



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

## **Bachelor of Social Work**

# **Public Curriculum Review Report**

**Faculty of Social Work  
University of Calgary  
June 30, 2016**



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## Executive Summary

The Faculty of Social Work prepares BSW graduates to address individual, family, community, and social concerns in the context of diverse and changing societies. Graduates are prepared to draw upon a variety of assessment and intervention methods to help achieve social well-being outcomes with appropriate structural supports across the life span. The program is based on the social work tenets of mobilizing strengths of individuals and groups, social engagement and civil societies, respect for diversity, inclusion, equitable participation, and social justice. The program is grounded in the vision and mission of the Faculty, inquiry-based methods of learning, the Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the social work profession, and the national accreditation standards for schools of social work.

We have a long record of delivering high quality degree programs across the province. We continue to do an exemplary job in reaching out to communities across the province. In responding to diverse needs across the province and local contexts for educational programs across many communities, we have developed a complex set of BSW programs. The Faculty of Social Work offers our BSW programs from three University of Calgary regional offices located in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Edmonton. We currently offer BSW programs across the province: Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, and beyond Alberta in our online programs.

We provide two distinct BSW curricula: the Learning Circles' curriculum and the Campus-based (urban center) curriculum. We currently have two routes/paths into the BSW program: University Transfer and Post-Diploma. The University Transfer and the Post-Diploma routes are available in all locations (Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Community-based Learning Circles, and Virtual Learning Circles). In addition to the two separate curricula, the curriculum is also slightly different for the Post Diploma route offered in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Edmonton.

This review process has taken place for over a year, beginning February 25, 2015, with an all-Faculty Orientation session and ending in May, 2016, with approval from our Faculty. During the period of February to September 2015, instructors entered their course details into the CAT online tool for Course Curriculum Mapping. Data analysis was completed from October – December 2015. We instituted a collaborative all-faculty effort to analyze the data particularly attending to creating a faculty-wide process for developing our action plan. On January 26, 2016, we held an all-Faculty Retreat to review data and on February 3, 2016, we held another all-Faculty Retreat to develop BSW program recommendations and action items for the report. On February 9, 2016, the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee reviewed and revised the Action Plan portion of the report. On February 24, 2016, the Faculty BSW Policy Committee reviewed and revised the action plan further. On March 16, 2016, we reviewed the Action plan as a Faculty in our Faculty Meeting. On March 23,

2016 the BSW Policy Committee reviewed the draft report and approved the Action plan component. The Faculty was provided with the Curriculum Review Draft Report for the April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Faculty Council meeting. The Curriculum Review report went forward to the Faculty Meeting on May 11, 2016, and received a unanimous vote of adoption.

One major recommendation emanating from the Faculty's 2015 Unit Review was to examine our program offerings, specifically to assess the feasibility of continuing to offer our full complement of programs. This is a valid question; in our 2009 Reaccreditation Review by the Canadian Association of Social Work Education, site team members commented that our BSW programs seemed overly complex because we have more than one curriculum for the same degree and offer a multitude of delivery options in different ways, across the province. We started to explore the answer in our BSW Curriculum Review.

The Curriculum Mapping results indicated that the BSW program covers the main Program-Level Learning Outcomes, and that instructors use a wide variety of assessment methods in their courses. Overall, our summary charts of the curriculum mapping data show the BSW Program Level Outcomes are covered across the two curricula. There are very few gaps or unintended redundancies in content across courses and years. There is evidence of alignment across intended outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment strategies.

The trends held across most programs, even though there was some discussion in the Faculty Retreats about inter-rater reliability and how the CAT tool categories may have been interpreted for different ratings (e.g., introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction). For our next Curriculum Review, we will ensure that a common definition of introductory, intermediate, and advanced is provided to those rating their courses in CAT.

More practice and skill building could be integrated into social work core courses. Practica could be seen as an advanced level in most outcome areas because this is where integration of theory and practice can happen. The issue and tensions of providing routes from both a post diploma and university transfer program was briefly discussed. The Learning Circles curriculum seems to be well-designed, instructional, and innovative in many aspects and we can learn from that delivery model and perhaps emulate that further in our three on-campus programs.

With the emergence of new BSW programs offered in other institutions across the province, it is time to begin to consider changes that enhance the Faculty's strengths and what we see as value added and unique. The visioning of the BSW and an overall strategy and approach can inform our future BSW program. Over the next few years, our Faculty plans to act on several of our BSW curriculum review findings.

