Council for Standards in Human Service Education

Assuring best practices in Human Service Education through evidence-based standards and a peer-review accreditation process

Council for Standards in Human Services Education
Self-Study Reader Handbook

Revised July 2024

Dear Self-Study Readers,

Thank you for becoming one of CSHSE's readers and/or site visitors. You have agreed to take on a key role in maintaining CSHSE's mission for quality, consistency, and relevance of Human Services education through evidence-based standards and a peer-review accreditation process. You are one part of a comprehensive review by many individuals. Your commitment to this process is essential in maintaining CSHSE's standards and policies. So, it is important that you review this Self-Study Reader Handbook and use the resources available to you when you review a self-study or conduct a site visit.

The Vice President for Accreditation (VPA) oversees the accreditation process and maintains direct communication with the program.

If a site visit is warranted, the lead reader takes on the role of the lead site visitor and is accompanied by the designated second reader. The site visitors' role is to validate the self-study and clarify information noted by the readers

You are a valuable component of the accreditation process. Your observations, evaluative comments, and recommendations are important facets of the Board's review for accreditation. Your time and efforts are appreciated in this process. Thank you for being part of the CSHSE team!

Sincerely,

Yvonne M. Chase, PhD, LCSW
CSHSE President

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Self-Study Reading Process Overview:

The CSHSE uses board members and board-approved external readers to evaluate a program's self- study application. Readers help to ensure the Council's mission for quality, consistency, and relevance of Human Services education through research-based standards and a peer-review accreditation process.

- A minimum of three readers will be assigned for a program's accreditation review.
- If the college requires a site visit, two readers will be assigned site visit responsibilities.
- Readers are given 45 days to carefully read and verify the self-study narrative information.
- Readers must submit a reader report noting compliance/non-compliance of the standards and specifications and the reader's evaluative comments.
- The lead reader compiles the readers' input into a lead reader report, which is presented to the Board for a decision.

Section I: Roles and Responsibilities

- **Readers' responsibilities**: With due diligence, evaluate the submitted self-study for compliance of the standards and specifications. Inform the lead reader of the date on which you received the self-study. Send completed reader reports to the lead reader no later than the date when the lead reader sets the 45-day reading cycle to end.

- **Lead reader responsibilities**: Inform the VPA of the readers' decision regarding the completeness of the self-study as soon as possible within the 45-day period. If the self-study is incomplete, the lead reader submits a report to VPA to request additional information before the reader review can be completed. When the readers have completed their review, the lead reader completes the report and sends it to the VPA to request board action. Finally, the lead reader will coordinate with the program to work on the itinerary if a site visit is warranted.

- The **VP of Accreditation** is responsible for overseeing the program accreditation process, assigning readers and site visitors, submitting the lead reader report to the board, and formally communicating the outcome to programs after the Board decision is reached.

- The **President** is responsible for scheduling the board review of program accreditation applications and preparing a Certificate of Accreditation sent to the programs approved by the Board.

Section II: Reader Guidelines

The following reader guidelines were developed as an introductory training component to a peer-review process**.**

CSHSE Resources

- Become familiar with the accreditation policies as outlined in sections of the Member Handbook.
- Review the standards and specifications for the specific degree level of accreditation the human service program seeks.

Reading the Self-Study narrative for compliance.

Both criteria must exist to rate "in compliance":

- The narrative must address the intention of the standard's context and specifications.
- The narrative for each standard and specification must be supported with documented evidence (e.g., official college documents, program documents, course materials, link, or website, etc.)

Recording compliance and comments

Work is still being completed on the most usable format for a reader report. Whatever the format, there are two areas the reader should consider in the self-study review:

- Compliance or non-compliance
- Strengths and /or areas for improvement

Recommendations

- According to the CSHSE Policy for Board Accreditation/Reaccreditation decisions, readers have the following recommendation options:
  - Accreditation with no conditions.
  - Deny accreditation due to significant non-compliance.
  - Table the decision until concerns are addressed.

Submission

Submit the self-study reader report to the lead reader by the due date.
- Be sure the identification information is completed on the first page.
- Be sure to sign and date the document. An electronic signature is acceptable.
- Be sure to list areas of noncompliance or recommendations.
- Be sure to complete a "save as" function and rename the document so that the college's name and your name appear in the saved document's name.

NOTE: Site visitors shall submit a travel reimbursement form to the CSHSE treasurer immediately following the site visit. Federal reimbursement rates, especially for mileage,

change each July. Please check with the CSHSE treasurer or Update Management if you claimed mileage reimbursement.

If work or life events during the reading period prevent completing your report on time, please contact the lead reader; if necessary, they may need to replace you with another reader.

