



Guidance: Leadership, staffing and resources

This document is to be read in conjunction with the *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (ASWEAS 2024), it is only a guide to assist.

Relevant Standard 8: Leadership, staffing and resources.

The program is governed, managed and administered to a consistent quality, and is appropriately staffed by social work qualified staff who are eligible for membership of the AASW, and resourced to ensure it fully supports the preparation of entry-level social workers to practice safely and effectively.

1. Intent of Standard 8

The overall intent of this Standard is to ensure that a social work Academic Organisational Unit (AOU) offering a program of professional social work education is resourced by appropriately qualified staff to safeguard that the educational outcomes for social work are achieved. It is critical that programs be resourced such that they can maintain a research profile and foster a culture of scholarship and research.

It is important that leadership, staffing and resources meet the needs of all students and are accessible and equivalent for students across all delivery modes and locations.

2. AASW will seek evidence of

1. The Academic Organisational Unit includes a staffing profile with sufficient appropriately social work-qualified staff, AASW-eligible academics for core content, and alignment with accreditation planning requirements.
2. The Academic Organisational Unit ensuring minimum social work-qualified staffing, vital for nurturing student professional identity, teaching core components, supporting development/research, and ensuring the student has a sufficient quality learning experience which allows for development and assessment of practical skills. The AASW would highly recommend that student-to-staff ratios exist of 22:1 (general) and 16:1 (practice skills).
3. The Academic Organisational Unit level of staffing and leadership documented within the application responsible for teaching and research is sufficient to ensure it allows for development of the program across the years and potential ongoing student cohort expansion without disadvantaging the students' academic learning support needs.

4. The Academic Organisational Unit aligns with requirements as stated by TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework that staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with supervisory roles, e.g. course or subject design or course coordination, must be qualified to at least one AQF level of qualification higher than the course of study being taught, or have equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise.
5. The Academic Organisational Unit Discipline Lead is a senior, experienced academic, eligible for AASW membership, who has postgraduate social work qualifications, publications in peer-reviewed journals, and is appointed at Level D or higher or an equivalent to this Provider rank.
6. The Academic Organisational Unit housing the social work programs is in a Faculty or school with aligned or cognate disciplines and has clearly defined governance and direct reporting lines.
7. The Academic Organisational Unit employs staff with expertise in core social work knowledge and skills as specified in ASWEAS, supplemented by part-time or casual staff for specialised teaching areas.
8. The Academic Organisational Unit social work staff demonstrate ability in teaching and supervising research, policy, and practice at undergraduate or postgraduate levels.
9. The Academic Organisational Unit academic teaching team is actively involved in the design and delivery of all aspects of the curriculum as noted in the ASWEAS.

10. The Academic Organisational Unit must include qualified social work staff with contemporary and relevant knowledge and practice experience to teach in areas relevant to their field(s) of practice.

The Academic Organisational Unit aligns with the requirements as stated by TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework that academic staff must be qualified to have at least one AQF level of qualification higher than the course of study being taught or have equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise. This principle does not exclude skilled or experienced practitioners teaching in the programs who do not hold a degree equivalent to or higher than the program in which they are teaching.

The social work qualified staff of the Academic Organisational Unit must have the expertise to cover the core social work knowledge and skills as specified in the ASWEAS and must deliver these areas of the curriculum, recognising that the social work Academic Organisational Unit may also employ on a part-time or casual basis individuals with particular contemporary expertise to teach in some specialist areas.

11. The Academic Organisational Unit must be able to demonstrate that it is research active. This may be demonstrated through
 - a. social work qualified staff appointed on teaching and research appointments, with at time allocated to research activities
 - b. social work teaching staff publishing peer-reviewed journal articles in the preceding three years.

