

# Final Assessment Report for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Program

## **Previous program review**

The Board of Accreditation of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW<sup>1</sup>) granted candidacy to the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in January 1999, interim accreditation in July 2000, and full accreditation in January 2002. The previous review of the BSW program occurred in 2007, concurrently with its CASSW accreditation review. The program was re-accredited for a four-year period, and following receipt and assessment of a progress report in 2009, CASSW's Board of Accreditation<sup>2</sup> moved to grant re-accreditation to the full seven years (until January 2014).

Three key issues were identified in the 2007 review:

- 1) The need for additional full time faculty and staff resources (two full time tenure track positions and an increase in support staff allocated to the School of Social Work - SSW).

**Result:** The interim 2009 progress report indicated the hiring of two full-time professors and the administrative assistant workload was increased from 0.5 FTE to full-time, and the Assistant to the Administrative Assistant increased from 0.25 to 0.5 FTE. Since then, with the introduction of the Master of Social Work program, and continued growth of the BSW program, two more faculty positions were created. The School is currently searching for an additional faculty member. Administrative support has increased to 2.5 FTE.

- 2) The need for a structural change that provides the SSW with greater oversight and responsibility for determining the curriculum and content of courses offered in the prerequisite BSW courses within the Social Development Studies (SDS) program and a hiring protocol which assures that the School has a major voice in recommending new faculty to be hired within SDS:

**Result:** Effective decision-making changes and protocols were established. Several new SWREN courses were introduced since 2009.

---

<sup>1</sup> currently Canadian Association Social Work Education - CASWE

<sup>2</sup> currently Commission on Accreditation – COA

- 3) The need for increased research and scholarly work from SSW faculty.

**Result:** The increase in the number of faculty in the SSW has resulted in significantly increased research and scholarly work over levels at the time of the previous program review.

The Board of Accreditation review in 2007 review also made eight recommendations:

- 1) *That greater responsibilities for budget management and performance reviews of faculty and staff within the SSW be delegated to the Director of the School.*

**Result:** Changes were made during the 2008/2009 academic year to provide clear responsibility to the Director of SSW for the allocation of funds from the School's budget. The Director now also works closely with the Director of Finance to prepare the annual budgets for the BSW program and the Master of Social Work (MSW) program introduced in 2012.

- 2) *That efforts be made to increase the level of diversity among faculty and students.*

**Result:** In 2007, males were proportionately more prominent in the tenured and full-time positions. Since 2006 more women than men have been hired in tenured and tenure-track positions as well as in sessional contract positions. Greater balance has also been achieved in age, sexual orientation, ability, racial, and ethnic diversity.

- 3) *That continued efforts be made to ensure general consistency in content and assignments within courses that have multiple sections, including prerequisite SDS courses.*

**Result:** Effective coordination has been achieved as a result of increased collaboration and communication among instructors within the School and with the Department of SDS.

- 4) *That the content of courses taught as BSW prerequisites in the SDS Program and courses taught in the BSW program be further reviewed to ensure that overlap is minimized.*

**Result:** There is an annual review of the social work prerequisite courses by the Director of SSW and the Chair of SDS.

- 5) *That the current curriculum be reviewed to ensure adequate coverage of content pertaining to francophone realities and Canadian social welfare policy.*

**Result:** In recognition of the importance of understanding practice innovations from Quebec, course syllabi now sometimes contain literature about experiences in Quebec. Six courses in the BSW program include content on social welfare policy and one prerequisite course focuses on Canadian social welfare policy (SOCWK 300R).

- 6) *That continued efforts be made to ensure adequate classroom space for SSW students, and that the feasibility of locating offices for SSW faculty in a common area be further explored.*

**Result:** The School's new MSW program in August 2012 acted as a catalyst for a new construction project at Renison University College to house the SSW. This new wing includes two classrooms, offices for faculty and staff, a meeting room, and a small student lounge. SSW faculty and staff are now housed together in a common area that includes a number of other non-SSW Renison faculty as well.