Board Decision

- After the Board decides on accreditation, an email will be sent to the program, notifying them of the Board's decision.
- All reader reports, lead reader reports, and the self-study with supporting documents will be retained for 10 years in the electronic data bank.

Section III: Policies

CSHSE Reader and Site Visitor Policy and Procedures

Accreditation is based on a self-study process completed every five years. Site visits are conducted every 10 years, beginning with the program's initial accreditation. The process for evaluating self-studies by three/four independent readers is the same for initial accreditation and reaccreditation.

Reader Evaluation of Self-Study

- The program applies for initial accreditation or reaccreditation and pays the appropriate fees.

- The Vice President of Accreditation (VPA) selects at least three readers and identifies one as the lead reader. The lead reader will also serve as the lead site visitor if a site visit is required.

- Each reader independently reviews and evaluates the self-study and submits the required reader report to the lead reader.

- The lead reader:

  a. serves as the coordinator for the accreditation/reaccreditation process,

  b. establishes a deadline for the readers' written reports within 45 days from the point the self-study was received by the readers.

  c. collates all responses and consults with the readers for any clarification needed.

  d. presents the report at the Board meeting.

Site Visit

- The lead reader serves as the lead site visitor.

- The VPA identifies one other reader to serve as a site visitor.

- The lead reader/site visitor coordinates the site visit using the suggested site visit itinerary found in the Appendix as a guide.

  a. After the lead site visitor and the program finalize the site visit schedule, the site visitors will make their own travel arrangements. Programs may assist with information on available lodging and restaurants in the area.

  b. Site visitors will submit their travel expenses for reimbursement to Update Management with a copy to the Board Treasurer.

  c. The lead reader/site visitor drafts the site visit report and submits it to the VPA, who submits it in the electronic board folder.

  .

SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY READER TIMELINE

- The program requests readers from the Vice President of Accreditation (VPA).
- The VPA should assign readers within 15 days of the program's request.
- Once the readers for the self-study have been identified, the program has seven (7) days to ensure the self-study is complete and submitted electronically.
- The Lead Reader sets the 45-day review period for the readers.
- Two options may occur after the reading period:
  1. Most of the readers determine that the self-study meets the standards. The lead reader report is submitted to the VPA for board action, or the lead reader notifies the VPA to initiate the site visit process.
  2. The self-study is determined to lack information, and compliance cannot be determined. The lead reader notifies the VPA, who notifies the program by requesting additional information. After receiving the response, the readers may request another reading period be scheduled.

CSHSE Policy for Board Accreditation/Reaccreditation Decisions

The Council's Board of Directors will act on the initial accreditation, interim report, and review or reaccreditation based on reader reports evaluating the self-study and site visitor reports. Programs under review will be informally notified of Board action via email by the VPA within 10 days and formally notified of Board action by a letter from the VPA within 30 days. Board actions will be posted on the website within 30 days of the decision.

Initial Accreditation, Interim Report and Review, and Reaccreditation Decisions

A. **Accredited**

1. Approval of initial accreditation/reaccreditation demonstrates that all Standards are considered met.
2. Recommendations may be stated, but no follow-up is required. These recommendations are not specifically dictated by the Standards and are intended to enhance the program's quality.

B. **Conditional Accreditation**

    1. The CSHSE Board places a program on Conditional Accreditation when the program is not in compliance with one or more of the CSHSE's Standards, and this non-compliance raises concerns about the following:

        a. the quality of the program and curriculum.

        b. the program's capacity to make appropriate improvements in a timely fashion and/or

        c. the program's capacity to sustain itself in the long term.

    2. The program must submit a report describing actions taken to achieve compliance within a Board-designated timeframe of not more than six (6) months.

C. **Tabled Accreditation/Reaccreditation**

    1. Tabled by Readers:
        a. The Readers have determined that the Self-Study does not include supporting documentation demonstrating compliance with the Standards.
        b. The Lead Reader notifies the Vice President of Accreditation that additional evidence is required to demonstrate compliance with the Standards and/or to comply with directions for formatting the Matrix and template.

        c. Upon notification by the Vice President of Accreditation, a program is given up to 90 days to submit the requested materials to achieve compliance. If information is not received within the timeline approved by the CSHSE Board ~~90 days~~, the program must reapply for accreditation.

        d. Materials must be submitted to the VPA, the Board Member-at-Large, and each reader. Once readers receive the additional information, they have up to 45 days to submit their reports to the Lead Reader.

        e. The Lead Reader submits the report with recommendations to the Board.