## 1. Improve Curriculum Alignment

- Goal 1. Ensure that the same course sections are consistent province-wide.
- Goal 2. Link Program Level Outcomes (PLOs) to Course Level Outcomes/Objectives (CLOs).
- Goal 3. Ensure that Program-Level Outcomes (PLOs) are reflected in the Course Level Outcomes/Objectives (CLOs).
- Goal 4. Address Program Level Outcome (PLO) gaps identified in the curriculum mapping.
- Goal 5. Address practice and skill building gaps.

Goal 6. Have consistent course outlines.

Goal 7. Encourage the alignment of assessments with Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes (CLOs) that are aligned with Program Level Outcomes (PLOs).

## 2. Improve the Teaching Culture Within the Faculty

Goal 8. Explore and examine Faculty's grading levels.

Goal 9. Create a distinctive BSW program vision.

Goal 10. Increase the culture of teaching collaboration in the faculty.

## 3. Provide Faculty Professional Development

Goal 11. Create more opportunities for instructors to discuss teaching.

Goal 12: Communication Plan: Communicate Curriculum Review actions.

The BSW Curriculum Review was a useful and educative process; the recommendations arising from our Curriculum review will positively impact the quality of our BSW program. Our Faculty looks forward to implementing our action plan and continuing to improve our BSW program.

## Context of the Faculty of Social Work BSW Program

The Faculty of Social Work was originally created in 1966 as the School of Social Welfare, one of the first units established when the University of Calgary achieved independence from the University of Alberta in that same year. The first program offered was a Master's level social work degree. The BSW degree was first offered in 1971, graduating seven students with a BSW in 1973. This program was accredited by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) in 1974. The Faculty started in 1969-70 with a complement of 12 full-time academics, 6 support staff, and approximately 20 students, and as of January 2016, we have 47 full-time equivalent (FTE) academic staff members, 18 support staff, and 9 Student Services staff working out of three core locations—Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge—who deliver our programs to Central, Northern, and Southern Alberta. Currently, there are 473 BSW students, 291 MSW students, and 27 PhD students enrolled across all of the Faculty's programs.

Since its creation, the Faculty has pursued academic excellence in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and service to the community and to the profession. Over the past 50 years, the faculty has expanded its academic programs to offer three distinct routes to the accredited BSW degree; three specializations and both a thesis and course-based route to the accredited MSW degree; a joint MBA/MSW degree program; and a PhD program.

As the context for BSW degree delivery of social work education shifts in Alberta (note that as of Fall 2016 we are no longer the only degree-granting social work program in the province), we remain committed to curricula and delivery models that are innovative and responsive to the needs of our communities. The BSW program provides the student with the professional knowledge, theory, and skills of social work including a wide range of experiential opportunities to integrate this learning in supervised practice settings. Upon graduation, students are prepared to practice as generalist social workers in a wide variety of social welfare fields in a continuously changing world. Areas of practice may include child welfare, family violence, community development, mental health, gerontology, social policy development, and working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The Faculty of Social Work offers BSW programs from three University of Calgary offices across Alberta. Most of our current BSW students are located in Alberta. We currently offer our two BSW programs across the province: Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, and beyond Alberta in our online programs. We have a long record of delivering a high quality complex set of degree programs across the province; the complexity is the result of responding to the diverse needs of local contexts across the province. Even with complexity and diversity in programming, we remain true to our main teaching pillar: "We will be the school of choice for those who want to become Canada's most insightful and skilled social workers."

Another strength of the Faculty of Social Work is that the 2013-2018 strategic plan is closely aligned with the University of Calgary's Eyes High strategic vision, the 2012 Academic Plan, and the 2012 Research Plan. Key actions that the Faculty believe will help us achieve our strategic goals are the following:

- Streamline our curricula to ensure students experience focused and effective educational experiences.
- Coordinate planning of curricula and delivery structures across the Faculty's regions.
- Work with key social work employers to enhance graduates' skills and knowledge.
- Make student engagement a priority.
- Invest in strategic post-degree programs that support graduates' transitions into the workplace.
- Engage in ongoing teaching development in order to ensure our students receive the best possible instruction.
- Engage community professionals in our classrooms, and in turn take our classroom experiences into the community.

