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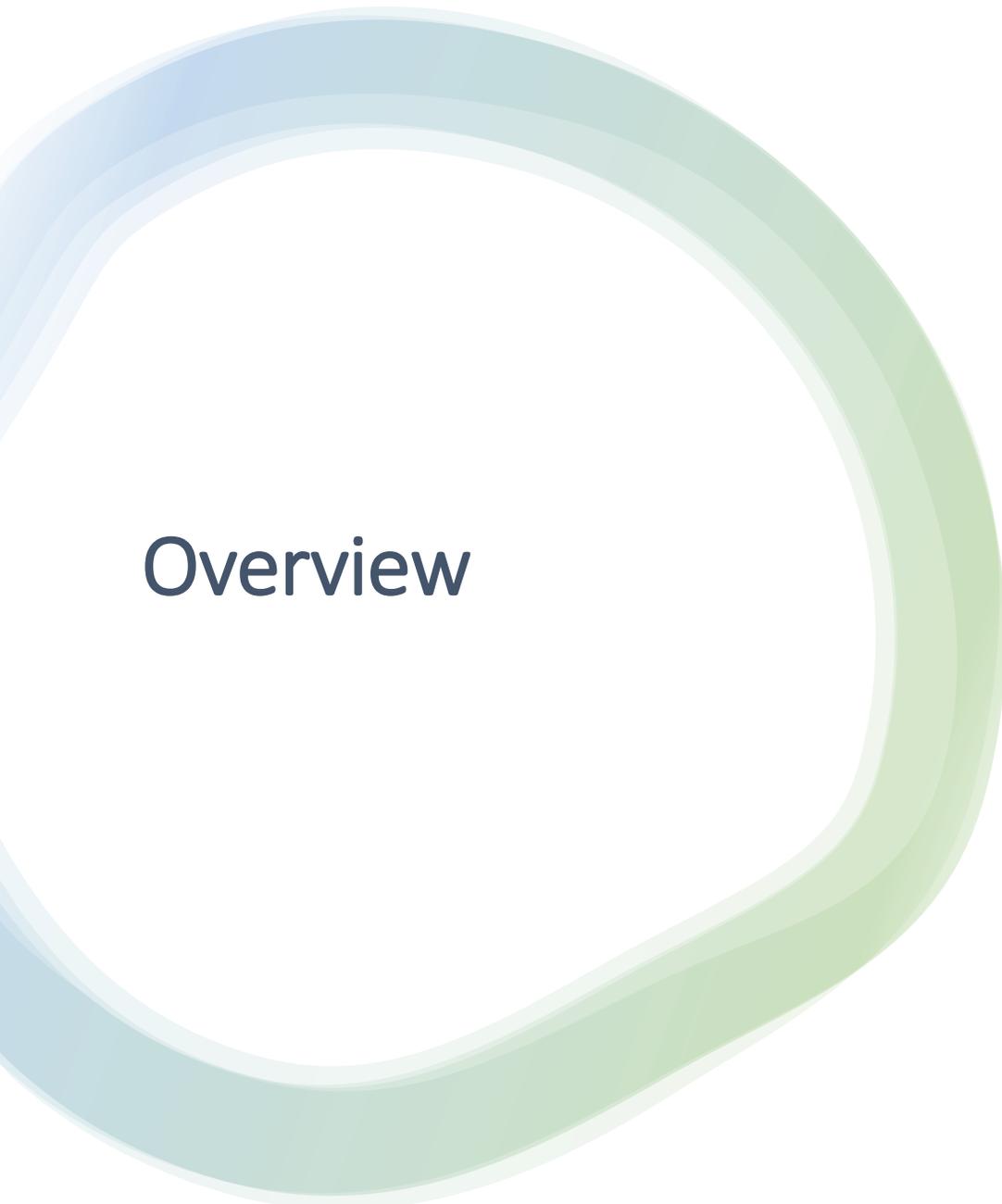


Southern Cross
University

Teaching mental health social work: What are we preparing students for?

Louise Whitaker (SCU), Melissa Petrakis (Monash), Fiona Smith (LaTrobe), Lisa Brophy (LaTrobe)

We acknowledge and pay respect to the ancestors and descendants of the Lands upon which we meet. We are mindful that the Land always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.