    2. Tabled by the CSHSE Board
        a. The Board postponed an accreditation decision because there was insufficient information to make a decision.

        b. When consideration has been tabled, the program must furnish the requested information no less than 30 days before the next Board meeting.

        c. If the information is not furnished, the program must reapply for accreditation as if it were an initial accreditation.

D**. Deny, Suspend or Revoke Accreditation**

    1. The CSHSE may deny, suspend, or revoke accreditation if:

        a. The program is out of compliance with one or more CSHSE Standards and CSHSE has determined, based on responses and reports from the program, that compliance cannot be achieved within the required timeline.

        b. The program has a substantiated complaint against it that the CSHSE has determined is sufficiently serious to deny, suspend, or revoke accreditation.

Actions Pertaining to Maintaining Accreditation

A**. Warning**

    1. CSHSE warns a program that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because the program no longer complies with one or more of the CSHSE Standards. A follow-up response is required to demonstrate that the program has taken appropriate steps toward compliance. Depending upon the circumstances related to the Warning, a site visit may be required.

B. Lapse in Accreditation Status

    The accreditation status of a currently accredited program lapses under the following circumstances:

    1. Non-payment of membership dues. Current membership must be maintained as a condition of accreditation. If membership is not paid by October 1st, accredited programs are notified by mail that the accreditation has lapsed. Program accreditation lapsed for non-payment can be reinstated by December 31 by paying the outstanding membership fee and a late charge.

    2. Reaccreditation application and fee are not received by the due date. In this case, the program must reapply for accreditation as if it were an initial accreditation. Official records will show the lapse in accreditation.

    3. Failure to meet the deadlines stated in a one-year extension of the reaccreditation period. If a program seeking reaccreditation cannot meet the conditions and deadlines indicated in the letter from the Vice President of Accreditation granting the extension, the program's accreditation will lapse, and the program must apply for accreditation as if it were an initial accreditation.

Section IV: Lead Reader and Lead Site Visitor Written Report Responsibilities

The Lead Reader/ Lead Site Visitor takes the leadership duties during the reading period and the site visit. The Lead Reader ensures that all readers have received the Self-Study, sets the reading period, collects and collates the reader evaluations, and submits a Lead Reader Report to the Vice President for Accreditation (VPA).

The Lead Reader is also responsible for ensuring that the readers determine that the Program has submitted enough information to warrant a site visit for an initial accreditation or reaccreditation or to submit a report for Board action for an Interim Report and Review accreditation. If the readers feel there is inadequate information in the Self-Study, the Lead Reader is responsible for submitting a Request for Additional information to the VPA.

The Lead Reader/Site Visitor is responsible for scheduling the site visit and managing the interview process between the Lead Site Visitor and Co-Site Visitor. The Lead Reader is also responsible for revising the Lead Reader report with information collected at the site visit and submitting the final report to the Vice President of Accreditation.

The Lead Reader report forms the basis of the Board's discussion and decision on accreditation and is a component of the VPA's formal communication with the Program. The Lead Reader may collaborate and consult with the assigned readers for clarification or suggestions when completing the Lead Reader reports.

Completing the Lead Reader Report to VPA to Request Board Action

This Lead Reader Report will be used if most readers independently determine that the self-study provides adequate evidence of compliance with the Standards and Specifications and that all previous CSHSE requirements have been met.

The VPA uses this report to create the formal board decision letter. The more accurate in completing the report, the more efficient the VPA can be in completing formal Board communications with the Program.

Completing the Lead Reader Report to VPA to Request Additional Information Before Board Action

This report is to be used when most readers independently determine that the self-study does not provide adequate evidence of compliance with the Standards or that the previous CSHSE requirements have not been sufficiently addressed. Fill in the sections completely

and accurately, and clearly note what information is needed by identifying the Standard/Specification and what is missing.

The VPA uses the information on this form to generate a formal CSHSE letter sent to the Program. These report forms will be emailed to the lead reader when they are assigned to a review.

Section V: Site Visits

Site Visit Process

The site visit aims to gather information that supports the self-study and amplifies the program's compliance with the National Standards. The 5-year Interim Report and Review requires a self-study, not a site visit. A site visit is required for initial accreditation and every 10 years thereafter. The self-study must be approved as sufficient and completed by the readers' consensus before a site visit is scheduled.

The VPA assigns readers to independently review the Self-Study, two of whom will be identified as site visitors. Self-study readers and site visitors are volunteers who donate their time and service to education and the field of human services. Site visits involve a two—to three-day commitment.

For specific guidelines related to site visits, refer to Appendix F: CSHSE Policies Relating to Programs for (Hybrid/Online Delivery, Multiple Sites, and Programs/Institutions that offer more than one-degree level in Human Services).

