



Master of Social Work
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
May 2024

Faculty / Affiliated University College	King’s University College	
Degrees Offered	Master of Social Work (MSW)	
Date of Last Review	2015-2016	
Approved Fields	None	
External Reviewers	Dr. Louise Stern, School of Social Work Vancouver Island University	Dr. Diana Coholic, School of Social Work Laurentian University
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Elizabeth Hayden, Associate Dean Graduate Faculty of Social Science	Daniel Amoak PhD Student Geography and Environment
Date of Site Visit	March 11-13, 2024	
Date Review Report Received	April 4, 2024	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: May 7, 2024 Faculty: May 7, 2024	
Evaluation	Good Quality	
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: June 24, 2024 ACA: September 4, 2024 Senate (for information): September 13, 2024	
Year of Next Review	2031-2032	
Progress Report	June 2027	

Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Master of Social Work Program delivered by the School of Social Work, King’s University College.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program’s self-study brief;
- the external reviewers’ report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Academic Dean, King’s University College.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review - Graduate (SUPR-G) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western’s IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the School of Social Work, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), King’s University College, and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

The Master of Social Work (MSW) was initially offered as a part-time option in September 2003 allowing students to complete their degree over nine terms (three years). In September 2007 a full-time option was introduced allowing students to complete their degree over three terms (one year). Admission of a separate part-time cohort has since been discontinued. In its current form, the MSW is a direct practice (non-thesis) program designed to develop and enhance the knowledge and practice skills of social work professionals. The program is course-based with a practicum. The School offers two curriculum options: a one-year advanced program for students that have previously completed a Bachelor of Social Work and work experience in the field and a two-year option for students who hold an undergraduate degree in another discipline. Total enrolment in the two-year option in 2021-22 was 43, with total enrolment in the one-year option at 20 in the same academic year.

The self-study included a full review and mapping of the Graduate Degree Level Expectations and Program-Level Learning Outcomes. All faculty (full- and part-time) outlined where and how outcomes were captured in their courses. Analysis of these data was supported by a team of graduate students. Additionally, a program exit survey and alumni survey informed the development of the self-study.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the King's Master of Social Work Program. They offer six recommendations with considerations for further enhancement.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Professionally accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE).
- Significant efforts to embed and action principles of EDID, including: 1) recruitment efforts and admission policies aimed to attract diverse candidates; 2) relationship building and partnerships with Indigenous Services; 3) increasing Indigenous content in an effort to decolonize the curriculum; 4) review of governance policies and procedures with the aim of filling EDID gaps; 5) recruitment initiatives resulting in the hiring of a Cree scholar, an Equity Integration Facilitator, and a Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization; complemented by an ongoing plan to enhance the employment of people from equity-deserving groups.
- Strong field education component with inclusion of mandatory training required by Social Work agencies.
- In-house practicum opportunities for students (e.g., SAFE and KCSC), to ensure that students are exposed to relevant experiential learning opportunities.
- Response to the needs of the job market for “job ready” social workers via initiatives such as the: Professional Development Series, Reflective Practice

Project, Think Tank Thursdays, Wellness and Self-Care website, and the incorporation of learning interventions that develop non-traditional abilities and a global mindset.

- Strong engagement of faculty, staff, students, and community partners in the operations of the program (e.g., via retreats, surveys and committees).

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- Accessing suitable placements for graduate students continues to be challenging.
- Ongoing clarification of all program messaging (e.g., website, admission guide, promotional materials) to clearly communicate what “direct practice” entails to alleviate any student misconceptions.
- In response to student and community partner requests for students to have more robust skills upon commencing their placements, the program is adding multiple course sections within relevant mental health courses to support demand for on this theme for all MSW students.