Overview

- Peer review of mental health social work curricula using cooperative inquiry
- ASWEAS Standards – what's changed?
- What are we aligning the mental health social work curricula to?
- Promoting excellence in mental health social work practice through our pedagogy

Peer review of the mental health social work curricula.

Because I think the four of us, in some ways have different questions that we've grappled with, and that's really interesting to me that we have conversations where we're grappling with the same roles in some ways. ... And that's the richness, but also the challenge (Melissa)

Our focus ... people who live with severe mental distress or mental health conditions that might result in diagnoses such as schizophrenia, personality disorders and bi polar disorder

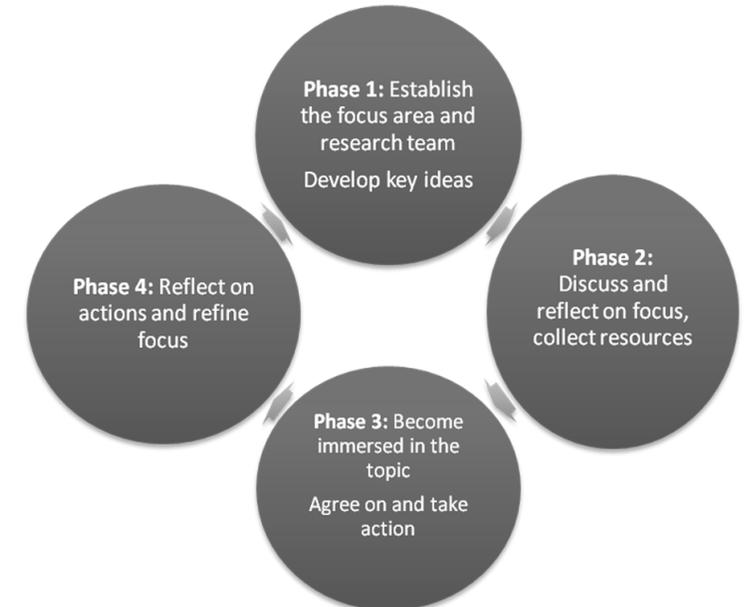


Figure 1: Inquiry phases (Heron & Reason, 2008; Short & Healy, 2017).

ASWEAS 2020

it's kind of huge this possible curriculum that we are burdened with. (Fiona)

Psychosocial health and wellbeing across the life cycle (ASWEAS 2020):

