Entry-to-Practice Exam Policy - Draft

1. Background

Under the terms of the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* (the Act) and the Registration Regulation made under the Act, it is a requirement of registration that applicants successfully complete examinations in social work or social service work if any are set or approved by Council.

Council of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the College) has approved entry-to-practice exams developed and administered by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB).

The ASWB entry-to-practice exams are designed to assess minimum competence of social work and social service work practice. The exams are developed through established processes, including regular practice analyses and rigorous question development and review. The ASWB follows industry standards related to validity, reliability and legal defensibility.

This Policy sets out the College's processes related to administering these entry-to-practice exams.

2. Purpose

As the regulatory body for social workers and social service workers in Ontario, the College's mandate is to serve and protect the public interest. Entry-to-practice exams support this mandate by helping to measure an applicant's readiness to practise. Registration requirements that combine educational qualifications and the successful completion of an entry-to-practice exam are widely considered best practice in regulated professions across Ontario, providing an important system of checks and balances.

3. Scope

This Policy sets out the College's processes for administering entry-to-practice examinations. The Policy applies to all applicants to the College as set out below, and the College staff involved in the registration process.

4. Definitions

In this Policy, the following words and phrases have the meanings set out below:

"Applicant" means an individual applying for registration with the College. The term "applicant" includes registrants who hold a certificate of registration from the College and are applying to change their class of registration. This includes:

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- Current registrants applying for a certificate of registration in a different category (e.g. a social service work registrant applying for a certificate of registration in social work;
- Previous registrants who have resigned their registration;
- Previous registrants whose certificate of registration was revoked for non-payment of fees;
- Registrants who have been in the inactive class for five years or more and are re-applying to the general class;
- Registrants in the retired class of registration and are re-applying to the general class; and
- Registrants who have been suspended for non-payment of fees or non-compliance with the CCP for two years or more and apply for reinstatement.

"Association of Social Work Boards" or ***"ASWB"*** means the nonprofit organization made up of social work regulatory bodies across North America that develops and administers all social work and social service work entry-to-practice exams.

"Entry-to-practice exam" or ***"exam"*** means the profession-specific exam developed and administered by the ASWB.

"New graduates" means an individual who has completed an approved social work degree program or social service work diploma program and apply to the College no later than December 31 of the year in which they graduate. This also applies to individuals who have completed their degree/diploma requirements but have not yet convocated.

"Registrant" means an individual who currently holds a certificate of registration with the College in any class.

5. Procedures

The following procedures apply to all applicants identified below and to College staff involved in the registration process.

A. Exam Eligibility

Individuals must receive authorization from the College before registering to write the appropriate profession-specific entry-to-practice exam. An applicant's eligibility to write the examination is set out in this policy.

Applicants are eligible to write the exam in the following circumstances:

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1. **Approved Degree and Diploma Applicants:** Applicants with an approved degree in social work or diploma in social service work will be eligible for the exam upon submitting an application for registration and satisfying the following:
    a. Meeting the specified academic qualifications
    b. Showing eligibility to work in Canada
    c. Confirming the ability to speak and write in English or French with reasonable fluency
    d. Paying the application fee
2. **New Graduate Applicants:** New graduates must also submit an application and satisfy the above criteria. However, a new graduate may be authorized to write the exam prior to convocation if all degree or diploma requirements have been satisfied and the only outstanding item is the final transcript showing the date of convocation. To receive authorization prior to convocation, the new graduate must:
    a. Meet the specified academic qualifications
    b. Show eligibility to work in Canada
    c. Confirming the ability to speak and write in English or French with reasonable fluency
    d. Pay the application fee
    e. Provide a transcript showing all completed courses

    A new graduate authorized to write the exam prior to convocation must submit a final transcript after convocating. The new graduate will not be eligible for registration until the final transcript is received, even where the exam has already been passed.
3. **Equivalency Applicants:** Applicants applying through the equivalency stream must be approved in principle for registration before receiving authorization to write the exam. Equivalency applicants who do not meet educational or work experience requirements will not be authorized to write the exam.

Applicants may receive authorization to write the exam before submitting a vulnerable sector check.

