

**Consultation Document on
Exploration on Setting up a Voluntary Enrolment Scheme for Specialization in
Social Work for Registered Social Workers**

Foreword

1. The Working Group on Professional Development (the Working Group) of the Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) invites views from the social work sector on exploration on setting up a voluntary enrolment system for specialization in social work in Hong Kong. This consultation document is prepared by the Working Group for the above purpose.

Background

2. The Working Group is a set-up under the Board. One of the tasks of the Working Group is to promote the Voluntary Continuing Professional Scheme (the VCPD Scheme) for Registered Social Workers (RSWs). The VCPD Scheme was launched by the Board on 10 June 2011. The other task of the Working Group is to promote the Guidelines for Social Work Supervision published by the Board in 3 June 2009.
3. In March 2013, the Working Group explored the way forward to promote the VCPD Scheme. After several meetings, the Working Group decided to work on the implementation of specialization in social work in Hong Kong as a way forward to encourage RSWs to participate in the VCPD Scheme. The idea is to encourage RSWs to pursue CPD activities which may facilitate RSWs to claim the status of “experienced and specialized social worker” (tentative title) in a specific social work field.

Rationale for exploration on voluntary enrolment for specialization in social work

4. The Working Group takes the view that participation in CPD activities by RSWs would enhance the professional standards of RSWs which would ultimately be beneficial to the service recipients as well as to the social work sector. After promotion of the VCPD scheme for some years, the Working Group finds that the number of RSWs enrolling in the Board’s VCPD system increases annually and the Working Group finds such responses and support from RSWs encouraging. The Working Group considers that it is necessary to explore ways to gauge the support of RSWs to enroll in the VCPD scheme and

also to maintain the momentum of those RSWs who have enrolled in the VCPD scheme to continue pursuing CPD activities.

5. Along this line and using the existing VCPD scheme as the foundation, the Working Group considers that the implementation of a voluntary enrolment scheme for specialization in social work may be an option that encourages RSWs to pursue CPD activities in a more steered manner, and to facilitate them to obtain recognition of experience in a specific field. As a result, the service quality would be enhanced. The initial idea of the Working Group is to setup a Voluntary Enrolment Scheme for Specialization in Social Work for RSWs (Voluntary Specialization Scheme) which would facilitate RSWs to claim the status of “experienced and specialized social worker” in a specified field. Under this proposed scheme, RSWs will be required to fulfill the requirements on both experience and expertise knowledge in a specified field if they decide to claim themselves as “experienced and specialized social workers”.

Ground work on research and exploration done by the Working Group

6. The Working Group used the information on specialization in social work in the United States of America, Canada and Taiwan as reference for exploration on specialization in social work in Hong Kong.
7. The Working Group organized a Forum on Exploration on Specialization in Social Work in Hong Kong (the Forum) on 7 July 2014. Overseas academics with knowledge on specialization in social work in the United States, Canada and Taiwan were invited to give talks at the forum. Several local tertiary institutes also joined as co-organizers in the Forum and sent speakers to share views on the subject at the Forum.
8. After working out a brief outline on the areas of specialization and also criteria for specialization, the Working Group invited two academics with knowledge on specialization in social work in the United States and Canada to give their views and comments on the outline worked out by the Working Group.

Brief outline on the voluntary specialization scheme

9. Drawing reference to the areas of specialization in social work in other countries with suitable adjustment to suit the situation in Hong Kong, the Working Group worked out nine categories of specialization in social work practice in Hong Kong as set out below:
 - (i) Social work administration and supervision
 - (ii) Elderly

- (iii) Addiction
 - (iv) Mental health
 - (v) Children and youth (including school social work)
 - (vi) Family
 - (vii) Medical and rehabilitation
 - (viii) Community and advocacy
 - (ix) Social work and criminal justice system
10. After working out the nine areas of specialization in social work in Hong Kong, drawing reference to the eligibility criteria in other countries, the Working Group proposes that the following 6 criteria should be included in the eligibility criteria for specialization in social work in Hong Kong:
- (i) Scope of the service
 - (ii) Academic qualification
 - (iii) Duration of relevant experience
 - (iv) Continuing professional development
 - (v) Relevance of service
 - (vi) Supervised practice

Eligibility criteria

11. The draft eligibility criteria for the nine proposed specializations are set out in the Appendix.

Other issues in the proposed voluntary specialization scheme

12. With respect to the duration of relevant experience, only full-time experience would be counted.
13. The experience gained from one posting can only be used to claim one specialization. The same experience cannot be used to claim two different specializations concurrently.
14. Only social work service and experience gained after 6 June 1997 (the date from which the Social Workers Registration Ordinance was effective) would be counted for relevant experience for voluntary specialization scheme.
15. The RSW claiming himself/herself as “experienced and specialized social worker” should satisfy the requirement of fulfillment of conditions for the VCPD scheme. Under the VCPD scheme, an RSW should complete not less than 60 CPD points in every 3-year cycle.

16. An RSW may claim the status of “experienced and specialized social worker” in a specific category as set out in paragraph 10 above after he/she has confirmed that he/she has met the eligibility criteria as set out in the Appendix to this document.
17. After claiming the specialization status, the RSW is required to renew the status of “experienced and specialized social worker” as set out in the Appendix.

