

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

School of Social Work

Date of Review: April 5th and 6th, 2021

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by the School of Social Work. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the School of Social Work program submitted a self-study in March 2021 to the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a review on April 5th and 6th, 2021. The review included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Faculty Dean, Vice-Provost, Faculty, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research, Associate Dean, Academic, Assistant Dean Director of the School of Social Work and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Director of the School and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (June and July 2021). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

External reviewers recognized:

- The “quality and dedication” of faculty and staff at the School, their “commitment to students, to the community, and to excellence”; the strengths of faculty members’ programs of research and educational leadership; the pride expressed by students, alumni and community partners about their association with the School
- The School’s “foresight and... alignment” with directions taken by key partners and stakeholders (CASWE, the University, and the Faculty of Social Sciences) and its “commitment to being forward thinking, always intent on responding to the changing, emerging needs of the wider community.”
- The “extensive experimentation and innovation” the School has demonstrated in evolving its undergraduate program, including the introduction of the Honours BSW degree, enhanced inclusion of Indigenous content and ways of knowing in undergraduate courses, creation of an Indigenous pathway in the BSW degree, creation of the Preparing for Critical Practice in Child Welfare (PCPCW) pathway, and the Community-University Policy Alliance on Gender-based Complex Homelessness. “These are both necessary directions for post-secondary programs in social work and offerings that have compelling relevance for the community.”
- The introduction of an MSW in Critical Leadership (MSW CL) and two new graduate diplomas (Community-Engaged Research and Evaluation (GD CER) and Critical Leadership (GD CL)): these programs “are particularly exciting, as they are directly relevant to community needs at both the regional and national levels.”
- The School’s PhD students are “both highly capable and well-supported,” successful in funding competitions, and filling academic and sector-specific positions across Canada.

Areas for improvement:

- Further work to integrate equity, diversity & inclusion into undergraduate programs, delivery models and governance, and to ensure that faculty with lived experience of complex issues have an opportunity to provide leadership and teaching in relevant courses/ that the School and its instructors reflect the populations they work with and serve.
- Undergraduate students “bring less professional experience, more diverse learning needs, and more complexity than seen in past years. This means they require more supports—including field education and mental health supports.”
- The Graduate Diplomas: “With continued evolution, marketing and support they could become programs subscribed by students from across the country.” Currently, however, the sustainability of the Graduate Diplomas is in question.
- “The collective and individual sustainability” of faculty and staff members’ current work. “The faculty complement is 0.5 FTE lower than in 2014 despite significant program growth and increasing student demands”; faculty and staff members’ “passion and dedication can mask the

impacts of workload demands.” The reliance on sessional instructors has increased, and “while these colleagues are invaluable at every school, their availability and ability to help build and sustain a school is limited.”

More specific areas for improvement described in the report are directly reflected in the recommendations, discussed below.

Implementation Plan

Please outline the recommendations made by reviewers and indicate how you plan to address the recommendations in the chart below.

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
Continue to focus on goals of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).	Prioritize equity goals in upcoming faculty hire (and continue to integrate EDI ‘inclusive excellence’ process in all hiring)	Director	Upcoming academic year
	Through the Social Work Practice Learning Platform, curate and develop curriculum resources that attend to equity and identity (especially in micro practice).	Undergraduate Chair	Three-year horizon
Continue to review the Field Education program to ensure there are adequate supports and that the School continues to respond to the rapidly changing and complex needs of the communities, placements, and students	Building on the review initiated through this self-study, consult colleagues in the field regarding the needs of communities, goals for placement-based learning, and factors in student success. Present results of the review, resource implications recommendations to the Dean.	Director and Field Education Coordinator	Summer 2021
Continue to review recruitment strategies for attracting	Review and strengthen approaches to recruitment and support for Indigenous students	Chair, Circle for Indigenous Social Work Action (CISWA)	Summer 2021 & upcoming recruitment cycle

undergraduate and graduate students		supported by Administrator	
Continue to review/strengthen BSW, MSW, and graduate diploma curricula	<p>Review curricula of BSW and MSW for attention to Indigenous knowledge, methodologies and histories – draw on the forthcoming <i>Indigenous Education Primer</i></p> <p>Pilot a co-teaching model in SW 2BB3 (2022/ 23 year) as one approach to addressing decolonization, equity, and diversity</p> <p>Initiate discussion with Experiential Education and MacPherson Institute colleagues, and Associate Dean, about an emerging partnership with Mission Services and the potential to develop a community-based teaching site with multiple placement opportunities</p> <p>In consultation with the Associate Dean, develop a proposal to sustain the <i>Preparing for Critical Practice in Child Welfare Pathway</i> (including formal designation and required resources), for presentation to FSS Undergraduate Curriculum committee & Dean.</p> <p>Further develop the Social Work Practice Learning Platform (including: consider curriculum development in areas identified in review: ‘on the ground’ advocacy/ change skills, documentation skills, death and bereavement, post-colonial social work practice)</p>	<p>Undergrad and Grad Chairs in collaboration with Chair of CISWA</p> <p>Director (proposal to Dean for teaching resources)</p> <p>Director</p> <p>Director</p> <p>Undergrad and Grad Chair, and Field Education Coordinator</p>	<p>Three-year horizon</p> <p>Late fall 2021</p> <p>Summer 2021</p> <p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Continue to promote student wellness	Further develop analysis of and approaches to self-care in BSW curriculum	Undergraduate Chair	Two-year horizon