Tips for a Successful Site Visit

- The lead site visitor will work with the program to make any necessary modifications to the itinerary. (Use the suggested site visit itinerary listed below.)
- When the lead reader informs the VPA that the readers have approved a site visit, the VPA contacts staff at Update Management, which handles CSHSE's management functions, and they will invoice the institution. Update Management is located in Tigard, Oregon.
- The lead site visitor asks the program for recommendations for hotels and restaurants. The two site visitors should arrange their travel plans so they arrive around the same time, if possible.
  - Hotel accommodations should be near the program, if possible, and meet site visitor needs, including:
  - A restaurant or coffee shop should be available in the hotel, within walking distance or within a short driving distance.
  - High-speed Internet should be available at the hotel.

- A site visit will not be conducted until the VPA confirms that the program has submitted the site visitor fees.
- Site visitors should expect a detailed itinerary before arrival, including the names and titles of individuals expected to attend each meeting. The lead site visitor should guide this process.

Site Visit Itinerary

CSHSE Accreditation Site Visit
Sample Schedule

Sample Schedule

Contact person:

	Site Visitors Arrive Afternoon/Evening – **Arrival Day**

Lodging:
Address:
Phone:
Dinner on the first night with faculty (optional).

DAY 1:	

Meeting #1 30 Minutes 9:00 – 9:30 Room	**Meet with Administration: Dean, Chief Academic Officer(s)** • Introductions • Council background information • Explain the site visit process. • Questions and answers
Meeting #2 90 Minutes 9:45 – 11:15 Room	**Initial meeting with faculty and staff** *Faculty and Staff:* • Make any necessary adjustments to the itinerary. • Address specific questions gathered from readers assigned to the self-study.
Meeting #3 45 Minutes 11:30 – 12:15	**Visit Library, Technology Centers, Educational Labs** *Librarian:* • Introductions • Examine holdings. • Review how the program accesses media materials. • Recent Program acquisitions.

Room	- Does the faculty give library assignments? - Students' use of the library - Librarian issues regarding the program - Integration of technology into teaching and learning - Accessibility of other resources

Build in a lunch break for site visitors.

Meeting #4 60 minutes 1:30 - 2:30 Room	**Meet with students/recent graduates informally (Program personnel should not be present)** Meet with students and recent graduates. - Introductions - Students will be asked what they would like to change, and why; what they never hope to change and why, and for general information about courses, fieldwork, advising, grading, and faculty availability.
Meeting #5 60 Minutes 2:45 – 3:45	**First field placement site visit:** *Field Placement Coordinator, Agency Rep:* - How placements are determined - How learning objectives are determined - How students are evaluated - How problems are managed - Faculty site visits: who is included, how often, who sets agenda, and observation.
Meeting #6 60 Minutes 4:00 – 5:00 Room	**Meet with advisory board members and other college personnel as determined by site.** *Attendees:* - Frequency of meetings - How the committee advocates for the program. *Provide examples.* - How they perceive their input to the program. - What they see as the strengths and limitations of the program. - Identify suggestions the Advisory Committee made to the Program and the outcomes.

DAY 2

	Breakfast **Check out of hotel.**
Meeting #7	**Second field placement site visit:** *Field Placement Coordinator, Agency Rep:*

45
Minutes
9:00 –
9:45 am
Site

Meeting #8 15 Minutes 10:00 – 10:15	**Site Visitors meet alone to prepare for next two meetings**

Meeting #10 45 Minutes 10:15 – 11:00	**Site Visitors meet with faculty and staff.** *Faculty attendees:* ● Go over list of strengths. ● Present areas of concerns (if any) ● Request any further information they feel the Board may need to consider. This does not preclude the Board from requesting additional information after their next board meeting.

Meeting #11 30 Minutes 11:00 – 11:30	**Site Visitors meet with President, Chief Academic Officer(s), Dean, Department Chair/Program Chair** *Attendees:* ● Overview of accreditation process and work involved in Self-Study. ● Strengths of program ● Concerns (if any) ● Express appreciation for college support of human services program

Talking Points for Meeting with Administrators

Introduction of Site Visitors

Date joined Council
Current position
Professional background

Introduction of the Council for Standards in Human Service Education
Established in 1979
Current number of member and accredited programs; membership is required for accreditation.
Responsible for accreditation of higher education programs in the field
Standards developed through the Southern Region Education Board
Draft initially field-tested with approximately twenty programs.
Asked to rate content validity of standards.

Periodically the Council solicits feedback from accredited programs about the
standards.
Standards cover program characteristics, curriculum, and fieldwork.
Recognized by CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation) in 2014
Board members, Readers, Site Visitors are volunteers.