- 7) *That an evaluation system be designed or that ongoing monitoring of the current practicum arrangements for part-time students be conducted to assess the effectiveness of innovations introduced to the practicum experience of these students.*

**Result:** A new process involving the Field Education Coordinator and an online practicum reporting system was developed that recognized part-time students' advanced learning goals, including placement opportunities that acknowledge their previous experience and that offer fitting challenges to increase their practice abilities.

- 8) *That policies affecting student progress in the program, specifically in relation to failures of the same course more than once, be reviewed and clearly communicated to students.*

**Result:** The School's policies related to failed course grades and unsatisfactory ratings in the Practicum are described in the BSW Resource Manual and BSW Practicum Manual, respectively, which are available on the School's Field Education webpage and in print. All of the policies are reviewed with the students during their orientation and students are required to sign that they have read the manuals.

### **Process for conducting the current self-study**

The current self-study was submitted by the School of Social Work to the Commission on Accreditation (COA), Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) for applying for re-accreditation of its Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program. This exercise also provided an opportunity to simultaneously conduct our own institutional cyclical

program review. The self-study was written by the Director of the School of Social Work, Dr. Susan Cadell in consultation with her faculty members and administrative and social work staff for field positions. The self-study was also informed by the work of the Schools' Curriculum Committee, Admissions Committee, Community Advisory Committee, and Practicum Committee. Student input (full-time and part-time) was obtained via course evaluations and various surveys over the period of time between reaccreditations. Specifically for the self-study, two surveys in the fall of 2012 were sent to graduates of the BSW program (graduating classes of 2007– 2011, with 65 responses) and to various community agencies to gather feedback (33 responses).

The site visit was conducted on October 21-22, 2013. The review team included two assessors representing the CASWE's COA (Dr. Ross Klein, Memorial University, Newfoundland and Dr. Siu Ming Kwok, Kings University College, London) and a University of Waterloo faculty member (Dr. Nancy Waite, School of Pharmacy). The review team's report was received on November 11, 2013, and the School's response and implementation plan were received on March 4, 2014. The Principal of Renison University College indicated his endorsement of the plan on March 5, 2014, adding that the addition of full time faculty will require approval of the Renison Board of Governors.

## **Characteristics of the program**

### *Historical review*

The Honours Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program was established at Renison University College in 1997 as a post-degree professional program. Its first class of 25 students entered the program in September 1998. The part-time stream was launched in Fall 2004 with six student entrants.

### *Program objectives*

The BSW program aligns with Renison University College's mission statement and strategic plan, and the University of Waterloo's Sixth Decade Plan. The objectives are also consistent with the School's mission and the mission of CASWE and are reflective of the CASWE Core Learning Objectives for Students (CLO's).

The curriculum at the Baccalaureate level (BSW curriculum) provides students with knowledge and skills for generalist practice. The BSW program objectives are the following:

- to prepare students for ethical, critically reflective, anti-oppressive, competent and accountable social work practice

- to ensure academic excellence not only through small class sizes, regular curriculum and program reviews, but also by adherence to the accreditation standards set by the CASWE
- to create and maintain learning opportunities with a variety of communities through student field practice and collaborative initiatives
- to promote academic accessibility through the development of online, distance education and part-time studies in addition to the regular full-time program
- to contribute to social work knowledge through research, publication and other scholarly activities.

### *Academic program*

The SSW provides a post-BA, Honours Bachelor of Social Work program through its regular stream (10 months, full-time) as well as a part-time stream for students who normally complete their degree requirements over three years. There is no co-op stream. The courses are the same for each program version with the part-time program offering greater flexibility for when the coursework and field component are accomplished. BSW students must complete 44 one-semester courses (30 at the BA level, ten of which are social work prerequisites, and 14 at the BSW level). Therefore 24 out of the total of 44 courses are social work-related. The BSW practicum requires the student to complete a 240-hour field placement in each term for a total of 720 practicum hours, exceeding the minimum CASWE requirement of 700 hours.

Each year two cohorts of approximately 30 full time students enroll. Class sizes typically range from 30-35 students. Full time and part time students are enrolled together in some elective courses. Part-time students have many choices available through on campus, multimodal means and at flexible times (weekends, evenings, intensive formats).

