program is to be offered
<b>AASW staff</b>	Provide the SWAOU with ASWEAS, guidelines and advice on process	
<b>AASW executive, AASW staff</b>	Consult on selection of suitable consultant, identifying two nominees	
<b>AASW staff</b>	Offer nominees to the SWAOU for choice of consultant	
<b>SWAOU</b>	Selects consultant from offered nominees	
<b>AASW staff</b>	Confirm participation of selected consultant and facilitates contact between SWAOU and consultant	
<b>Consultant</b>	Contacts SWAOU and begins work	Minimum nine months before program to be offered
<b>AASW staff</b>	Distribute contracts/invoices to the SWAOU, contracts to consultant	
<b>SWAOU</b>	Returns completed contract/invoice	
<b>Consultant</b>	Returns completed contract to AASW	

## 2.2. Stage 2: Consultancy

Stage 2 commences with the SWAOU delivering its social work program proposal to the consultant and AASW staff. A report, using the report template, will provide all details of the current status and work to date in the development of the program. This document will form the basis of the work of the consultant with the SWAOU and is critical to the success of the process. It is an expectation that there is sufficient maturity of development and thinking displayed in the social work program proposal that the accreditation consultancy can be concluded within six months of the commencement of the consultancy process.

The process of consultancy is largely a matter for agreement between the SWAOU and the consultant, provided that at least one site visit (all campuses) is undertaken during the consultancy and contact between the parties, by teleconference or similar, occurs at least once a month.

Throughout the process it is the responsibility of the SWAOU and the consultant to ensure that work is clearly informed and designed towards meeting the requirements of ASWEAS 2012. It is also the responsibility of the SWAOU to update and amend the social work program proposal (including the report template). The consultant will utilise the expertise of the two consultancy advisers to provide advice, mentoring and support with respect to program development and recommendations of the consultancy report.

Upon agreement of conclusion of program development, the consultant will accept the revised social work program proposal document and undertake an assessment of the document against the requirements of the ASWEAS 2012. This will inform a draft consultant's report, which will be provided to the SWAOU for comment. If agreement is not forthcoming, it is the responsibility of both parties to seek assistance from the AASW.

At the conclusion of Stage 2, the proposed program will have reached a level of maturity that enables the consultant to make informed decisions about whether the program will meet the requirements of ASWEAS 2012. The consultant will complete a draft consultant's report which will be provided to the SWAOU for comment.

The Stage 2 process is outlined in Table 2.



**Table 2: Stage 2 process**

<b>Party responsible</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time of activity</b>
<b>SWAOU</b>	Provides social work program proposal to consultant and a copy to AASW and consultancy advisers	
<b>SWAOU, consultant</b>	Agree schedule for consultancy, including details for at least one site visit (all campuses) and a monthly teleconference (or similar)	
<b>SWAOU</b>	Finalise all administration, travel, accommodation etc. details for site visit(s) etc.	At least eight weeks before site visit
<b>SWAOU, consultant</b>	Commence work on development of program	
<b>SWAOU, consultant</b>	Undertake site visit(s)	
<b>SWAOU</b>	Maintains and develops social work program proposal document based on ongoing program development	
<b>Consultant</b>	Throughout process, as needed, seeks advice and support from consultancy advisers	
<b>SWAOU, consultant</b>	On agreement of conclusion of development, SWAOU submits updated social work program proposal to consultant and consultancy advisers	
<b>Consultant</b>	Assesses social work program proposal against ASWEAS 2012 and completes draft consultant's report, including a recommendation to AASW board of directors regarding provisional accreditation	
<b>Consultant</b>	Forwards draft consultant's report to SWAOU and consultancy advisers	
<b>SWAOU</b>	Considers draft consultant's report and provides detailed response	
<b>Consultancy advisers</b>	Responding to consultant's needs, provide advice and support, including comments on draft reporting and recommendations	

Party responsible	Activity	Time of activity
<b>Consultant</b>	Considers SWAOU response and confirms/amends recommendations as necessary. The final consultant's report is then submitted to the AASW and copied to the SWAOU	Minimum of three months before program is to be offered

### 2.3. Stage 3: Decision making

With the work of the SWAOU and the consultant complete, the final consultant's report is considered by the AASW executive and staff to inform a briefing for the AASW board of directors. The briefing will include a recommended decision regarding provisional accreditation and is scheduled for consideration at the next appropriate meeting of the AASW board. Once the board has made a decision regarding provisional accreditation, the AASW president will advise the HEP, the SWAOU and the consultant of that outcome.

At the conclusion of Stage 3, all participants will be advised of the decision of the AASW board of directors regarding the provisional accreditation of the program.

The Stage 3 process is outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3: Stage 3 process**

Party responsible	Activity	Time of activity
<b>AASW staff</b>	Provide consultant's report to AASW executive	
<b>AASW executive, AASW staff</b>	Draft briefing paper for AASW board	
<b>AASW board of directors</b>	Considers briefing paper and makes decision regarding provisional accreditation	At the first appropriate meeting of the board after receipt of the final consultant's report
<b>AASW president, AASW staff</b>	Formally advise the HEP, the SWAOU and the consultant of the board's decision	

### **3. Social work program proposal and consultant's report**

The initial social work program proposal, including a completed report (using the report template), sets out the current state of the proposed program against the requirements of ASWEAS 2012. This, together with all relevant supporting documentation, is provided to both the consultant and the AASW. Hard and soft copies are required and the report must be provided in the format of the provided template.