Accreditation Process
Self-Study every 5 years
Site visit every 10 years.

Site Visit Goals- Due Diligence
Validate Self-Study
Obtain additional information for clarification.

Site Visitors will present information they have gathered at the site visit and from the Self-
Study to the Board
The Board meets three times a year to make accreditation decisions.
Board makes the final decision on accreditation.

Notification to Program of Board's Decision
Informal notification – 10 days after meeting
Formal notification – 30 days after meeting

Appendix A: CSHSE Policies Relating to Programs (Hybrid/Online Delivery, Multiple Sites, and Programs/Institutions that offer Multiple Degrees in Human Services)

Hybrid/Online Course Delivery

If more than 50% of required human service courses are offered in a hybrid/online format, the Program must:

1. Provide a narrative and documentation that assures compliance with the Standards.

2. Document that the program provides adequate technical training and support for students and faculty.

3. Provide access for Self-Study Readers to review online classes, if requested.

Multiple Sites

CSHSE considers a site to be a location where the student can complete the entire program curriculum. Offering a few courses at a location is not considered a site.

Human services programs with multiple sites **must**:

1. Provide policies and procedures which document the following:

   - continuity of the curriculum across all sites.

   - availability of resources across all sites.

   - consistency of Program/Institutional policies and procedures.

2. Identify representative sites to visit.

Institutions/Programs that offer Human Services degrees at more than one level (Associate, Baccalaureate, and Master's)

1. **Membership**

   Only one membership fee per institution is required. It will be the membership fee for the highest level degree, the program offers.

2. **Accreditation Fees**

   An application and an accreditation fee are required for each degree level.

3. **Self-Studies**

   A separate self-study, including narrative and supporting documentation, is required for each degree level for which accreditation is being sought.

4. **Self-Study Readers**

   A separate team of readers, with no less than three readers per self-study, will be

assigned to evaluate the self-study for each degree level.

If a site visit is required, one reader from each team will be identified as the lead site visitor.

5. **Site Visits**

If the self-studies for all degree levels are submitted concurrently, a single site visit will be conducted.

If self-studies are submitted at separate times, a separate site visit for each program is required.

Each lead reader will submit a separate report to the Board.

Appendix B: External Reader Approval Policy

Policy

Self- study readers may come from member programs as well as accredited member programs. The lead reader for any self-study will be a current or former Board member.

Recruitment

The Council will consider individuals who have expressed an interest in participating as external readers with goals of (a) protecting the integrity of the work of the Council, (b) maintaining a balance of readers from different levels of degree programs and representing a broad geographic area, and (c) being intentional in soliciting readers from diverse groups including, for example, age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and affectional / sexual orientation, and ability, and with respect to but not limited to geographic regions.

Qualifications

- Current or former faculty member at a CSHSE member program.

- Five years' experience teaching in higher education.

Compensation

Readers and site visitors are non-paid volunteers. Travel expenses for site visitors are covered by the Council.

Approval Process

1. Potential reader submits the following to the VPA:
   a. A cover letter stating their interest and reasons for participating, and the amount of time that they can commit
   b. A current curriculum vita
   c. A letter of institutional support from either the Dean or Chair
   d. A letter of reference

2. VP of Accreditation reviews materials to determine if:
   a. The packet is complete
   b. The applicant is or has been a faculty member in a current CSHSE member program
   c. Individual is willing to commit the time required to be a self-study reader
   d. The CV reflects experience in the field of Human Services

3. The VPA makes the decision to accept an individual as a reader.

Appendix C: Travel Reimbursement Policy

Travel Reimbursement Policy

The travel reimbursement policy provides reimbursement for travel to and from meetings of the Board of Directors, travel to and from other meetings the board may approve (e.g., CHEA, NOHS), and site visits.

Airfare	To/from board meetings and other meetings as approved by the Board.
Mileage	• Mileage associated with board-approved meetings will be reimbursed at the IRS standard mileage rate. (Note: This rate changes annually. Please check the current rate.) • Travel by auto is not to exceed 120% of airfare.
Hotel	The Council will pay for accommodations.
Meals	The Council will reimburse meals upon presentation of receipts. Reimbursement guideline per meal: $20-Breakfast, $30-Lunch, $60-Dinner
Conference fees	Conference fees for the annual conference of the National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) will be paid if the member attends.
Car Rental	Council members may rent cars for transportation to/from meetings.
Incidentals	Including taxis, UBER, parking, tolls, tips, etc.
Not Reimbursable	Alcoholic beverages.

To receive reimbursement, the travel reimbursement form and copies of receipts must be submitted to the Treasurer and to Update Management within 30 days.