



January 25, 2010

Professor Cheryl Misak
Provost, University of Toronto

Dear Cheryl,

On behalf of the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (FIFSW), we are delighted and wish to thank the reviewer for his positive and constructive augmented external-OCGS review of the Faculty in October 2009. The review credited the Faculty with many achievements. In response to your request, I am providing my administrative response to the report, in particular to the identified issues and recommendations.

Suggestion that consideration be given to examining the structure of the administrative team and possibly strengthening the role of the Associate Dean

In the next three to six months I plan to conduct a review and restructuring of the administrative structure. I will review the job descriptions, and will consult with U of T human resources, with Deans of similar size faculties at the University and with schools of social work in comparable universities. In this process, I will develop principles for restructuring. For example, the administrative organizational structure should be based on educational programs to ensure that the student experience is consistent and of the highest quality. I will involve the Associate Dean.

Recommendation to review the thesis and research practicum options at the MSW level as these are not required for accreditation and may undermine opportunities to develop competence in direct practice

The thesis option

The reviewer's recommendation regarding the thesis option corresponds with the Faculty's plans. In the September 2009 Factor-Inwentash Academic Plan Update I identified the thesis option in our MSW program as a continuing challenge and noted that the Faculty would review the thesis in order to make recommendations about whether and how to offer this option effectively. Barriers to students selecting the thesis option include the fact that the program is a professional focused masters program, the limited availability of faculty to supervise the thesis, and the additional demands required for a student to complete the thesis. MSW theses are not typically required in North American social work programs.

The Faculty is currently in the process of reviewing the thesis option. We have examined this option within Canadian schools of social work and comparable schools of social work in the US. Although the MSW thesis is often not offered as an option, we plan to develop and review an alternative to the thesis that will be available in the 2010-2011 academic year and that has two options: 1) a special studies course that will provide students with the competencies they would acquire by completing a thesis; and 2) a thesis option available to a maximum number of students per year if they meet identified criteria and if there is a faculty member available to supervise the thesis. It will be made very clear to students that the thesis option will require demands and time in addition to the requirements to complete the MSW program. The current research offerings, which were noted by the reviewer, such as the independent research/reading course will remain options for students to gain research knowledge and skills.

The Research Practicum

The research practicum option is intended for year two MSW students who request this as a placement. These students are clearly informed of the implications, which are that this practicum will not prepare them for direct practice and that if they are interested in direct practice this option is not preferred. Year one students however, are typically provided with a practicum that is practice related, most often in direct practice and in significantly fewer cases in policy. In the next six months we plan to review the research practicum to ensure that students graduate with optimal practice experience.

Please let me know if you need anything else.

Sincerely,



Faye Mishna
Interim Dean and Professor