Throughout the consultancy process, it is the responsibility of the SWAOU to update the social work program proposal. Upon agreement of conclusion of development, the SWAOU will provide the updated program proposal to the consultant. The consultant will then assess the proposal with appropriate advice and support from the two consultancy advisers and complete a draft consultant's report. The report will contain recommendations as necessary to the SWAOU as well as the consultant's recommendation to the AASW board of directors on whether the program should be provisionally accredited for the duration of its first cohort or not accredited. Any recommendation against accreditation must be clearly based on the evidence provided in the final consultant's report.

The draft consultant's report is then provided to the SWAOU, who will provide a final response to the consultant. This final response is then considered by the consultant in confirming or amending the comments and recommendations of the report. The report is then finalised and submitted to the AASW.

#### **3.1. Report template**

See attachment 1.

#### **3.2. Intellectual property**

The AASW supports innovation and best practice and acknowledges the importance of intellectual property. In completing an accreditation consultancy, it is important that all relevant material to facilitate the consultant's work in both development and assessment of meeting the requirements of ASWEAS 2012 be provided. All materials submitted are strictly controlled with access limited to the following parties: the SWAOU, the consultant and consultancy advisers (during course of the consultancy), the review team composed for the immediately subsequent review, the AASW executive and board, and relevant AASW staff.

It should be noted that consultants relinquish to the SWAOU any intellectual property created as part of the process. However, the AASW strongly encourages appropriate acknowledgement of the contribution made by all parties in the development of social work programs.

#### **3.3. Authorship and document control**

In using the report template, both parties (the SWAOU and the consultant) must consistently and accurately identify authorship. It is absolutely prohibited that at any time any party amend or remove content inputted by the other party.

## **4. AASW consultants and appointment of consultant**

### **4.1. AASW consultants**

AASW consultants are members of the accreditation panel who are nominated by the executive to act as consultants to higher education providers planning to develop new social work programs and to social work programs planning to extend their course either to a new location or by introducing a new program structure. It is preferable that consultants are academics or former academics with extensive knowledge and experience in curriculum design. The consultant will have participated in a least three reviews of an existing social work course and be an appointed chairperson.

For information on the appointment of the AASW accreditation panel, see Guideline 1.5.

### **4.2. Procedures for appointment as consultant**

- 1) Members with at least three years' experience and three reviews on the accreditation panel will be invited to apply for the position of consultant.
- 2) Consultants will be appointed by the president or nominee initially for a three-year term with the option of continuing.
- 3) Consultants are alternatively referred to as chairpersons and are eligible to chair reaccreditation reviews.

### **4.3. Selection criteria for appointment as consultant**

- 1) Demonstrated higher level skills to those required by a panel member.
- 2) Demonstrated skills in chairing in a range of different contexts.
- 3) Strategic and skilled in negotiating with senior university personnel.
- 4) Ability to analyse large quantities of data and to prioritise.
- 5) Ability to manage a newly formed team.
- 6) Advanced knowledge of the interface of social work education in a higher education setting.

### **4.4. Process for appointment of consultants and consultancy advisers to an accreditation consultancy**

On receipt of a formal request from the higher education provider for the appointment of a consultant, the AASW executive and AASW staff will meet and consider the following factors before nominating two accreditation panel members to the HEP for its consideration:

- 1) Location of possible consultants in relation to the HEP.
- 2) Time since the consultant last chaired a review or conducted an accreditation consultancy.
- 3) Availability of consultant to undertake consultancy.
- 4) Consultant's previous experience in curriculum design and evaluation.

- 5) Consultant's knowledge base related to any special needs or focus of the HEP and the program under development (e.g. distance education provision).
- 6) Other relevant political factors.

After consideration of the factors listed above, the following will occur:

- 1) The AASW executive and AASW staff nominate two possible consultants from the accreditation panel and forward their names to the SWAOU having ascertained their willingness to be nominated.
- 2) The SWAOU selects one of the suggested consultants, and notifies AASW staff.

Two consultancy advisers will be appointed by the AASW to the accreditation consultancy from those accreditation panel members eligible to act as consultant.

#### **4.5. Accountability of consultant and consultancy advisers**

The consultant enters into a contract with the AASW which details the responsibilities of the consultant to contribute to the development of the program. The consultant is also accountable to the AASW for the production of a consultant's report and a recommendation regarding provisional accreditation.

Consultancy advisers enter into contracts with the AASW which detail their responsibilities.

## 5. Annual Reporting

Upon provisional accreditation it is a requirement that the SWAOU provide reporting each academic year on the status of the AASW accredited social work qualification. Annual reporting will be completed each year prior to mid semester break (or equivalent), Semester One. SWAOU are to complete the ASWEAS Annual Report Template (Attachment Two) and submit electronically to the AASW Education program [education@asw.asn.au](mailto:education@asw.asn.au)

It is an expectation that annual reporting will be completed every year of accreditation including the year in which reaccreditation review is undertaken.

## **Attachment 1: Template for review report**

Review report template [PDF]

## Attachment 2: Annual reporting template

Annual reporting template [PDF]