The SSW has established well-supported field practicum procedures and has worked out a rigorous process of recognizing previous work experience. The intensive field education component of the BSW builds relationships with agencies and organizations around southern Ontario.

The expectations of academic proficiency and professional competence are identical in both programs. Graduates will have the knowledge, values, and skills necessary for an initial level of entry into professional practice, providing service to a broad range of populations at all systems levels. BSW degrees are awarded by the Faculty of Arts.

In order to ensure courses are high quality, SSW has since the 2002/2003 academic year, used the Standards of Accreditation and, more recently, the new Core Learning

Objectives (CLO's) to carry out an analysis of each course (prerequisites and BSW level), based on the course outlines, stated course objectives, texts, assignments and reading lists. These analyses served to highlight areas of strength, gaps, inconsistencies among different sections of the same course, and areas for updating. Students are evaluated through a variety of means in all courses. Using standard course evaluation questionnaires, students have rated their BSW courses favourably with scores for the last two academic years above 4.0 (out of 5).

International learning opportunities have been developed in the last few years, including a reciprocal term exchange with a School of Social Work in India<sup>3</sup>, a short-term experience of 10 days in Mexico (SWREN - 427R International Learning Experience) and establishment of a "3+1+1" China project whereby students who have completed three years of undergraduate study in China, can then attend Renison University College to complete the BSW prerequisites in one year and then can apply to complete the BSW program requirements in their final year.

## **Students**

There are currently 58 students in the BSW program full time, 63 students in the part-time BSW, which makes the school small to medium compared to similar programs in other institutions. These numbers have been relatively steady since 2007. From fall 2007 to fall 2011, the BSW enrolled an average of 56 new students into first year full-time program along with a 3-5 students continuing from a previous year. Total enrollment in the BSW from the 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 academic years ranged from 40 (2007/2008) to 65 (2008/2009), averaging 55 students. The number of students who graduated in the 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 academic years averaged 50. Retention averages 97<sup>4</sup>%.

Admission to the BSW programs (both full-time and part-time) requires the completion of an undergraduate degree with at least a B average, at least 6.0 units (12 courses) in the social sciences, including ten specific prerequisite courses or their equivalents. Most of these courses are taught by Social Work faculty in SDS. Applicants must also demonstrate sufficient practical experience and personal suitability as evidenced by

---

<sup>3</sup> This program is being terminated because it did not fulfill its goals.

<sup>4</sup> This figures differs from the 91% derived from retention information in the self-study. The 91% figure includes students as having left the full-time program after one year, when in fact they are continuing on. Based on 4 years of 98% retention and 1 year of 93%, the true retention rate is 97%.

three letters of reference and a personal statement. Students also submit a CV/ résumé, citizenship information (if applicable) and proof of English language competency. Overall admission averages for full time (FT) and part time (PT) students are as follows:

<u>Full-time BSW</u>	<u>Part-time BSW (both fall and winter entry each year)</u>
2012: 76.1%	76.8%
2011: 75.6 %	74.0
2010: 77.3%	74.4
2009: 76.6%	76.6
2008: 75.0%	74.7
2007: 75.3%	74.6 (fall only)

SSW accepts students with a lower than 75% overall average if they have done considerably better in their last 10-14 courses and their reader application scores are high based on the full application process.

The part-time program admits an average of 11 new students each term, although the numbers have varied widely from 5 in the winter 2010 term to 19 in the fall 2011 term. Total enrollment in the part-time program for the fall 2007 to winter 2012 terms ranged from 60-75 students, averaging 67 students. With 19 new students in the fall 2011 term and 17 new students in the winter 2012 term, the 2011/2012 academic year saw the highest number of new enrollments in to the part-time program.

Male students in the program are a small minority (2010/2011 4.6% males; 2011/2012 1.8% males) which reflects the profession quite well. There are currently only 2 visa students in the program. Discussions are underway to increase recruitment strategies to reach out to underrepresented groups.