12. The Academic Organisational Unit academic teaching staff are involved in internal committees, or academic representation in the governance and curriculum management arrangements for the program.
13. The social work program development drawing on staff or other individuals or groups with knowledge, expertise and culturally safe practice with Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander service users and communities.
14. The social work program looks to engage individuals with lived experience or utilises industry representatives to maintain currency of curriculum content and assessment design.
15. The Academic teaching team reflects a balance of permanent and sessional staff is maintained across the program and demonstrate how the staffing when delivery is across more than one site is equivalent for all locations.
16. The Academic Organisational Unit systematically monitors teaching quality and program through evaluations, performance management, feedback and professional development to mitigate risks to the sustainable delivery of the social work program.
17. The Provider resources (e.g. offices, practice education areas and resources, simulation space, online learning platforms, teaching spaces, research areas) enabling the sustainability of the specified teaching and learning methods outlined within the social work program.
18. The Provider ensuring that all students no matter the location have the same learning outcomes, experience and support.

3. Commitment of social work programs to the professional body

Accredited social work programs should demonstrate active commitment to the profession of social work represented by the AASW and through the AASW linked to the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work. This could include:

- promoting the benefits of joining the AASW and encouraging participation in AASW activity on a national and state basis
- promoting a strong commitment to the profession of social work as a self-regulating profession and the role of AASW members in engaging in evolving professional issues in a self-regulating profession
- providing AASW access to students to promote the AASW in relation to benefits and responsibilities
- strongly encouraging social work educators to be role models in demonstrating a commitment to the professional association by being a member and participating in the work of the association at either branch or national level.

It is considered highly important that the accredited programs demonstrate their commitment to the profession of social work to support the development and quality of service for social work in Australia, noting that social work is a self-regulating profession, and social workers have a responsibility to engage in key professional issues in order to keep developing a strong effective profession.

This commitment should be demonstrated through adherence to the AASW Code of Ethics and ongoing adherence to practice standards and learnings ensuring that all graduates understand the development of their social work knowledge and practice.

The AASW and accredited social work programs have a range of mutual priorities in ensuring the continuing development of the social work profession for students and qualified professionals. It is important that the AASW and educators continue to consider these common goals and consider strategies to support the development of mutual interests, the identification and development of joint projects and activities, and practice partnerships, for the ultimate benefit of social work client groups. Although it is normally expected that social work educators who teach in accredited programs be members of the AASW, it is not mandatory for all staff of accredited social work programs to be members.

Satisfying the commitment to the professional requirements of the ASWEAS may be demonstrated by:

- adherence to and maintenance of the AASW Code of Ethics by staff and students in all accredited programs and mandatory incorporation of this code into the program curriculum
- demonstrated engagement with the AASW to promote and advocate the development of contemporary practice in the field of social work and the support to AASW to incorporate into activities and development membership of the AASW and participation in state and/or national activities of the AASW and in continuing development of the professional association by staff of accredited programs.

4. Non-Compliance Risk

If the Provider was to not meet this, it may result in a conditional accreditation finding placed on the social work program by Council. It may additionally affect the students by:

- **Failure to meet accreditation Standards** – without a qualified academic team and effective governance, the program may fail to comply with the ASWEAS, which may result in conditions being placed on the program
- **Decline in program quality and student outcomes** – inadequate academic expertise and leadership may lead to poorly designed curriculum, insufficient theoretical and practical learning, and a lack of support for students. This may in turn impact skills development, especially in critical areas like biopsychosocial assessment, ethical practice and interdisciplinary collaboration
- **Reputation damage** – noncompliance may reflect poorly on the program and the Provider, which could damage the Provider's reputation among prospective students, employers, and the professional community, leading to reduced student enrolments and industry support
- **Poor student placement and employment prospects** – without appropriate leadership and qualified staff to guide students during the program, and prepare them for student placements, graduates may be underprepared for entry into the profession. This can harm relationships with practice partners when sourcing placement opportunities
- **Risk to student welfare and learning experiences** – noncompliance may result in limited student support, decrease in timely feedback, which may affect students' academic progress, mental health, and overall learning experience. Addressing these risks requires strong governance structures and leadership, appropriate staffing, and ongoing support staff to ensure the program aligns with professional standards and meets the ASWEAS.