

Social Service Worker Program Standard

The approved program standard for all Social Service Worker programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (MTCU funding code 50721)

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Inquiries regarding specific Social Service Worker programs offered by colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario should be directed to the relevant college.

This version replaces the program standard released in April 1996. Inquiries regarding this program standard should be directed to the address noted above.

This publication is available on the Ministry’s Web site at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

*Cette publication est également disponible sur le site Web du ministère:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>*

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ISBN 978-1-4249-4212-1 (PDF)
ISBN 978-1-4249-4211-4 (HTML)

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities acknowledges with thanks the significant contribution of the many individuals and organizations who participated in the review of this program standard. In particular, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities would like to acknowledge the important roles of

- All those who participated in the focus groups in Sudbury, Toronto, Kitchener and Kingston, and to the many individuals and organizations who participated in the broad-based consultations.
- The coordinators of Social Service Worker Programs for their assistance throughout the project, the project officer who led the review of the vocational standard, Janet Honsberger, seconded faculty member from Sir Sandford Fleming College, and the project officer who completed the validation and approval processes, Bill Fallis, seconded faculty member from George Brown College.
- The joint working group of the College Committee of Vice-Presidents, Academic (CCVPA) and the General Education / Generic Skills coordinators group, who re-articulated the generic skills learning outcomes (now the Essential Employability Skills) and the general education policy (now the General Education Requirement) in light of the Credentials Framework.
- The Committee of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) for the use of its definition of Essential Employability Skills (EES).

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I. Introduction

This document is the Program Standard for all Social Service Worker programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology (MTCU funding code 50721). This version replaces the program standard released in April 1996.

Development of System-Wide Program Standards

In 1993, the Government of Ontario initiated program standards development with the objectives of bringing a greater degree of consistency to college programming offered across the province, broadening the focus of college programs to ensure graduates have the skills to be flexible and to continue to learn and adapt, and providing public accountability for the quality and relevance of college programs.

The Colleges Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has responsibility for the development, review, and approval of system-wide standards for programs of instruction at Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology.

Program Standards

Program standards apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by colleges across the province. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

- **Vocational standard** (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question),
- **Essential employability skills** (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction), and
- **General education requirement** (the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction).

Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate in order to graduate from the program.

Individual colleges of applied arts and technology offering the program of instruction determine the specific program structure, delivery methods, and other curriculum matters to be used in assisting students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the standard. Individual colleges also determine whether additional local learning outcomes will be required to reflect specific local needs and/or interests.

The Expression of Program Standards as Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation of one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified.

Expressing standards as learning outcomes ensures consistency in the outcomes for program graduates, while leaving to the discretion of individual colleges curriculum matters such as the specific program structure and delivery methods.

The Presentation of the Learning Outcomes

The **learning outcome** statement sets out the culminating demonstration of learning and achievement that the student must reliably demonstrate before graduation.

The **elements of the performance** for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the learning outcome. The elements do not stand alone but rather in reference to the learning outcome of which they form a part.

The Development of a Program Standard

In establishing the standards development initiative, the Government determined that all postsecondary programs of instruction should include vocational skills coupled with a broader set of essential skills. This combination is considered critical to ensuring that college graduates have the skills required to be successful both upon graduation from the college program and throughout their working and personal lives.

A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools, and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty, and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

Updating the Program Standard

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will undertake regular reviews of the vocational learning outcomes for this program to ensure that Social Service Worker Program Standard remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of students and employers across the Province of Ontario. To confirm that this document is the most up-to-date release, contact the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at the address or telephone number noted on the inside cover page.

II. Vocational Standard

All graduates of Social Service Worker programs of instruction must have achieved the 9 vocational learning outcomes listed in the following pages, in addition to achieving the essential employability skills learning outcomes and meeting the general education requirement.

Preamble

The Social Service Worker program provides students with practical, integrated learning experiences and a body of knowledge related to the promotion of human well being and the affirmation of strengths and capacities of people in their environments.

Graduates maintain professional relationships which adhere to legal and ethical standards and it is expected that they will have a commitment to work for social justice and to promote the development and sustainability of a culture of equality. They work with individuals, families, groups, and communities in identifying and mobilizing resources to facilitate opportunities for positive change.