### **Faculty and staff**

The full-time professoriate in the time interval covered by the self-study includes 1 full professor (School Director), 2 associate professors, 4 assistant professors and 1 adjunct assistant professor. Five of these faculty are now allocated fully to SSW and one is allocated primarily to Renison's undergraduate SDS. The BSW program also utilizes a contingent of part-time/sessional faculty many of whom are completing their doctoral studies in social work. All faculty members are female with one exception. There is only one impending retirement, and because that individual is currently on administrative leave, she is not included in the faculty complement reported. There are 2.5 FTE administrative support staff (one of whom coordinates the part-time program) plus a full-time Field Education Coordinator for the BSW program, a full-time MSW Program

Coordinator, and a part-time MSW Practicum Coordinator. Academic advisement in the BSW program is currently provided by Director for the full-time BSW students. Part-time advisement is provided by the BSW part-time advisor who is also the School Administrator.

Although a relatively small school, faculty CVs clearly show a solid history of research (projects total \$9M in last 7 years), extensive scholarship, teaching, leadership and service to the academy, professional organizations/associations and to the community. All faculty have expertise in at least 2 of the possible 4 fields of social work identified (individuals and groups, community, policy and health). Their strong record of scholarship is demonstrated in the lifetime summary of the members, which includes 45 chapters in books, 2 invited peer-reviewed articles, 71 articles in refereed journals, 248 refereed conference papers and presentations, 83 invited papers and presentations, 45 workshops and 52 working and technical papers.

Faculty and professional staff are fully competent to fulfill their duties and contribute to the overall quality of the school and both the BSW and MSW programs. The SSW normally offers 27 courses each year, and most faculty having a teaching load of 5 courses, slightly higher than the Faculty of Arts average teaching load of 4 courses. The director has a reduced teaching load of 2 courses.

### **Insights from surveys**

The alumni survey gathered data from BSW graduates of the graduating classes of 2007 – 2011. Responses were received from 65 graduates. At the time of participating in the survey, 64% of alumni were employed in a social work capacity, 13% were unemployed and 11% were continuing students. The majority (42%) of alumni responding to the survey were employed in child welfare settings; 14 % were employed in mental health settings and an equal percentage (4.8%) were employed in counselling agencies, government settings and community health. Twenty-one out of 42 respondents rated their job satisfaction as a 4 out of 5 (highest).

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback about how the BSW program could better support its graduates. There was some consensus that Renison should provide alumni with ongoing job searching support, by creating a website specifying a list of job opportunities and openings available, hosting alumni events and providing a platform for social networking to occur. Alumni also suggested that instead of referring students to Graduate Services on Waterloo campus, having knowledgeable personnel at Renison to assist with post-graduate preparations such as résumé writing, career planning, and job searching can be beneficial for students.



Agencies that responded to the survey rated students and graduates of the BSW program between 3.0 and 3.8 on a 5-point scale (5 is highest) in all categories that were queried. Most agencies (86%) responding to the survey indicated they would hire more BSW graduates from Renison University College.

## **Summary of program strengths and weaknesses**

### *Strengths of Program*

- Quality of program: The reviewers noted the following: "...students are given clear learning objectives (as required for accreditation) and course assignments are appropriate for the course level (compared to other schools of social work).
- Quality of field program
- Quality of instructors (teaching, scholarship), administrators and staff
- Accessibility of faculty
- Suitable class sizes (~30 students)

### *Challenges/Weaknesses of Program*

- Insufficient number of regular faculty to deliver and administer the program
- Inconsistencies between multiple sections of the same course continues to be a challenge. Part of the problem is that almost 50% of courses are being taught by 23 sessionals.
- Two of the nine CASWE core learning objectives were identified as relatively weak by students and alumni: participation in policy analysis and development, and engaging in organizational and society systems' change.
- Students and alumni felt there should be greater content on macro practice and better integration of theory and practice.
- Small number of regular faculty
- Gender imbalance and need for higher diversity for both instructors and students
- A number of elements of the Social Work field program are out of compliance with accreditation standards (discussed in the following section)

## **Review team report, program response and implementation plan**

Several elements in the Social Work field program were out of compliance with accreditation standards. The re-accreditation report stated three requirements must be met:

**Requirement 1:** That the School of Social Work formally convey to students the parameters of responsibility in the process of locating, arranging, and implementing a field placement. Difference parameters based on the location of the desired placement (e.g., a placement in Toronto or out-of-province) should also be stated.