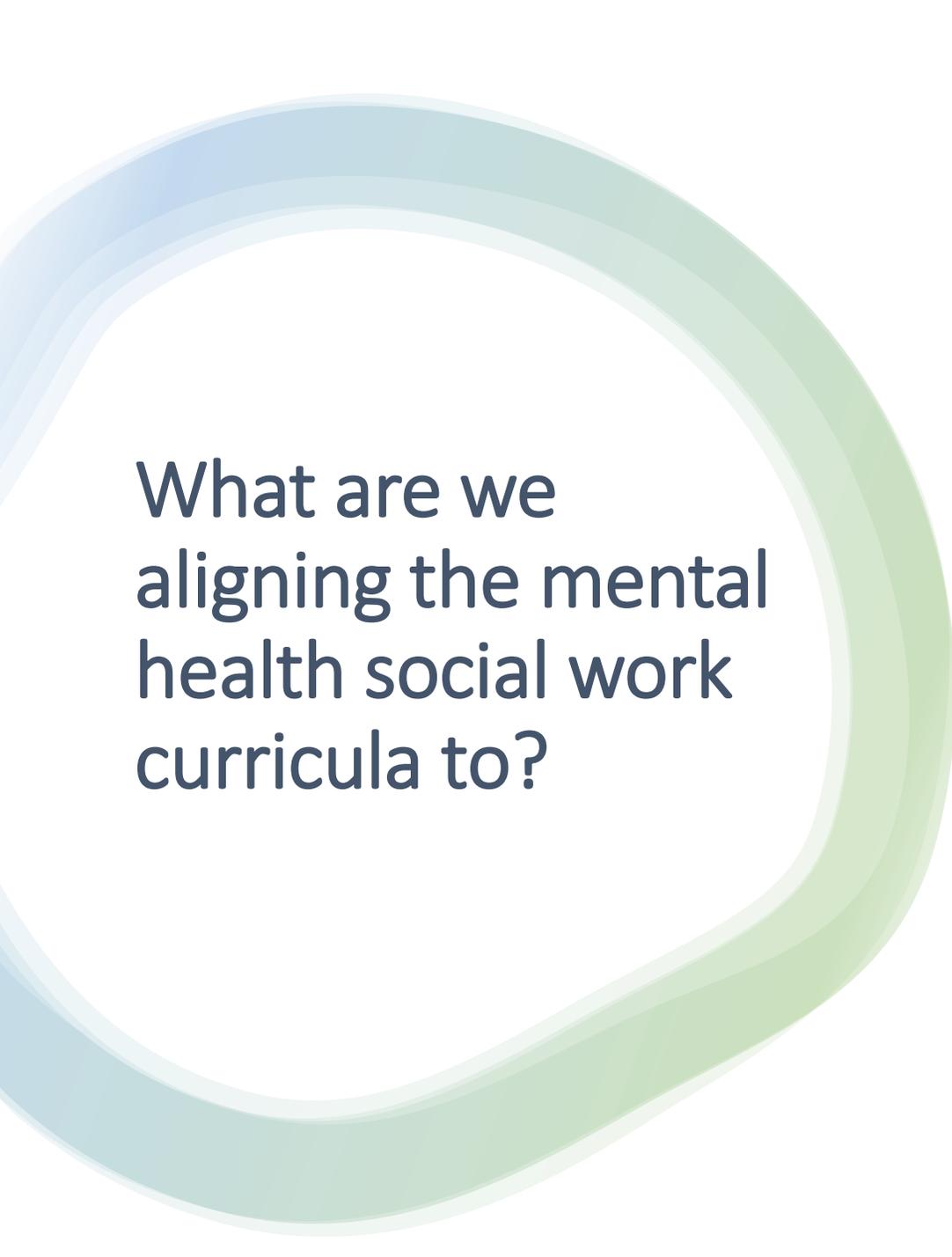
For example:

- Dominant discourses and constructions of mental and physical health, with a critical awareness of the issues inherent in using deficit models.
- The impact of socio-economic status, life opportunities, trauma and environment on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities.

Mental health core curriculum (ASWEAS 2012):

For example

- ... clients should be able to expect that social workers can recognise the nature of their difficulties, including mental health problems, and work collaboratively with them to resolve or improve their situation



What are we
aligning the mental
health social work
curricula to?

- ASWEAS
- Industry readiness
- *Stepping up to the plate (Lisa)*
- Critical thinking

The logo for ASWEAS 2020 features a large, stylized, irregular shape on the left side of the slide. This shape is composed of several concentric, overlapping bands in shades of light blue and light green, creating a sense of depth and movement. The text 'ASWEAS 2020' is centered within the white space of this shape.

ASWEAS 2020

- *'Pendulum swing'* from a biomedical model to a human rights approach (Melissa)
- Mental health curricula might be influenced by several areas of required content.



Mental health social work practice

We know that once upon a time the answer to that was pretty easy. Now it's not. I've realised it's not that easy to know where they [graduates] are going to go. (Melissa)

At the moment I am trying to say to them, well if you're going into private practice as a graduate of this (masters) degree you're doing that as a social worker not as a psychologist. These are some of the things that you need to think about as a social worker. (Louise)



*Stepping up to the
plate*

My critique is much more that we haven't stepped up to the plate, that social workers haven't stepped to the plate in relation to the really problematic issues that are going on. We're not engaged with it enough. We're not engaged with the physical health, the homelessness, the social exclusion issues, the social determinants of mental health to the point that we should be. (Lisa)



Thinking critically

... But you're more employable if you can think and more adaptable if you can think. And my feeling is that that's the critical message. That if you are taught one way of doing something then you're kind of limited by that. (Fiona)



Promoting excellence in mental health social work practice

Yeah, I am thinking about how we are supporting our students to, to know what a social work perspective even is. And to feel, not arrogant, or in competition with other disciplines, but genuinely clear and proud about what they bring. (Melissa)

- Aligning to a shifting, diverse and inadequate mental health system
- Influence of our own experience
- Collegial debate about mental health social work curriculum.



References

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