



Academic Promotion Discipline Statement

Area: Human Society
Discipline: Social Work
School: Social Work and Arts

Discipline Overview

Social work in Australia is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

The discipline is well established in Australia and overseas, however as a practice-based profession, social work has not had a strong tradition of research and scholarship. Social work academics tend to be either practice-based experts or researchers/theoreticians with little engagement with professional practice.

Members of this discipline are drawn from the profession, and only enter academia after several years as a social work practitioner. Practitioners of social work are generally more mature with an average age of 42 years, two years above the national workforce average.

A bachelor or master qualification in social work is typical of social work practitioners. Doctoral qualifications in the profession are rare but this is improving.

Gender Profile

Profession/Industry <i>Source: Joboutlook.gov.au (2018)</i>	84% female / 16% male
Higher Education Sector	Data not currently available
Charles Sturt University <i>Source: 2020 Course Accreditation Report</i>	70% female / 30% male

Discipline Context and Expectations

INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION	Social work is regulated by Australian Association of Social Workers (ASSW) professional body. Courses are accredited every five years against the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS). Standards include required staff-student ratios, staff qualifications and workplace learning requirements.
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DISCIPLINE PEDAGOGIES	<p>Teaching is delivered in accordance with accreditation standards, thus scope/autonomy of an individual to develop/refine subject content and delivery is limited.</p> <p>Students must complete 1,000 hours of supervised workplace learning and demonstrate how they meet professional practice standards throughout the course. Involvement in workplace learning is a requirement of all academics in the social work discipline.</p>
STUDENT PROFILE	<p>The University has the largest domestic student load in social work (approximately 1000 students - social work and human services) comprising mostly mature age women.</p> <p>Undergraduate Level, commencing students 60% regional and remote with 27% from low SES backgrounds.</p> <p>Master Level, commencing students 14% regional and remote with 18% from low SES backgrounds.</p> <p>Seventy-five percent of undergraduate study is online. Master qualification is 100% online.</p>
STUDENT FEEDBACK/ PERFORMANCE	<p>The student demographic within this discipline means that the majority work and often have multiple commitments. As a result, expectations of service, teaching and content quality is high.</p>
RESEARCH APPROACH	<p>Both collaborate and individual research are typical of this discipline. Research can be both theoretical and applied in nature and have a diverse range of outputs including journal articles, conference papers and workshops, stand-alone reports, books and book chapters.</p>
PUBLICATION	<p>Social work's research status is growing, but it is relatively new. For example, in 2020 there are only 14 Q1 Scimago-ranked journals listed for social work, compared to 50 Q1 physical therapy, sports therapy and rehabilitation journals and 313 Q1 political science and sociology journals. Of the 14 Q1 social work journals, 8 are in child and family areas with only 1 generic social work journal: British Journal of Social Work. The major Australian journal: Australian Social Work is Q2; only 15 journals listed for social work are ranked as Q2. This means that opportunities to publish in Q1 and Q2 journals are largely restricted to limited fields of practice and these are highly competitive.</p> <p>Similar to allied health researchers, social work researchers tend to publish in discipline-specific peer reviewed journals which can contribute to a lower citation rate and impact factor compared to other social science or scientific disciplines (see Tilbury et al (2020) for more details of citation patterns). Journal articles are typically between 5,000 and 8,000 words. Sole or co-authored books are highly valued as are book chapters.</p> <p>Research can be sole-authored or in collaboration. Multi-authored publications in alphabetical order mean equal contribution by co-authors, otherwise the first author is assumed to have made the major contribution.</p>
CONFERENCES	<p>Conference presentations at national and international level are important in developing an external profile in this discipline. Highly regarded conferences within the discipline include the International Federation of Social Workers/Social Work Educators and National Australian Association of Social Workers conferences, as well as Australia and New Zealand Social Work and</p>



	Welfare Education and Research conference. Invitations to present are highly competitive/carry a level of prestige within the discipline.
GRANTS	<p>External grants are unusual for social work research, and when they are awarded, tend to be industry-funded rather than national competitive research grants such as ARC.</p> <p>Industry grants are typically between \$5,000 and \$100,000 and are usually awarded to a group of researchers. Social work researchers may also partner with interdisciplinary research groups, for instance in environmental or health research.</p>
HDR SUPERVISION	Research supervisory skills are developed beginning with Honours supervision, then co-supervision of Master and HDR students. Principal Supervision can be undertaken once an HDR candidate who has been co-supervised has successfully completed their degree.
RECOGNITION	No unique discipline specific awards or fellowships.
EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT	<p>As social work is a practice-based profession it is expected that academic staff enact their social work values through involvement with school, faculty, university and/or professionally or geographical-based communities of practice.</p> <p>Social work academics are encouraged to actively contribute to their discipline whether through membership of professional bodies or other professional associations. Voluntary memberships of industry or professional-based boards or committees of management are valued as strategies to maintain professional currency.</p>
PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION	<p>The profession is self-regulated. While there is no professional requirement for individual national registration, there is an expectation that social workers are eligible for entry to the Australian Society of Social Workers, the prerequisite being completion of an accredited academic course.</p> <p>Many of our academic staff in this discipline are members of the ASSW or contribute to its operation.</p>

Prepared by	Academic Promotion Team	
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