

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON
QUALITY ASSURANCE
Cyclical Review of the Master of Social Work
Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report**

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's Master of Social Work are provided pursuant to the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Master of Social Work resides in the School of Social Work, a unit administered by the Faculty of Public Affairs.

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorized by Carleton University's Senate Quality Assurance and Planning Committee (SQAPC) as being of good quality. (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.13-7.2.14).

The External Reviewers' report offered a very positive assessment of the programs. Within the context of this positive assessment, the report nonetheless made a number of recommendations for the continuing enhancement of the programs. These recommendations were productively addressed by the Director of the School of Social Work, and the Dean of the Faculty of Public Affairs in response to the External Reviewers' report and Implementation Plan that was submitted to SQAPC on May 11, 2023.

UNIT RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN					
Programs Being Reviewed: Master of Social Work					
Prepared by (name/position/unit/date): Dr. Sarah Todd and Dr. Susan Braedley					
External Reviewer Recommendation & Categorization	Unit Response (choose only one for each recommendation): 1- Agreed to unconditionally 2- Agreed to if additional resources permit (describe resources) 3- Agreed to in principle 4- Not agreed to Rationales are required for categories 2, 3 & 4	Action Item	Owner	Timeline	Will the action described require calendar changes? (Y or N)
Recommendation 1: Current class sizes be maintained. Allow the school to replace retiring faculty members – enrollments in social work have not declined. (concern)	2 - Agreed to if additional resources permit The School has been supported in maintaining current class sizes to date. The School has also been successful in receiving replacement positions to date so that class sizes remain stable for the foreseeable future.	Ongoing discussions with ODFPA	Director/Dean	ongoing	N
Recommendation 2: Reconsider the contract hiring policy that sets minimum enrollment numbers for courses for the SSW. Faculties and schools of Social Work have a specific curriculum that must be taught to meet the CASWE accreditation standards and, especially the core learning objectives for the MSW curriculum. The possibility of cancelled courses or increases in class sizes place the quality of training provided to social work students and program accreditation at risk. (concern)	2 - Agreed to if additional resources permit The policy to cancel classes that have low enrolment is due to resource constraints. When an essential or required course has low enrolments, ODFPA has always been open to discussions regarding the implications of cancellation. In addition, ODFPA supports all the field seminars operating below the cut off numbers. Given resource constraints the School also cross lists courses between programs etc., to boost enrolment and ensure the continuation of the curriculum.	Ongoing discussions with ODFPA	Director/Dean	ongoing	N
Recommendation 3: Departmental allocation of funds to units based on enrolment be proportionally applied rather than shared equally among units. The SSW is a smaller school that is hit harder by reductions than larger units where reductions are more easily absorbed. (concern)	1 - Agreed to unconditionally This is already a consideration in negotiations, and we are confident it will continue to be so.	Ongoing discussions with ODFPA	Director/Dean	ongoing	N