Opportunities for enhancement include:

- Exploring the expansion of international programming with a focus on India.
- Possibility of offering the MSW program in an online format.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, an internal faculty reviewer, and an internal student reviewer were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two and a half days with the:

- Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
- Associate Vice-Provosts of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Director, Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- President, King’s University College
- Vice-President & Academic Dean (Interim)
- Associate Academic Dean
- Associate Dean of Research and Research Facilitators
- Dean of Students
- Director of Libraries
- Head, Research & Information Services
- Director, School of Social Work

- Program and Department Staff
- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the Master of Social Work Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to SUPR-G by the Internal Faculty Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

External reviewers noted that overall: *“the MSW program at King’s University College is a strong, well-resourced and managed professional program, with a cohesive and committed faculty team and an engaged study body.”*

Strengths of the Program

- MSW’s two streams of study create a highly engaging environment for students, who noted that this model, with its small class sizes, strengthens collaboration among peers and with faculty members.
- Many faculty members are nationally and internationally recognized scholars in their respective areas of expertise; and students are offered opportunities to research and publish with faculty.
 - High level of scholarship with several members obtaining tri-council funding including a recent CFI grant to establish shared research infrastructure at King’s/Western.
- SAFE and KCSC provide students with much needed field placements and fill a gap in the provision of mental health support.
- Commitment to implementing EDID includes initiatives such as: 1) reserving spots for BIPOC students, 2) considering holistic assessment processes to make room for applicants from equity-seeking groups, 3) curriculum and policy review, 4) increasing the diversity of case studies used in teaching, and 5) creating support groups for 2SLGBTQIA+ and BIPOC/Indigenous students.
- Students expressed appreciation for faculty members’ expertise and approaches; and for the opportunity to participate in leadership roles and student associations.
- Varied funding opportunities are available to students.
- Strong quality of admitted students – exemplified in part by the competitiveness of admission.
- Very high completion rate for both degree options, which is supported by a dedicated academic advisor who monitors students and provides timely interventions.

Prospective Improvements for the Program to Consider

- Some students identified a perceived lack of flexibility with the assessment of student learning, especially in the context of (diverse)abilities and universal design. (*Embedded in Recommendation #1*)
- Challenges related to budgetary issues may impact the SAFE and KCSC field placement programs, and the clinical supervision provided to the social work students who completed their practicums in the two program options. (*Embedded in Recommendation #2*)
- Clarify the field placement process to alleviate student concerns. (*Embedded in Recommendation #2*)
- Add sections to in-demand elective courses so that students can access the content they need and want. (*Embedded in Recommendation #3*)
- Explore pathways that facilitate better work-life balance for students, including examining attendance policies that students feel are rigid and not accommodating, as well as considering provisions for part-time study. (*Embedded in Recommendation #4*)
- Consider how the high number of academic and practicum-based accessibility accommodations (short and long-term) impact teaching and learning outcomes for students. (*Embedded in Recommendation #1 and #4*)
- Consider whether some Western services for graduate students could be offered at King’s College on certain days/times rather than having service accessibility only on the Western main campus. (*Embedded in Recommendation #5*)
- Students indicated: 1) that “heavy” learning loads result in them feeling “overloaded and burned out”; 2) feeling inadequately prepared to enter practice, which results in reticence and anxiety when entering into field education settings; 3) a need for more EDID content and representation in the curriculum and the classroom setting; 4) limited interaction with SOGS and feeling that their concerns are not always being addressed; 5) a need for better communication and inclusion in decisions around program governance (*Embedded in Recommendations #1 #4, #5 and #6*)
- Examine allocation of office space to ensure that part-time faculty members can meet individually and privately with students.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers’ recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers’ Recommendations	Program/Faculty Response
<p>Recommendation #1 Continue addressing issues of diversity, representation, and inclusion within a broader context. Specifically, we recommend that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum be reviewed so that EDID content, theory, and applied practice can be integrated into all courses, and not just stand-alone courses/lectures/modules that are specific to EDID content (with input from students and faculty). 2. Learning (pedagogy) and evaluation processes should take into account contemporary diversity and the inclusion of all learners and learning styles, including universal design of curriculum. This includes supporting students with academic disability accommodations while continuing to meet program requirements and competencies. 3. Continue to address and support representation in admissions, hiring practices, and curriculum development. 4. Due to the large number of accommodation requests, current supports and services/positions should be kept in place, and strategies should be developed to address these issues in the future. 5. Support the Director of EDID to work with (if possible) field placement supervisors and agencies/organizations to assist BIPOC students in the field. 	<p>Program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The curriculum integrates content, theory, and applied practice across all appropriate courses in addition to specifically designed EDID courses to ensure there is core content delivered to every graduate of the program. Students are reviewing the curriculum for EDID content and the faculty members will be reviewing this at the Fall retreat. 2. Plans are in place to invite Western’s Centre for Teaching and Learning to facilitate a workshop at the spring retreat on universal design with our faculty members (both full and part-time). 3. Continue adhering to the practices outlined in the IQAP self-study that support representation in admissions, hiring practices, and curriculum development. 4. The School will maintain current support that facilitates accommodation requests. The School is working with the Equity and Diversity Committee to explore ways of providing better support to these issues in the future through the annual diversity and equity survey. 5. The Director of EDID currently supports all of King’s; therefore, expanding their current role within the School is not feasible in regards to placement supervisors and agencies. The Director currently supports BIPOC students by attending Educational Reviews to bring an EDID lens to the process, offers practicums to our students, and advises the School on a case-by case basis. <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the School’s responses to this recommendation, especially use of resources and connections with the Western Centre for Teaching and Learning regarding universal design in learning, and is also looking at ways of promoting the newly developed Certificate in Universal Design.</p>