**Response:** We recognize the importance of this clarification. Work has been underway for some time to consolidate and simplify both BSW student and the field manuals. We will make sure that the manuals accurately reflect the parameters of responsibility.

Action	Deadline
Create a separate field document that clearly outlines procedures. This will be inserted into the manual and will be highlighted at orientation.	May 1, 2014 for insertion into the 2014/2015 manual
Inform the students about this issue at the information session prior to beginning the BSW as well as orientation.	May 1, 2014 for the BSW field information session later that month
We will add a section to our website with Frequently Asked Questions and address one question to this issue.	June 1, 2014
Procedures will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary, in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Requirement 2:** That the School of Social Work set minimum standards for frequency and type of contact between the Faculty Field Consultants and agency-based field instructors.

**Response:** We recognize that these standards are inconsistently communicated in the field manual and the contracts of the part-time Faculty Field Consultants. We are grateful that this requirement has underlined the need to be clearer about these requirements with both the Faculty Field Consultants and our agency-based field instructors.

Action	Deadline
We will clarify the field manual and the yearly contracts with our Faculty Field Consultants so that the standards are consistent.	May 1, 2014
We will be clearer with the yearly contracts with our Faculty Field Consultants to reflect these standards and verbally verify that they understand what it is that they	July 1, 2014 when the Faculty Field Consultants

are agreeing to do at the time of signing.	sign their contracts
The Director of Program and Field, who supervises the Faculty Field Consultants, will monitor the process throughout the 10 months of field placement	Ongoing September to June every year
Procedures will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary, in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Requirement 3:** That the School of Social Work have a formal policy with regard to the protocol for supervision of field agency supervisors who do not possess a BSW (Section 3.2.22 of the CASWE Accreditation Standards).

**Response:** We recognize the importance of meeting this standard.

Action	Deadline
Draft the policy in February 2014 during field review day with field education coordinators, full-time faculty, the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School.	March 1, 2014
The policy will then be shared with the Practicum committee for feedback and revisions.	April 1, 2014
The policy will be formally approved at a School of Social Work meeting.	May 1, 2014
The policy will be included in the 2014/2015 BSW Practicum Manual.	June 15, 2014
Policy will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary, in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

The review team made seven recommendations related to curriculum (including field education) and resources:

**Recommendation 1:** A formal structure be established for the process to be followed for revision or change of a social work course in SDS whereby the School of Social Work actively participates in those changes (Section 2.17 of the CASWE Accreditation Standards).

**Response:** This is an important issue that has been raised before. We recognize that the formal structure is needed in case the current climate of cooperation changes.

Action	Deadline
The Chair of SDS and the Director of the School of Social Work have already begun to meet with the Dean to discuss options. A draft procedure will be developed.	March 1, 2014
The procedure will then be presented to SDS and School of Social Work meetings.	May 1, 2014
The procedure will then be presented to Academic Council for feedback and revisions. Approval will be sought.	June 1, 2014
The procedure will be reviewed by the Director of the School and the Dean and revised as necessary, in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Recommendation 2:** A formal structure of collaboration be established (a common curriculum committee, for example) for the purpose of mutual understanding of social work courses in SDS versus the School of Social Work, and how these courses fit together as a curriculum.

**Response:** This is an important issue that has been raised before. We recognize that the formal structure is needed in case the current climate of cooperation changes.

Action	Deadline
The Chair of SDS and the Director of the School of Social Work have already begun to meet with the Dean to discuss options. A draft procedure will be developed.	March 1, 2014
The procedure will then be presented to SDS and School of Social Work meetings.	May 1, 2014
The procedure will then be presented to Academic Council for feedback and revisions. Approval will be sought.	June 1, 2014
The procedure will be reviewed by the Director of the School and the Dean and revised as necessary, in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Recommendation 3:** That the School of Social Work hire a senior social work academic (Associate or junior-Full Professor) who is able to support and mentor junior colleagues.