Two major recommendations from the Faculty's 2015 Unit Review were to (1) review our program offerings, particularly to assess if we can reasonably continue to offer our full complement of programs, and (2) to attend to possible gaps that may have emerged in our program delivery during the last several years. Through the BSW Curriculum Review, especially the curriculum mapping exercise, and our Accreditation self-study (submitted April 1, 2016) we have begun to examine both issues.



## Guiding Questions

The following critical questions have guided the curriculum review for all of the Faculty of Social Work BSW Programs:

1. What are the strengths of the program?
2. Where are the gaps and redundancies in the program?
3. To what extent (negligible, moderate, extensive) are program-level learning outcomes being addressed in the program? Where are they being addressed in the program?
4. To what extent do student assessment strategies across the program support and capture student learning? Is there a need for more diversity of student assessment strategies used in the program?
5. Do students in different streams have different experiences? To what degree are program outcomes met differently for post-diploma (PD) and university transfer (UT) route students? What are the discrepancies among the Learning Circles, PD, and UT programs? How could we increase consistency and portability of our BSW program (for students and faculty) across the province?
6. To what extent are the BSW programs offered across the province aligned, and how can we improve alignment of the various programs to ensure a comparable student learning experience?

# Action Plan

## 5-year Action Plan for 2016 BSW Curriculum Review Report - June 30, 2016

<b>Recommendation #1: Curriculum Alignment</b>
<b>Goal 1. Ensure that the same course sections are consistent province-wide:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set up a collaborative structure for course coordination for every course across the province.</li><li>• Explore common/shared course objectives across different sections of the same course.</li><li>• Increase consistency across the province.</li><li>• We are not proposing that course outlines are identical and encourage that course assignments and assessments fit the student's context. However, we expect that, at the same time, courses are coordinated to ensure consistency in addressing and meeting our BSW program accreditation expectations and our course level objectives for each course.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 2. Link Program Level Outcomes (PLOs) to Course Level Objectives (CLOs):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create an ideal model curriculum so that PLOs match CLOs (Course Level Objectives).</li><li>• Learning circles was identified as a potential model due to broad emphasis on all PLOs, well organized, high level of coordination.</li><li>• Modular format may help to facilitate the coverage of all PLOs.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 3. Ensure that Program-Level Outcomes (PLOs) are reflected in the Course Level Objectives (CLOs):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consistent course template with PLOs is used across all regions. Purposefully linking BSW Program Level Outcomes (PLOs) to each course.</li><li>• Have a framework/skeleton to see how pieces of the curriculum fit together and be more intentional about course objectives.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 4. Address PLO gaps identified in the curriculum mapping:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty will add course objectives in course outlines to address gaps in program identified in curriculum mapping and review (e.g., research, social justice, critical thinking, organizational change, and academic integrity). Could be module components, however must be included in course objectives. This includes more incorporation of applied practice research and students doing own research.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 5. Address practice and skill building gaps:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty will ensure that practical aspects, high impact practices (HIPs), and interaction are emphasized in course objectives- Link Practice with theory – More practice opportunities for students.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 6. Have consistent course outlines:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty will help instructors to work from a common course outline template. Flexibility will be maintained for each instructor to be able to add his/her own teaching style to the outline.</li></ul>
<b>Goal 7. Encourage the alignment of assessments with Course Learning Objectives (CLOs) that are aligned with Program Level Outcomes (PLOs):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance constructive alignment of courses (links between course objectives, student assessments, and teaching and learning activities).</li><li>• Align student assessments with the course learning objectives.</li></ul>
<b>Recommendation #2: Teaching Culture</b>

**Goal 8. Explore and Examine Faculty's Grading Levels:**

- How do we evaluate student learning?
- What is our faculty's culture around grading?
- How can assessment be more helpful and challenge students to higher learning?

**Goal 9. Create a distinctive BSW Program Vision:**

- What distinguishes our BSW program? What makes us distinct from other BSW programs?
- We are aiming for high rigor, high quality, with program integrity.
- Consider: What does our Faculty view as our unique social work pedagogy?

**Goal 10. Increase the culture of teaching collaboration in the faculty.**

**Recommendation #3: Faculty/ Professional Learning Development**

**Goal 11. Create more opportunities for instructors to discuss teaching:**

- Hold regular faculty discussions and workshops.

**Goal 12: Communication plan - Communicate Curriculum Review Actions**

- Discuss the Curriculum Report and Action Plan each Faculty Meeting Agenda and Teaching & Learning Committee Agenda.