<p>Recommendation 4: Additional staff be hired in key positions to alleviate the untenable workload burden on existing staff. This particular concern is reaching a critical juncture and must be addressed forthwith. (concern)</p>	<p>2 - Agreed to if additional resources permit This recommendation pertains to administrative positions. There has been significant turnover and change among administrative staff, due to retirements and leaves, with some positions empty for short periods. This has made many demands on the team, in losing the expertise of long-time team members, in continually orienting new staff, in adjusting to constant staff change, and in continually covering for empty positions. At the time of writing all positions are filled, but more change is ahead. This recommendation also pertains to additional stress for Black, racialized, and Indigenous faculty due to recruitment of more students from these communities and the mentoring associated with this positive result. The School has addressed this by redistributing service work, so that Black, racialized, and Indigenous faculty who are doing mentorship and leadership on issues pertaining to racism and decolonization have room in their service schedule to do it. For example, when an Indigenous professor took over graduate program supervision, the tasks of MSW CPR and Accreditation that normally would be conducted by the person in this role were assigned to another faculty member, to allow service time for their important leadership on Indigenous issues. Further, by leading specific activities and committees on these issues, leadership on Indigenous and Black issues is made more visible and valued as service. That said, these service allocations are a conversation and relationship. It is not assumed that all Black, Indigenous, and racialized faculty want, or have the skills, to do this mentorship and leadership.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor administrative team workloads and revise job descriptions when required. Work efficiently to fill positions when they become vacant.</p>	<p>Director Departmental Administrator</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>
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<p>Recommendation 5: The need for the intensive week be reconsidered and an alternative be sought that meets the needs of the revised curriculum and reduces the stress of that component for students. (concern)</p>	<p>4 - Agreed to in principle (with alternative suggestions to reduce student stress) We agree that student stress can be reduced in the fall semester of the Foundation Year of our MSW program. However, the Intensives have had important positive impact, creating a tangible sense of community for students, as well as alleviating the stress of having another course each week in this semester. We have committed to a process to review the learning outcomes across courses in this semester to look for redundancies and to explore the possibility of reductions in the number and intensity of assignments, which is high. A committee of faculty and students from the MSW Foundation year program will conduct a thorough learning outcome and assignment review and make recommendations to the Graduate Program Committee to reduce stress related to course intensity across the Foundation Year first semester.</p>	<p>Review the learning outcomes across Fall semester MSW Foundation year courses to remove redundancies and explore the possibility of reductions in the number and intensity of assignments.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Supervisor</p>	<p>Completed by June, 2023</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Policy courses be adapted to include a high level of preparation for policy placements – eg. writing briefs and how to advocate for positive or anti-oppressive changes in government settings. (concern)</p>	<p>1 - Agreed to unconditionally We agree that the policy courses in the MSW need to adapt to the requirements for policy placements. That said, MSW students come to the program with a wide variety of backgrounds in policy, including no policy background. The Foundations level course is designed to provide a solid skill foundation. The Advanced Policy course can and should achieve this outcome for students in the Advanced Year. We will review MSW policy course syllabi to ascertain if and how improvements to preparation for the Advanced Year Practicum can be made for students who are pursuing policy placements, and the policy practice team will design adjustments in course syllabi to ensure learning opportunities offer this preparation with support from the Graduate Program Supervisor.</p>	<p>Review MSW policy course syllabi and make necessary adjustments to ensure learning opportunities offer sufficient preparation for policy placements.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Committee/ Supervisor</p>	<p>Completed by September, 2025</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>Recommendation 7: The requirement of French language or bilingual placements be communicated to students and language learning resources be compiled for students. This will meet the francophone criteria of the CASWE core learning objectives. (concern)</p>	<p>1 – Agreed to unconditionally We agree with this requirement. Requirements for French language in some placements is clearly outlined in the field placement materials and communications from the field team but is not outlined in our MSW recruitment materials. It will be added. Learning resources for French language training are available through the French department at Carleton, but for students with few existing French language skills, it will not be possible to do enough training to qualify for bilingual positions. Students will be made aware in advance, and this will be added to our recruitment materials on line and in person.</p>	<p>Revise MSW recruitment materials.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Supervisor</p>	<p>Completed by April, 2023</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: The school revise their paid practicum placement policy to allow for students to readily access federal and other placements where pay is mandated or offered. (concern)</p>	<p>4 – Agreed in principle This recommendation is based on incorrect information. There is no policy to prevent students from accessing paid placements, and indeed, we have students in paid practicums quite regularly. The majority of placements are unpaid, however, due to the funding constraints within health care and social services in Ontario.