

# AASW Accredited Supervisor Capability Statement

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**AASW**

Australian Association  
of Social Workers

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## Preamble

The Australian Association of Social Workers is the body mandated by members, higher education providers (HEP) and the broader professional community, to set and maintain standards of professional conduct for social workers in Australia.

The social work profession operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural, physical and natural environments while recognising the impact of the psychological, social, organisational, political and economic determinants on health and wellbeing. Social workers are committed to maximising the wellbeing of individuals and society. We consider that individual and societal wellbeing are underpinned by socially inclusive communities that emphasise principles of social justice and respect for human dignity and human rights, including the right to freedom from intimidation and exclusion.

Drawing on theories of social work, social sciences, psychology, humanities and Indigenous knowledge, social workers focus on the interface between the individual and the environment and recognise the impact of social, economic and cultural factors on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Accordingly, social workers maintain a dual focus in both assisting with and improving human wellbeing, and addressing any external issues (known as systemic or structural issues) that may impact on wellbeing, such as inequality, injustice and discrimination.

Supervision is central to the professional identity of all social workers. It is a requirement across all areas of professional practice and contexts ensuring that social workers meet community expectations and organisational requirements. It is not a sector or practice area-specific credential, nor is it a cultural supervision credential. The supervision credential provides evidence of a social worker demonstrating the high-level capabilities (skills and knowledge) expected for individual supervision.

The statement should be read in conjunction with the [AASW Code of Ethics 2020](#) which identifies the values and moral principles that underpin social work practice and outline the required level of attainment for ethical social work conduct and accountability. All AASW members are required to comply with this Code and it informs all AASW documents and policies. The capabilities should also be read in conjunction with the [AASW Practice Standards 2022 \(coming soon\)](#) which describe the minimal requirements for effective, professional and accountable social work practice in all social work contexts. They provide essential guidance to the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS).

## Capability 1: Building supervisory relationships

Accredited Supervisors are characterised by high-level engagement skills in building productive, effective and ethical relationships with supervisees and stakeholders.

### Knowledge

Supervision requires a strong understanding of:

- the nature and dynamics of engagement in supervision
- functions and patterns shaping the supervisory relationship
- concepts of interdependence and use of power in relationships
- impact of the lived experience on the supervisory relationship
- roles of intention, responsiveness and guidance within supervision
- supervision frameworks and tools.

### Skills

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate the following skills at a high level:

- advanced techniques for managing engagement complexities in supervision
- respectfully questions and challenges, ideas and responses
- uses supervision as a key forum for constructive assessment of effective practice and performance
- encourages supervisees to incorporate learnings from supervision in a manner that transfers learnings into their role
- provides strategies for managing organisational and administrative demands
- enables the supervisee to step outside their work role and consider the wider implications of their practice
- negotiates areas for focus and review with supervisees
- manages complex dynamics of engagement in diverse contexts
- uses supervision to encourage critical reflection related to culturally appropriate and inclusive practice
- maintains the boundaries and power dynamics outside the relationship
- systematically records and monitors the quality and impact of engagement
- maintains a productive relationship while addressing areas in need of improvement
- draws on a range of tools and resources to encourage the best possible practice outcomes for supervisees.

## Capability 2: Applying theory and research

Accredited Supervisors work with a well-developed and clearly articulated framework underpinned by critical assessment of current and emerging theory and research.

### Knowledge

Supervision requires a strong understanding of:

- theories, research and models of supervision
- the purpose, functions and modes of supervision
- methods and learning processes in supervision
- developmental stages and transitions in the supervisory relationship
- potential tensions between developmental and performance assessment roles
- expectations and responsibilities of both the supervisor and supervisee.

### Skills

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate the following skills at a high level:

- enables the supervisee to provide high quality outcomes across all aspects of their work
- identifies the functions and patterns within a supervisory relationship
- establishes clarity in role definitions, expectations and outcomes
- uses knowledge to hypothesise and make complex judgements
- challenges and enables supervisee to develop their knowledge base and make evidence-informed judgements
- uses a range of supervision approaches and theories that enable supervisees to enhance their practice.

### Capability 3: Modelling reflective practice

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate high-level reflective capabilities, professional empathy and emotional intelligence.

#### Knowledge

Supervision requires a strong understanding of:

- the critical reflective function of supervision
- theory and practice underpinning effective supervision
- how values and ethics impact on the supervisory relationship
- the nature and significance of emotional intelligence
- the framework in which performance management is undertaken
- theory and principles of peer and collegial-assisted learning.

#### Skills

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate the following skills at a high level:

- models a culture of professional curiosity and continuous learning
- maintains a coherent sense of professional self through their own ongoing supervision
- seeks opportunities for feedback, mentoring, support and constructive feedback
- applies reflective, narrative coaching and culturally sensitive frameworks to supervision
- self-awareness of professional limits to knowledge and expertise
- applies and expands the techniques and approach of a mindful supervisor
- models a constructive approach to addressing organisational and administrative obstacles
- identifies and clearly articulates their strengths in supervision and areas for continued growth
- models safe practice approaches to supervision
- regularly refreshes knowledge to inform and improve their role and approach
- reflects on how their personal reactions, emotional state and experience influence their supervisory practice
- openness to feedback to enhance supervision knowledge and skills
- identifies and manages personal impacts, self-disclosure and other areas involving the use of self that affect the supervisory alliance.

## Capability 4: Enhancing professional growth

Accredited Supervisors can evidence highly effective approaches to developing supervisees' competence and confidence based on skilled assessment of their needs.

### Knowledge

Supervision requires a strong understanding of:

- developmental stages of professional growth for social workers
- roles and expectations of social workers in the workplace
- the purposes and impact of authority and accountabilities in the workplace
- social work career pathways and employment destinations
- impact of developments in the use of information and communication technologies on social work and the workplace
- adult learning principles
- life cycles in professional growth
- key practice areas in which the supervisees are engaged
- effective monitoring, assessment and evaluation methods.

### Skills

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate the following skills at a high level:

- addresses the needs and concerns of supervisees guided by a clearly articulated skills assessment framework
- assesses how information from supervision discussions are transferred into the supervisee's practice
- identifies developmental needs and supports learning pathways
- sets meaningful and achievable goals and objectives
- has a wide repertoire of effective strategies to support and enhance professional growth
- uses a range of interventions to develop the competence and confidence of supervisees
- encourages, consolidates and extends the capabilities of the supervisee
- supports supervisee to identify gaps in knowledge and skills
- sensitively manages instances of professional failure and disappointment
- provides constructive options for professional development and improvement
- provides opportunities for supervisees to address ethical dilemmas, gaps in practice or areas of avoidance in supervision
- achieves a balance between meeting management accountabilities and the professional benefits of supervision
- provides a forum for reviewing practice alongside the policies and procedures of the employing organisation, relevant legislation and the ethical and practice standards of social work.

## Capability 5: Contributing to the supervision knowledge base

Accredited Supervisors are active contributors to expanding and refining the supervision knowledge base through practice development, research and education.

### Knowledge

Supervision requires a strong understanding of:

- relevant AASW policies
- principles of professional development
- theoretical foundations and principles for leading change
- changing nature of social work and social work contexts
- demographic trends and employment outlooks for social workers.

### Skills

Accredited Supervisors demonstrate the following skills at a high level:

- champions the role and significance of supervision
- advocates for appropriate resources to improve the quality of supervision
- conducts evaluations and analysis of professional development needs
- leads the design and delivery of professional development programs
- facilitates the learning and development of others
- disseminates, critically analyses and initiates discussion of new insights, research or approaches
- contributes to AASW publications, conferences and seminars.





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