<p>Recommendation #2 Support the King’s Community Service Centre (KCSC) and the SAFE practicum projects and/or work with community partners/stakeholders who can support these projects with human resources – specifically, social work supervisory positions that will manage and supervise students in field placements in these programs.</p>	<p>Program: The Clinical Supervisor’s contract for the KCSC has been renewed and is supported in the 2024-2025 operating budget. For the next fiscal year, the plan is to advocate for this position to be made permanent.</p> <p>The King’s Campus and Community Social Worker is a permanent position shared with the Dean of Students’ Office. The School is allocated 0.5 FTE of this position to offer clinical supervision to students placed with our SAFE program. This role is currently vacant and is being redefined. The School is advocating for it to be converted to a 1.0 FTE from the 2025-2026 fiscal year, which will enable the expansion of SAFE and other new School of Social Work-based practicum initiatives.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the renewal of the KCSC Clinical Supervisor contract for 2024–25, and supports collaboration between Social Work and the Office of the Dean of Students. The School’s future requests will be seriously considered within budgetary parameters and institutional priorities.</p>
<p>Recommendation #3 Consider making courses focused on mental health, substance use/addiction, and trauma-informed methods required courses, and/or add sections to elective courses that are strongly in demand.</p>	<p>Program: The School currently offers four electives each year in the MSW program. Consistently, Mental Health and Trauma-Informed methods are the top two selections. Beginning in 2025, the School plans to offer two sections of each of these courses to ensure every student has the option to take them. In lieu of one or these courses, students will be permitted to take a graduate elective outside of the School of Social Work or pursue an Independent Study with a full-time faculty member in an area of their interest.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the School’s response.</p>
<p>Recommendation #4 Consider bringing back a part-time MSW stream to address challenges (e.g., juggling multiple responsibilities, financial burdens), and to provide a buffer for those full-time students who may have difficulty completing their studies because of changing responsibilities.</p>	<p>Program: The School currently doesn’t have the resources required (financial or human), to mount a part-time MSW stream at this time. Students are allowed to complete the MSW program in either stream on a part-time basis should it be a recommended accommodation. A Block Placement option was introduced in the program to allow students to complete their practicum after having completed their coursework for those who find pursuing both at the same time too difficult.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the School’s response, and notes the mechanisms of accommodation already in place for students.</p>