Administration of the voluntary specialization scheme

18. Participation of RSWs in the proposed specialization scheme in social work is voluntary.
19. The Board would not provide any form of recognition, certification, or credential for any RSW who participates in the proposed voluntary specialization scheme. An online self-helped platform would be provided by the Board for RSWs to manage their enrolment with the proposed scheme for claiming of the status of “experienced and specialized social worker”.
20. The Board would not charge any fee for registration under the scheme.

Views invited

21. This is an initial proposal of the Working Group. The purpose of the consultation exercise is to invite the social work sector to have a discussion on the proposal of setting up a voluntary enrolment scheme on specialization for RSWs. The Working Group would like to invite RSWs, senior year social work students, agencies and tertiary institutes to give views on this subject.
22. Please send your views to the Working Group through the following means on or before 15 August 2015:

(a) By post: Working Group on Professional Development, Social Workers Registration Board, 27/F., Eastern Commercial Centre, 83 Nam On Street, Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong

(b) By fax.: 2591 1411

(c) By email: info@swrb.org.hk

(d) By web reply form:

www.swrb.org.hk/specialization_consultation/index_eng.asp



23. A consultation session will be held for RSWs to express their views to the Working Group directly. Details are set out below:

Date: Thursday, 17 September 2015

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Venue: Lecture Room, Social Workers Registration Board, 26/F Eastern
Commercial Centre, 83 Nam On Street, Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong

Social Workers Registration Board

6 May 2015

**Eligibility criteria for enrolment as
“Experienced and Specialized Social Worker”**

1. Scopes of service for specialization

For each area of specialization, the scopes of service are proposed as set out below:

(i) Social work administration and supervision

The scope covers, but is not limited to, financial management, human resources management and general administration of a social welfare agency. RSWs in the rank equivalent to Social Work Officer or above or Senior Social Work Assistant or above are eligible.

(ii) Elderly

The scope covers, but is not limited to, community support, home and community care and residential care services.

(iii) Addiction

The scope covers, but is not limited to, social work service in residential setting for treatment of addiction, under community addiction treatment programmes, or in settings mainly serving people with addiction.

(iv) Mental health

The scope covers, but is not limited to, psychiatric medical social work, medical social work service at Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness, medical social work services in different wards in hospitals under the Hospital Authority, the Personal Care Programme of the Hospital Authority, Supported Employment Service, medical social work service for psychiatric patients in residential setting, medical social work service under the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services (CRS Rehab) –ex-Mental Illness of the Social Welfare Department.

(v) Children and youth (including school social work)

The scope covers, but is not limited to, integrated children and youth service, school social work service, and outreaching service and services for children and youth at risk.

(vi) Family

The target group of the family social work service is basically a family of two or more members. The scope covers, but is not limited to, service for single-parents and clients of family service centres as well as those involved in domestic violence.

(vii) Medical and rehabilitation

The scope covers, but is not limited to, medical social work service in non-psychiatric medical social work setting, medical social work service under the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services (CRS Rehab) –Medical and Physical Handicapped, and CRS Rehab-Disabled Pre-schoolers of the Social Welfare Department, medical social work service in self-help or mutual help groups / organizations.

(viii) Community and advocacy

The scope covers, but is not limited to, social work service for community development in geographical or functional communities or group on policy and / or legislative advocacy.

(ix) Social work and criminal justice system

The scope covers, but is not limited to, probation and correctional services which are currently provided by the Social Welfare Department and the Correctional Services Department.

2. Eligibility Criteria

(The criteria below would be applicable to all nine specializations)

(i) Scope of the service

Please refer to Part 1.

(ii) Academic qualification

A degree in social work recognized by the Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) for registration is a prerequisite. In any circumstances, the required degree in social work cannot be substituted by social work practice experience or any degree of other disciplines.

(iii) Duration of relevant experience

No less than four uninterrupted years or no less than six years in total of broken periods of post-degree social work practice experience in the relevant service is required. Only social work service and experience gained after 6 June 1997 (the date from which the Social Workers Registration Ordinance was effective) would be counted for relevant experience for specialization.

(iv) Continuing professional development

Participating in the Board's Voluntary Continuing Professional Development Scheme for Registered Social Workers (RSWs) and achieving the bench mark of 60 CPD points in three years as recommended in the Voluntary Continuing Professional Development Scheme are pre-requisites for claiming the status of "experienced and specialized social worker".

(v) Relevance of service

The RSW who seeks to be a specialized social worker in a specialization field should practice social work in that field within the scope so defined.

(vi) Supervised practice

Throughout his/her duration of service in the relevant service, whether or not continuous, the RSW should practice under supervision. The RSW should provide the name(s) of his/her supervisor(s) who also must be RSW(s).

3. Renewal of status of "experienced and specialized social worker"

The duration of status of "experienced and specialized social worker" as claimed by an RSW would be linked up with the period for which the RSW would fulfill the VCPD bench mark of 60 CPD points for three years. The RSW has to renew his/her status as an "experienced and specialized social worker" and the condition for renewal of the status is continued fulfillment of benchmark of 60 CPD points for 3 years under the VCPD scheme.