



Graduate School

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Masters of Social Work

CAA Committee Members:

The Masters of Social Work (MSW) has presented a proposal to transition to a course-based only program.

Presently, the Master of Social Work is a thesis-based program that includes a non-thesis option. To satisfy degree requirements, students may either submit a thesis or take a four hour comprehensive exam. The program requests conversion to a course-based only requirement. If approved, students need only complete their defined curriculum to receive the MSW degree. The thesis option would remain, which would be useful for students who wish to transition to the PhD program in Social Work.

The change is submitted to bring the OSU program in line with other MSW program nationally. Among our peer institutions, MSW programs are all course-based. As Social Work is an accredited program, their course work and competencies are tightly regulated and reviewed regularly. Their accreditation assures the maintained rigor of the program.

The MSW proposal was considered at the September 27th meeting of the Graduate School Curriculum Committee (GSCC). Associate Dean Denise Bronson from the College of Social Work attended the meeting and explained the proposed change to the committee. In discussion with Dean Bronson, the GSCC was satisfied that the change did not jeopardize the rigor of the program. They approved the change.

The Proposal was subsequently circulated to the Graduate Council, by email, with a call for an electronic vote by October 31, 2012. The proposal was passed by Graduate Council.

The proposal is now presented to the Committee on Academic Affairs for its consideration.

Sincerely,

Scott Herness
Associate Dean



Proposal for Course-based Master of Social Work Degree

We are submitting this proposal requesting conversion of the Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree to a course-based program that will no longer require a thesis project or a comprehensive examination. As noted below, this change will make our MSW program requirements consistent with social work programs ranked in the top 10 according to the recent US News & World Report, such as the University of Michigan, Washington University, University of Chicago and Case Western Reserve, with whom we compete nationally for the best students. There will be no loss of content or rigor of our program with this conversion.

Background:

Currently, under the quarter system, the College of Social Work requires all MSW students to complete either a master's thesis or a comprehensive examination as a requirement of graduation. Most of our students choose to complete the comprehensive examination which consists of a four-hour written exam focusing on key issues in social work such as assessment, intervention, evaluation, and practice values/ethics. With the move to semesters, we changed the format of the non-thesis option to a capstone project that requires a two-semester effort focused on an intervention, program, or policy evaluation completed in the student's field practicum. In our semester conversion proposal to OAA, we noted that this format will provide a more comprehensive assessment of our students' mastery of key competencies, practice behaviors, and knowledge. We will continue to require a capstone project for all MSW students even if this proposal to shift to a course-based degree is approved.

Rationale/Justification:

The MSW degree is the terminal professional degree in social work education and, as such, we are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education according to our ability to give students the knowledge, competencies, and practice behaviors required for successful social work practice at multiple levels (i.e., individual, family, group, community, and policy). In addition to completing coursework on theory, policy, best practices, values/ethics, and cultural competence, all MSW students in the 2-year program are required to complete 1008 hours of field practicum. The field experience gives students the opportunity to apply knowledge acquired in the classroom and to develop the skills and competencies required for success in the profession. At the conclusion of each semester the field experience includes a very thorough assessment of student mastery of practice competencies. This assessment, along with the required two semester capstone course will provide a more realistic and meaningful assessment of student competency than our prior comprehensive examination. We believe that students are best able to demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge, competencies, and skills for

social work practice in the classroom (including the capstone courses) and in the field practicum, rather than through a comprehensive examination or thesis.

We recently completed a review of the top 10 schools of social work in the US according to the current US World and News rankings. None of these programs require a comprehensive exam, thesis or capstone project to complete the degree; all are course-based only. Typically, MSW programs in general do not require a comprehensive examination or thesis to complete the degree.

There are several advantages to a course-based MSW degree at Ohio State University:

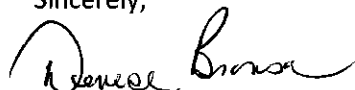
1. The MSW program at OSU would be more attractive to future applicants without the exam or thesis requirement and enable us to compete with national programs for the best students;
2. We believe that the field practicum is the best indicator of a student's ability to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge, competencies, and skills for successful SW practice;
3. The capstone project will become part of the course requirements for graduating with an MSW. This is a two course sequence completed as part of the advanced curriculum.
4. The college will have much greater flexibility in use of faculty and community lecturers to supervise capstone projects which will allow us to keep the class sizes smaller and provide more individualized attention to each project;
5. A course-based degree will eliminate the need for students to submit a Master's Examination Report form and greatly reduce the paperwork required in the MSW Program office and at the Graduate School; and
6. We will continue to offer a thesis opportunity for those who anticipate pursuing a doctoral degree after completing the MSW program.

Finally, we note that there is precedence for course-based only master's program at the Ohio State University. Presently, our degrees in Masters in Business Administration, Masters of Public Administration, Masters of Business Logistics Engineering, and Masters of Occupational Therapy are all course-based only programs.

We hope this proposal provides the necessary information for you to consider granting course-based status for the MSW degree program in the College of Social Work. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this proposal further and can provide additional information as needed.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Denise Bronson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs &
Director of MSW Program



Tamara Davis, Ph.D.
Chair, Graduate Studies Committee