Social Service Worker program graduates demonstrate an understanding of and ability to adhere to a number of values and guiding principles in their occupational practice. Such values and principles reflect

- a belief in the fundamental respect, dignity, worth, and potential of all people
- a belief in the right to self-determination of Canada's aboriginal peoples including their right to determine, provide, and have access to appropriate social services
- a commitment to the linguistic duality of Ontario, including the right to access social services in the French language
- a desire to promote justice, equality, and access to culturally appropriate services to all, respecting race, national origin, language, religion, gender, age, physical and intellectual ability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status
- an empowerment of people, groups and communities to identify and utilize their own strengths to address systemic barriers to meeting their needs
- accountability to service users, communities, and to society

Social Service Work is governed by the Social Work and Social Service Work Act (1998). After successful completion of the Social Service Worker program, graduates are eligible for registration with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW), the regulatory body for the profession under the Act.

Graduates of the Social Service Worker program may participate as a member of an interdisciplinary team and can expect to find employment in a variety of community service settings. These include federal, provincial, and municipal governments; group homes; shelters; community centres; programs for the physically and mentally challenged; mental health services; child protection agencies; older adult services, and educational and long term health care settings.

Synopsis of the Vocational Learning Outcomes Social Service Worker Programs

The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to

- 1. develop and maintain professional relationships which adhere to professional, legal, and ethical standards aligned to social service work.**
- 2. identify strengths, resources, and challenges of individuals, families, groups, and communities to assist them in achieving their goals.**
- 3. recognize diverse needs and experiences of individuals, groups, families, and communities to promote accessible and responsive programs and services.**
- 4. identify current social policy, relevant legislation, and political, social, and/or economic systems and their impacts on service delivery.**
- 5. advocate for appropriate access to resources to assist individuals, families, groups, and communities.**
- 6. develop and maintain positive working relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and community partners.**
- 7. develop strategies and plans that lead to the promotion of self-care, improved job performance, and enhanced work relationships.**
- 8. integrate social group work and group facilitation skills across a wide range of environments, supporting growth and development of individuals, families, and communities.**
- 9. work in communities to advocate for change strategies that promote social and economic justice and challenge patterns of oppression and discrimination.**

Note: The learning outcomes have been numbered as a point of reference; numbering does not imply prioritization, sequencing, nor weighting of significance.

The Vocational Learning Outcomes

1. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

develop and maintain professional relationships which adhere to professional, legal, and ethical standards aligned to social service work.

Elements of the Performance

- recognize the legislative framework governing social service work and take into account the implications for professional responsibility and accountability
- establish working relationships that adhere to professional standards, codes of ethics, relevant legislation, and agency guidelines
- promote individual's strengths and right to self-determination when engaging in processes of collaboration, consultation, and advocacy
- use skills, such as, but not limited to, active listening; validating; reframing; confrontation; clarifying; and empathizing, to build and strengthen professional relationships in face-to-face, telephone, and electronic communication situations
- establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries between personal and professional relationships, in accordance with professional, legal, and ethical standards of practice
- maintain privacy of individuals and confidentiality of information, in accordance with professional, legal, and ethical standards of practice and organizational requirements
- recognize the impact of governance on professional relationships

2. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

identify strengths, resources, and challenges of individuals, families, groups, and communities to assist them in achieving their goals.

Elements of the Performance

- facilitate and advocate for appropriate access and referral to a continuum of formal and informal services and resources to support individual goals
- work collaboratively with individuals, families, groups, and communities to set and achieve goals, utilizing a holistic strengths-based approach
- produce written and electronic documentation which describes facts, observations, and recommendations, in accordance with legal, ethical, and professional standards, and agency protocols
- recognize and affirm natural support systems and networks within communities as a vehicle to facilitate positive change
- assist individuals in accessing community resources such as supportive counselling, group work, and community work as appropriate to their needs and goals

3. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

recognize diverse needs and experiences of individuals, groups, families, and communities to promote accessible and responsive programs and services.

Elements of the Performance

- develop effective helping relationships, identifying integration of variables such as ethnicity, age, ability, developmental stage, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social and economic class, and family structure
- determine biological, sociological, economic, political, environmental, spiritual, cultural, and psychosocial variables that affect human development and behaviour
- contribute to collaborative plans of action within the changing demographic, social, political, and economic composition of the community, through the use of advocacy and consultation tools and strategies
- recognize the history, culture, traditions, norms, and values of individuals and their communities to promote the development of responsive programs and services

4. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

identify current social policy, relevant legislation, and political, social, and/or economic systems and their impacts on service delivery.