**Response:** This is recognized as an urgent need. When we were hiring in 2013, we advertised for an assistant or associate professor but were unable to hire at the associate level. When the MSW program was approved in partnership with AHS, an agreement was made to seek a faculty member who would be joint between the School and the AHS. This could be senior level position.

Action	Deadline
Continue trying to establish a hiring committee and advertisement for a joint appointment between AHS (51%) and School of Social Work (49%). This is being done by the Director of the School and the Dean.	ongoing
Hire for August 1, 2015. The Director of the School is responsible for overseeing this process.	May 1, 2015

**Recommendation 4:** That the School of Social Work hire one additional tenure stream faculty member in order to reduce the large reliance on sessionals/per-course instructors.

**Response:** Hiring an additional full-time faculty member would help reduce the number of sessionals and would improve the ratio of our course offerings by full-time faculty in relation to part-time faculty.

Action	Deadline
Seek approval from the Principal to hire a full time tenure track faculty member	September 15, 2014
Establish a hiring committee. The Director of the School is responsible for overseeing this process.	October 15, 2014
Hire for August 1, 2015	May 1, 2015

**Recommendation 5:** That the School of Social Work continue to work to standardize course content and student learning across multiple sections of the same course.

**Response:** We recognize the need for this activity.

Action	Deadline
The Director is actively working with individual instructors, both PT and FT, to encourage them to work together to ensure standardization of content and assignment.	ongoing
We have begun to hold orientation sessions with new part-time faculty (FT faculty and School staff are included). Feedback on the first one in September 2013 informed us that the creation of community helps with the motivation of part-time faculty to work together	September 2013 and ongoing
The School is working on implementing a more complete course outline template that includes School policies, such as professional conduct and late submission policies, along with the required University policies.	April 1, 2014 for implementation in Fall 2014

A model for teaming PT instructors with FT instructors for purposes of standardization is under development. Approval will be sought from the Dean.	April 1, 2014 for implementation in Fall 2014
Procedures will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Recommendation 6:** That the School of Social Work undertake an evaluation with students to determine what they are learning in what courses (and what they are not learning), perceived overlap between courses, and to ensure adequate macro-practice content per Core Learning Objectives for Students #7 and #8.

**Response:** We recognize the need for this activity. Current practice of getting feedback from students verbally to a fellow student who sits on the curriculum committee is in revision already as we recognize the need for better mechanisms. The model of PT and FT faculty teaming, as described above, will aid in ensuring adequate macro practice coverage.

Action	Deadline
Feedback form and questions have been drafted and circulated to full-time faculty.	February 1, 2014
Faculty will provide feedback on questions and form.	March 1, 2014
Feedback form will be finalized during March 2014 BSW Curriculum meeting.	April 1, 2014
Form will be circulated to students for data collection. Special attention will be paid to macro coursework.	May 1, 2014
Review process will be undertaken again yearly.	Ongoing
Procedures will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary and revised as necessary in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015

**Recommendation 7:** That the School of Social Work ensure policies and practices with full-time students and part-time students are the same. Where they must vary, this should be clearly stated in the Student Manual and in admission materials.

**Response:** We appreciate this recommendation as principally providing an opportunity to revisit the practice of the Reduction of Hours for part-time BSWs. The field documents being created in response to Requirements 1 and 3 will aid in this process of clarification to students as well.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Review policies and practices to ensure that they are the same with full-time students and part-time students. Change as necessary.	May 1, 2014
Discussion of elimination of the practice of Reduction of Hours for part-time BSWs will occur at a School of Social Work meeting. Discussion of any other inconsistencies found. Approval will be sought for any changes made.	June 1, 2014
Procedures will be reviewed by the Director of Program and Field and the Director of the School and revised as necessary and revised as necessary in consultation with CASWE COA.	September 1, 2015