	Discussion about students' mental health (especially in pandemic) as regular agenda item at faculty meetings	Director	Upcoming academic year
Expand and refine supports for students with diverse accessibility and (dis)ability learning needs	Confirm capacity and process for the <i>Faculty of Social Sciences Liaison to Student Accessibility Services</i> to support BSW & MSW placement accommodations	Director in consultation with FSS Liaison and Dean	Summer 2021
	Support instructors to take up recommendations in the FlexForward guide for accessibility in the remote teaching & pandemic context	Director	Upcoming academic year
Continue to refine MSW programs, examining in particular issues related to curriculum design, scheduling, and recruitment.	Review MSW programs for opportunities for online and blended teaching and learning	Graduate Chair	Two-year horizon
	Review recruitment: consider an approach that recognizes strength of applicant pool for MSW CL, and challenges in MSW CA	Graduate Chair	
	Seek out leadership placement opportunities in clinical contexts	MSW Field Education Co-ordinator	
Review and refine the positioning and structure of Graduate Diplomas within the School's graduate programs.	Building on the self-study, undertake a review of the Graduate Diplomas: purposes, current audiences, opportunities presented by remote learning, new delivery arrangements and structures (e.g. micro-credentials that ladder to MSW), funding models (especially in light of new corridor funding arrangements), resources required for sustainability.	Director, in consultation with Graduate Chair, GDip CERE program facilitator & Associate Dean Grad Studies & Research	Recommendations Summer 2022
Continue to review PhD student experience	Review attrition and times to completion to determine if program changes to support student success are merited	Director, with Graduate Chair	Summer 2021

Continue to be proactive regarding faculty and staff wellness	<p>As part of CASWE self-study, initiate formal conversation with faculty and staff to assess well-being as program growth and increasing complexity make their roles more demanding.</p> <p>In CASWE review, identify steps to protect well-being and balance demands and identify required adjustments to faculty and staff numbers.</p>	Director and Administrator	CASWE self-study this summer and fall; external review Spring 2022
Encourage the inclusion of student voices by fostering student caucus participation within governance and decision-making structures	Review processes for seeking student input into governance and decision-making; consider designated spots for members of caucus groups	Undergraduate Chair	Two-year horizon
As a School, review the University's commitment to Internationalization and explore stronger action to be better aligned with this particular direction reflected in the institution's strategic plan	Consult with faculty members with interest/ expertise in internationalization; consider alignment with the University's Internationalization commitments, and any actions to foster greater alignment	Director	Two-year horizon

Faculty Response

The Dean thanked the reviewers for their thorough review and thoughtful recommendations regarding how to enhance the educational programs of the School of Social Work, noting the recommendations will be helpful to both the School and the Dean in the coming years as they work to strengthen the programs.

The reviewers offer high praise for the School and its educational programs. The review notes that the School is forward-thinking and responsive to the needs of the community, making it a leader among Schools of Social Work in Canada. The reviewers highlight the commitment and dedication of all faculty and staff to provide a high-quality education to

its students, and emphasize the innovation and experimentation undertaken by the School in response to both recommendations from the 2014 IQAP review and changes in the broader environment in which the School operates. Of particular note is the development of programming to respond to calls by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, new pathways that address challenging areas of social work practice such as child welfare, and new programs that serve needs for life-long learning and alternative pathways for pursue graduate education in social work. The School's faculty are research leaders in Canada. The School is recognized by all as fostering a strong collegial environment that supports consensus decision-making and effective governance. Overall, the review offers a strong endorsement of the current work of the School while offering recommendations for further enhancing its programs.

Most of the recommendations focus on areas already identified by the School as needing attention, and the review offers helpful, creative options for the School to consider in addressing them. The Dean noted in particular the increasing challenges with respect to field placements, due both to students who are less prepared than in the past (due to more limited life experiences) and the increasingly competitive context for arranging placements, which requires finding placements outside the traditional types of organizations. The School has and will continue to devote resources to address these challenges. The School has long focused on issues of EDI, Indigenous Strategies, and social justice, sensitive to the need to integrate such perspectives into both learning settings and in the practices of the School. The School has clear plans for deepening this work. And the School has already begun re-thinking the design and role of its still relatively new diploma programs in response to its experience thus far. The Dean reviewed the School's response to the review recommendations and discussed the response with the School Director. The response is thorough, responding to each of the recommendations offered, and outlines realistic actions that can be taken to address each of them effectively. The School is committed to meaningful change in each area, and we have already agreed on some areas that require resources from outside the school, such as enhanced support for the field education programs. The Dean was fully satisfied with the School's response and looked forward to working with its members in the coming years to implement the recommendations.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.