Elements of the Performance

- use a structural analysis process that identifies underlying social structures to describe issues affecting individuals, families, groups, and communities
- describe the impact of relevant legislation, mandated policies, and regulations on service delivery
- review social welfare system policy initiatives from government funding bodies and service delivery organizations, and identify the effects of major policy shifts on service delivery
- identify presenting challenges of individuals, groups, families, and communities in the context of larger structural issues
- describe social problems such as violence, poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and addictions within a larger social, political, and economic context

5. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

advocate for appropriate access to resources to assist individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Elements of the Performance

- use major helping systems such as natural support, mental health, social assistance, community information, and justice systems to support individuals, groups, and families in the achievement of their goals
- identify and utilize informal helping networks and other individual resources in the creation of action plans
- identify and link with relevant community resources to facilitate referrals and to meet individual goals
- advocate with individuals, families, and groups, through effective communication and the use of technology, to problem solve, access current resources, and address gaps in service

6. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

develop and maintain positive working relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and community partners.

Elements of the Performance

- work collaboratively as a member of a team, program partnership, and/or multidisciplinary group
- consult and collaborate with relevant partners to ensure an integrated understanding of the individual's situation and to improve quality of community resources and services
- maintain accountability to colleagues, peers, and supervisors while working collaboratively and independently as required
- utilize effective problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies within service delivery systems

7. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

develop strategies and plans that lead to the promotion of self-care, improved job performance, and enhanced work relationships.

Elements of the Performance

- seek and utilize ongoing formal and informal supervision as required
- seek and utilize support and feedback, related to one's own performance, strengths, challenges, and limitations, from colleagues, peers, supervisors, and other professionals as appropriate
- employ effective self-care techniques and secure appropriate support and resources as required
- develop awareness of self in terms of values, beliefs, and experiences and determine how this impacts upon the development of professional relationships with individuals, colleagues, and supervisors
- identify tools and processes for engaging in reflective practice and critical inquiry

8. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

integrate social group work and group facilitation skills across a wide range of environments, supporting growth and development of individuals, families, and communities.

Elements of the Performance

- integrate theoretical and practice models of group work pertaining to social service work
- utilize group facilitation strategies to promote change and address needs of group participants
- develop effective group leadership skills to facilitate and address the needs and strengths of diverse groups
- research, plan, evaluate, and develop proposals and strategies to establish new groups
- monitor and facilitate group process and implement appropriate interventions and group-building strategies

9. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

work in communities to advocate for change strategies that promote social and economic justice and challenge patterns of oppression and discrimination.

Elements of the Performance

- identify and use community development models to determine community needs, risks, and assets and to promote positive social change
- contribute to action plans, funding proposals, and community capacity building and assessment strategies to influence and promote positive social change
- identify and monitor advocacy and change strategies that promote inclusion, equity, equality, and participatory democracy
- engage in community education efforts that promote social justice

III. Essential Employability Skills

All graduates of Social Service Worker programs of instruction must have reliably demonstrated the essential employability skills learning outcomes listed on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational learning outcomes and meeting the general education requirement.

Context

Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living, and for lifelong learning.

The teaching and attainment of these EES for students in, and graduates from, Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- These skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today.
- Our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills.
- These skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

Skill Categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

Application / Implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories, and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

| SKILL CATEGORY | DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates: | LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| COMMUNICATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking • Listening • Presenting • Visual literacy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.</i> 2. <i>respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.</i> |
| NUMERACY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning • Analyzing and using numerical data • Conceptualizing | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <i>execute mathematical operations accurately.</i> |
| CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing • Synthesising • Evaluating • Decision making • Creative and innovative thinking | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <i>apply a systematic approach to solve problems.</i> 5. <i>use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.</i> |
| INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering and managing information • Selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project • Computer literacy • Internet skills | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</i> 7. <i>analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</i> |

| SKILL CATEGORY | DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates: | LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to: |
|----------------|--|--|
| INTERPERSONAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work • Relationship management • Conflict resolution • Leadership • Networking | <p>8. <i>show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others.</i></p> <p>9. <i>interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</i></p> |
| PERSONAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing self • Managing change and being flexible and adaptable • Engaging in reflective practices • Demonstrating personal responsibility | <p>10. <i>manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</i></p> <p>11. <i>take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.</i></p> |

IV. General Education Requirement

All graduates of Social Service Worker programs must have met the general education requirement described on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational and essential employability skills learning outcomes.

Requirement

The General Education Requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the Credentials Framework (Appendix A in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction).

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study, and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

This general education learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.

Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens student's essential employability skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and / or societal importance.

Themes

The themes listed below will be used to provide direction to colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education Requirement for programs of instructions.

Each theme provides a statement of Rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each area. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

1. Arts in Society:

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

2. Civic Life:

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

3. Social and Cultural Understanding:

Rationale:

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content:

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

4. Personal Understanding:

Rationale:

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content:

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

5. Science and Technology:

Rationale:

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer-related technologies, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.