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Clinical courses be examined for overlap and duplication of content, and courses be revised to ensure broad and thorough coverage of clinical theory and skills. (concern)</p>	<p>1 - Agreed to unconditionally We agree that there is duplication among the clinical courses. Some of this duplication is necessary, because students in the Advanced Year come from Carleton programs and a wide variety of other programs, with often significantly different skills in clinical work. To achieve a base line of skills necessary for professional practice, students inevitably relearn some of what they have learned in the past. That said, reviewing the clinical curriculum, which has been in development over the past five years, is due.</p>	<p>Review the clinical course syllabi to assess how learning outcomes are scaffolded and how skills are introduced, consolidated, and assessed. Identify areas for improvement to enhance the depth, breadth, and coverage of clinical training.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Committee/ Supervisor</p>	<p>Completed by September, 2024</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>Recommendation 10: Restore extra funding for a limited term position that will allow the field practicum office to liaise effectively with community organizations and provide quality placement for students. (concern)</p>	<p>2 - Agreed to if additional resources are made available. The extra funding for this position was a Covid-19 initiative due to historically unprecedented pandemic-related shifts and contractions in the availability of field education opportunities for our students. While these conditions have eased, field conditions have not returned to their pre-pandemic conditions, nor are they anticipated to do so. With more programs initiating co-operative and practice learning, there is intense competition for field education placements and supervision. In health and social services, labour shortages and burnout have meant more organizations have reduced capacity to offer training opportunities. An additional position allows the field team to be more agile and aggressive in pursuing field opportunities and maintain strong relationships with key field partners.</p>	<p>Ongoing discussions between director and ODFPA</p>	<p>Director/Dean</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Provide financial resources to reinstate the Practicum Fair. (concern)</p>	<p>4 – Agreed in principle These resources were not removed, so there is no need to reinstate them. The Agency Fair, which was suspended due to Covid-19 concerns and additional workload, will be reinstated as soon as field faculty can organize it.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: The school explain whether options exist for research course sequencing changes. (concern)</p>	<p>4 - Not agreed to The research course is offered in the fall semester of the Advanced Year, which is the first semester for 1 year MSW students and the 3rd semester for the 2 year MSWs. Students are able to take other research courses across the university concurrent with this course and if pursuing the thesis option, are encouraged to do so. They also have the option of replacing their MSW course with the School’s doctoral level research and methods course offered in the same semester, which explicitly teaches how to prepare a thesis proposal. There are no options for research course sequencing that allows students from the first</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>Foundation year of the 2-year program to take their research course in their first year. This is because:</p> <p>A) The fall semester is composed of 4 required courses that must be taken before entering the full-time field practicum in the Winter semester. Students do take one course concurrent with their practicum, that is offered outside of their practicum hours. Only one course is offered, it is a required course, and it is not a research course. Priority is given to those courses that directly prepare students for their field work as students are often working with vulnerable populations and must be adequately prepared to do so in accordance to professional standards and ethics.</p> <p>b) 2 year and 1 year program participants – all who are eligible for the thesis option – take their research credit together in Fall. The pedagogical scaffolding logic is that students have at least a grounding in social work practice and a basis from which to build research thinking after completing a practicum.</p> <p>Our students are aware that if they choose the thesis option, they may need an extra semester of registration to complete their programs. However, MSW students do complete within the 1-year time frame. Factors involved in cases where they have enrolled for an additional semester include, for example, students' need for full time paid work, qualitative community-based projects that sometimes involve additional ethics review or extended time to develop trust and connection with community members.</p> <p>Due to the reality that the thesis can, and is regularly, completed during the 1-year time frame, it is listed as such in the calendar. However, we provide a detailed articulation of the timeline on our website so students are able to pace themselves and assess where they are in the process in relation to the overall project timeline</p>				
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	https://carleton.ca/socialwork/wp-content/uploads/MSW-Thesis-Timeline.pdf				
Recommendation 13: Carleton make concerted efforts to recruit Indigenous and Black and other diversity group faculty and students. The school may wish to examine why Indigenous students are not moving from the BSW to the MSW. It may be that Indigenous specialization MSW programs are drawing students to other provinces. (concern)	1 - Agreed to unconditionally The School continues to build on its efforts to recruit and retain Black and Indigenous students to the MSW. Using recruitment funds from the Dean's office, we have hired an MSW student with a background in communications to work with the Graduate Program Supervisor on targeted recruitment and reversion initiatives, with support from faculty. This is the second iteration of these initiatives that proved helpful in 2020, as our data collection included in our report shows.	Continue ongoing efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of Black and Indigenous students to the MSW.	Graduate Program Supervisor	February 2023 and ongoing	N

*Please note that there were two *recommendation 4* in the body of the External Reviewers' Report. The second recommendation 4 (from page 7 of the External Reviewer's report) was added to the implementation plan chart as recommendation #13