<p>Recommendation #5 Identify and clarify the role of MSW students within the context of School governance and decision-making; explore the option of an internal GSWAS group; and to regularize meetings with SOGS on the King’s campus for MSW students during the academic year to address the felt disconnect between the social work students and other graduate students at Western.</p>	<p>Program: Elected MSW representatives were informed that they are already part of an MSW student association within the School of Social Work, for which a constitution was developed by a past cohort of MSW students. Each year between 5 and 6 students are elected by their peers from each cohort of the program, with one MSW Executive representative from each cohort for a total of fifteen MSW student representatives in their association each year. The three MSW executives meet with the MSW Program Coordinator a minimum of once each term. They organize monthly meetings among themselves and have representatives on such committees as the School Curriculum Committee, Field Education Committee, the Equity and Diversity Committee, and King’s Library Committee. They also have two elected representatives to SOGS and they receive funding based upon the number of SOGS meetings they attend on main campus. This money is paid out to the next year’s cohort as a budget they can control and use as they wish.</p> <p>In the last term of each year, all the MSW representatives also meet with the MSW program coordinator, Director of the School of Social Work and the Field Education Coordinator to provide feedback based on their experience in the MSW program. This has resulted in changes in the curriculum and extracurricular activities offered. Notes from these meetings are completed and forwarded to the MSW students each year.</p> <p>This year the MSW representatives/association decided to add an Environmental Representative within their constitution and are going to recommend that the terms for Foundation year representatives can be renewable for a second term in order to provide continuity within their association.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the School’s response.</p>
<p>Recommendation #6 Continue working toward enhancing how program decisions, processes and changes are communicated to students so that so that any perceptions related to lack of transparency and inconsistency can be addressed and reduced.</p>	<p>Program: The School is looking at mechanisms for better sharing the decisions made and how they were made with the student body. A monthly newsletter will be implemented at the beginning of the new academic year for these purposes; and a Q&A section will be added to the web page to address questions raised by students during the academic year.</p> <p>The students currently have both voice and vote through their representatives to all of the School committees. All motions that come forward to School Council for final vote that are not supported/asked for revisions are sent back to the respective committee to review and resubmission, ensuring that students have full input into any final decisions made by the School. To address those rare issues requiring a vote that don’t fall within the purview of any of the existing School Committees, a new Policy Committee has been added where students will have both voice and vote. Therefore, there will be no decisions taken by the School that require a vote where students haven’t had both input and vote.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the School’s response.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Program Chair, and the Dean of the Faculty are responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan. Of note, recommendation #4 has not been included below as the program has indicated in its response in the summary table above that it is unable to action it and highlights existing accommodations.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>Recommendation #1 Continue addressing issues of diversity, representation, and inclusion within a broader context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the curriculum for EDID content with a contracted group of students and follow-up with faculty members at an upcoming retreat. • Invite Western’s Centre for Teaching and Learning to facilitate a workshop on universal design. • Maintain current supports that facilitate accommodation requests; and work with the Equity and Diversity Committee to explore ways to better support these issues in the future through the annual diversity and equity survey. 	Director	<p>By December 2024</p> <p>By May 2025</p> <p>By April 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #2 Support the King’s Community Service Centre (KCSC) and the SAFE practicum projects and/or work with community partners/stakeholders who can support these projects with human resources – specifically, social work supervisory positions that will manage and supervise students in field placements in these programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for KCSC Clinical Supervisor’s role to be made permanent. • Redefine the role of King’s Campus and Community Social Worker and advocate for it to be converted to a 1.0 FTE from the 2025-2026 fiscal year. 	Director	By May 2025
<p>Recommendation #3 Consider making courses focused on mental health, substance use/addiction, and trauma-informed methods required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer two sections of Mental Health and Trauma-Informed methods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will be permitted to take a graduate elective outside of the School of Social Work or pursue an Independent Study 	Director	By September 2025

<p>courses, and/or add sections to elective courses that are strongly in demand.</p>	<p>with a full-time faculty member in an area of their interest, in lieu of one of these courses.</p>		
<p>Recommendation #5 Identify and clarify the role of MSW students within the context of School governance and decision-making; explore the option of an internal GSWAS group; and to regularize meetings with SOGS on the King's campus for MSW students during the academic year to address the felt disconnect between the social work students and other graduate students at Western.</p>	<p>Continue supporting and meeting regularly with MSW student association representatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage ongoing communication with SOGS, and attendance at SOGS meetings. 	<p>Director</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation #6 Continue working toward enhancing how program decisions, processes and changes are communicated to students so that so that any perceptions related to lack of transparency and inconsistency can be addressed and reduced.</p>	<p>Explore ways to better communicate decisions and decision-making processes to the student body, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a monthly newsletter. • Add a Q&A section to the website that addresses questions raised by students during the academic year. • Ensure student voice and vote on a new Policy Committee. 	<p>Director</p>	<p>By September 2024</p>