



DIRECTORATE OF STANDARDS AND NATIONAL REVIEWS

DESKTOP EVALUATION: BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

In 2015 the Council on Higher Education (CHE) approved a national *Qualification Standard for Bachelor of Social Work*, to which all programmes leading to the award of the qualification need to be aligned. In 2022 the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) decided that a special alignment evaluation of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programmes should be undertaken. The process was affirmed at a meeting between the CHE and Heads of Social Work Departments representing 18 higher education institutions.

Based on nominations from higher education institutions, members of a preparatory Reference Group were confirmed. The Group provided necessary academic and professional support, including clarification of the scope of the alignment process, and assistance with the development of the alignment evaluation instruments, including the Institutional Alignment Report. Institutional Reports were submitted to the CHE in June 2023, to be subjected to desktop evaluation by suitably qualified and experienced academic peers, selected from institutional nominations.

The evaluators participate as independent individual experts; they do not represent any institution, professional body or interest group. They are contracted by the CHE to provide an agreed number of desktop evaluation reports by an agreed date. The current aim is to have each pair of evaluators produce two evaluation reports on a template provided by the Directorate.

It needs to be emphasised that this is not an programme accreditation or re-accreditation exercise. Should the desktop evaluation identify areas in which essential information is lacking from the institutional Alignment Report, further information may be requested.

The benchmark for evaluation is the Qualification Standard, and the scope is the extent to which the programme meets all its specifications. For this reason, no comparison is made with any other programme. The desktop Alignment Evaluation

Report will recommend a finding on full, partial or non-compliance. Once approved by the National Standards and Reviews Committee (NSRC), the Evaluation Report will be submitted to the institution for the sole purpose of correcting any inaccurate factual details contained in it. Thereafter, it will be considered by the HEQC, which will determine the outcome and, as needed, requirements for improvement plans, and progress reports detailing how improvements are being implemented.

The format of the Evaluation Report is modelled on the format of the Institutional Alignment Report, so that findings can be clearly linked with sections and aspects reported on by the institution. The Evaluation Report will take the form of a narrative, in which observations and judgements are referenced with respect to the Institutional Report. The Evaluation Report will, in summary, indicate whether or not the programme is fully aligned with all aspects of the Standard. In cases where it is not, recommendations for improvement will be made; the evaluation panel's recommendations may repeat or modify areas for improvement already identified by the institution, or include additional ones arising from the desktop evaluation. The panel will also identify, where it may apply, aspects that may be considered above the threshold of the Standard and worthy of consideration in the sector.

Desktop evaluation will commence with a two-day workshop for evaluators. The workshop will begin with orientation by the Directorate that will include introduction to the Evaluation Report template and associated issues. During the workshop a due date will be agreed on for submission to the CHE of the Reports.

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