

**Social Work, MSW and PhD, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies**

OFFICE OF THE  
 VICE-PROVOST  
 ACADEMIC

**Cyclical Program Review – 2007 to 2014**

**Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan**

**Reported to Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance: 12 December 2016**

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**Program Description**

The School of Social Work offers two MSW programs: an Advanced Standing Program for students who have completed a BSW – offered on a full-time and part-time basis; and a Two-Year Program for graduates from related fields.

The first MSW program offered by the School began in 1984 with a part-time program for BSW graduates. In 1997, a full-time One-Year MSW was added. Where the original program had a thesis requirement, this was replaced in 1997 with a practicum research seminar and a major research paper, called the Practice Research Paper (PRP).

In 2008, The School accepted its first students into the doctoral program. Where the MSW programs offer advanced-level professional training, the PhD program is essentially theory-based, and its dissertation requirement ensures that doctoral students do research that results in a contribution to social work knowledge and theory.

The Accredited Fields of Study for our MSW program are:

- Integration of Research and Critical Practice
- Identity, Diversity and Anti–Oppression
- Social Policy Analysis and Advocacy in a Local, Global and International Context

The endorsed Fields of Study for the doctoral program are:

- Social Policy
- Globalization and International Issues
- Systemic Oppression
- Race, Ethnicity, and Culture
- Community and Direct Practice

Program	Registrations (in-take) 2014	Enrolment FTES 2014	Degrees Awarded 2014
BSW	181	496	143
MSW	80	90	75
PHD	6	24	0



**Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:**

Dr. Leslie Brown, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia

Dr. Therese Jennissen, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Don Diplo, Faculty of Education, York University

**Documentation Provided to the External Reviewers**

Prior to the site visit, the external reviewers are provided with the following:

- Dean's /Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Department/Program Omnibus Statement (where applicable)
- Program Self-Study Brief, which includes program structure, curriculum and learning outcomes, program reflection, enrolment and retention data, resources, student input and quality enhancement opportunities
- Faculty CVs
- University, Faculty and Program planning documents

**Site Visit:** February 8, 9, 2016

During the two-day visit formal meetings were held with the following individuals and groups: Vice Provost, Alice Pitt, Librarian, Catherine Davidson & Subject Librarian, Norda Majekodunmi, Field Education Manager, Vina Sandher, MSW students (all years & programs represented except part-time students), Director of the School, Barbara Heron & Graduate Program Director, Yuk-Lin Renita Wong, Field Instructors (representatives from the community), Associate Dean of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (LA&PS), John-Justin McMurty, • PhD students (students ranging from years 1 – 8 in their years of study), Graduate Office Staff, Emma Posca, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), Barbara Crow, Faculty of School of Social Work.

**Outcome:**

The Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations. Progress on the recommendations will be included in the Follow-up Report due June 2018; this Report will address the outcome of deliberations on the viability of the part-time program with any additional steps to be taken as a result. The next CPR will begin in the Fall of 2022 and will align with the undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work Program.

**Strengths:**

- The School's philosophical perspective is one that emphasizes anti-oppressive social work practice and intersectionality. York's School of Social Work is regarded as one of a few flagship schools in this regard.
- Program expectations are "derived from the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents' Graduate Degree Level of Degree Level Expectations and the School's Mission Statement," (review report) and learning outcomes are clear and appropriate.

- The modes of delivery for course material are appropriate and varied in the MSW program. A mixed range of formats is used including lectures, small group work, individual and group presentations, role-plays and other experiential activities such as interviewing, field observation, contemplative activities and web based tools.
- There is a wide range of the methods and criteria for assessing students' achievements in relation to their learning objectives
- The School is impressive in the diversity of its faculty; the School has identified that the hiring of an additional indigenous faculty member is a priority.
- The vast majority of students in the full-time advanced MSW program graduate within the expected time frame; careful attention needs to be paid to the completion time of students in the part-time program.
- The library is well equipped and keen to support social work students.

### **Opportunities for Enhancement:**

The Review Report provided a fulsome and robust discussion of the materials included in the self-study, including the program's agenda of concerns, appendices, and their meetings with faculty and students.

The reviewers observed that students in the MSW had concerns in the following areas and provided some ideas of how the program might approach addressing these concerns:

1. Attention to practice skills in the curriculum is needed
2. More content related to Indigenous peoples and reconciliation is needed (with additional faculty as a priority)
3. There is overlap in course content within the two-year program
4. There are questions about the value of practice-based Research Paper (PRP),
5. There are concerns about Field Office services

The reviewers also supported plans the program had already put in place in some instances. They cautioned that availability of quality field placements is critical to any expansion of MSW numbers and suggested a university strategy for increasing the number of placements, providing incentives for potential field supervisors, looking beyond the 416 area, developing relationships with Indigenous agencies and communities, and developing research-based practica.

The Review Report recommended that, given concerns about student preparation and completion rates, consideration be given to closing the part-time program or, if it is retained, "that the rationale be clear and the admissions and curriculum be seen to reflect their purpose."

With regards to the PhD Program, the reviewers identified some concerns based on their review of the self-study and meetings with faculty and students during the site visit. They felt strongly that attention to these issues should be a priority for the School of

Social Work and acknowledged that the School had already established a working committee to focus on the PhD program. In particular, the following concerns require immediate attention and as with the MSW program, the Review Report included some key questions for consideration by the program, as well as detailed examples of how the concerns affect students and faculty members:

1. The purpose and expectations are unclear and should be clarified
2. There are gaps and unevenness in terms of processes and structures which need to be reviewed to improve student support and success;
3. Communications are challenging;
4. The comprehensive paper is a barrier to student progress and should be reworked to “reflect the purpose of the program” and to facilitate “student progress to the dissertation research;”
5. Space is ineffectively assigned to students, and office space should be allocated to PhD students.

**Implementation Plan (prioritized)**

The Dean’s Implementation Plan notes that the program has addressed each of the reviewer’s concerns very carefully in its response document.

The Dean’s Plan with regards to curriculum review is as follows:

Action	First Responsibility	Final Responsibility	Timeline
Curricular Review of both the MA and Ph.D. Program including a review of overlap in courses	Department	Dean’s Office based on the program’s report	April 2017
Development of Indigenous Focused Curriculum	Department	Dean’s Office	June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2017 submission to the Curriculum Committee of LA&PS
Review of the Practice Based Research Paper	Department	Department	Change for 2017/18 Cohort (July 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2017)
Field Office Service Improvement Report	Department	Dean’s Office	Report of needs submitted to DO by April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2017

The Dean’s Office and the program have been working to address structural and resource issues identified, including support for an additional Indigenous faculty resource, field placement support and additional office staff.

The following action items and timelines have been identified by the Dean’s Office. Progress on the items will be considered as further resource requests are made.

<b>Action</b>	<b>First Responsibility</b>	<b>Final Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Strategic Plan for the graduate Program	Department	Dean's Office review	April 2017
Hiring plan with a focus on indigenous scholars	Department	Dean's Office	Yearly complement planning process
Increased Ph.D. accepts	Department	Dean's Office, AD Graduate Studies & Research	January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2017

The follow-up report due in June 2018 will provide detailed information on progress and itemize additional action plans flowing from a strategic plan for the graduate programs and curriculum review.

Note: A search is underway for an Indigenous scholar with an anticipated July 2017 appointment.

Alice J. Pitt  
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