Applicants in the inactive class who have held the inactive certificate for more than five (5) years and are seeking to move to the general class must demonstrate current competence. Such applicants are eligible to write the examination to satisfy the Registrar of current competence, following the criteria within the exam eligibility section above, except that no application fee is required.

There are additional specified registrants who for the purpose of this policy are considered applicants and are required to complete the profession-specific exam. See the term

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"Applicant" in Section 4, ***Definitions*** for more information. .[1]

B. ***Exam Categories***

All social service work applicants eligible for the exam will write the ***Social Service Work Exam***. This includes social service work applicants applying through the equivalency stream.

All social work applicants eligible for the exam will write the ***Bachelor's Exam***, regardless of whether they hold a bachelor's or a master's degree in social work. This includes social work applicants applying through the equivalency stream.

C. ***Exam fees***

Applicants are responsible for payment of all examination fees directly to the ASWB. The College does not have the capability to waive or defray the fees.

D. ***Exam locations***

Exams are administered in-person. Applicants can complete the exam at any location approved by the ASWB. This includes Pearson VUE examination centres and any other locations approved by the ASWB.

E. ***Exam evaluation***

The results of the exam shall be reported as a pass or fail. The College will accept the ASWB score report as the official result of the examination for each individual.

F. ***Exam attempts***

An applicant who fails the examination may apply to retake the examination a maximum of two (2) times, for a total of three (3) attempts. A waiting period of 90 days is required by ASWB between rewrites unless otherwise approved by ASWB. The College cannot waive the 90-day waiting period.

In some circumstances, an applicant who does not pass the exam in three (3) attempts may request permission from the College for a fourth attempt. The request must be made in writing, and include reasoning and any extenuating circumstances that contributed to the previous unsuccessful attempts.

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[1] The College recognizes registration may lapse due to delay in work permit extension caused by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). In such cases, the College will exempt the examination requirement. However, to qualify for this exemption, individuals must provide the College with proof that they have filed an application with IRCC to extend their work or study permit **before their current work or study permit expired.**

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If approved, the applicant must sign an undertaking agreeing to the following conditions:

- They will complete the fourth exam attempt within four (4) months of their previous exam attempt.
- If unsuccessful on the fourth attempt, the applicant acknowledges that they will no longer be eligible to challenge the exam and accordingly do not meet the registration requirements.

Individuals who do not successfully pass the exam after three (3) attempts (or four if approved for an additional attempt) will no longer be eligible for additional exam attempts. The applicant will not have met the registration requirements and will not be eligible for registration.

G. ***Accommodations***

Applicants may be eligible to receive testing accommodations including but not limited to, additional writing time; American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation; an audio version of the exam; lactation room; additional breaks, English as Second Language (ESL)/French as Second Language (FSL) accommodations etc. All accommodation requests must be made through the ASWB, in accordance with its non-standard testing arrangements policy.

H. Examination Requirement Satisfied

The following individuals are considered to have satisfied the examination requirement:

1. **Prior exam completion in another jurisdiction:** Individuals who provide proof of successful completion of the required ASWB exam in another Canadian or American jurisdiction. These applicants demonstrate they have successfully completed the exam and therefore have satisfied the prescribed registration requirement.

2. **Labour Mobility Applicants in Good Standing:** Applicants who apply for registration with the College on the basis of their registration in another Canadian jurisdiction will be deemed to have met the examination requirement if: (I) they produce a current In Good Standing Certificate from the social work regulator in that other Canadian jurisdiction (with the exception of Alberta and Saskatchewan)[2] and (ii) the applicant has engaged in the practice of social work within the five years immediately before the date of the application or otherwise satisfies the Registrar that they are competent to perform the role of a social worker

[2] The Ontario Government approved an exception to the labour mobility chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade for social workers registered in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which came into force on July 1, 2017, replaced the Agreement on Internal Trade. Here is the link to the exception: https://workersmobility.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Social-Workers-ON.pdf.

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I. Applications Deemed Withdrawn

Applicants will have two (2) years from their date of eligibility to successfully complete the exam. If they do not successfully complete the exam in this timeframe, their application will be deemed withdrawn and the file closed.

Those who do not complete the exam within the two (2) year timeframe are eligible to re-apply.

6. Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed by the Office of the Registrar every three (3) years or as required. Changes to the Policy will be recommended by the Office of the Registrar to Council for approval.

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