UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Faculty of Social Work

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SELF-REVIEW REPORT

April 2019

UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Introduction

This report is an abstract of the Self-Review Report of the Faculty of Social Work at the School of Social Sciences, University of Iceland and is intended for public disclosure at the University's website.

In accordance with the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework at the University level in Iceland and the University of Iceland's Guidelines for the organization, scheduling and process of institution-led review of faculties and interdisciplinary programmes, the Faculty of Social Work (the Faculty), School of Social Sciences (the School), University of Iceland (the University), conducted self-evaluations during the autumn semester of 2018. The results are presented in this report. A self-evaluation committee was established in September 2018.

The committee members were:

1. Sigurveig H. Sigurðardóttir, Senior Lecturer and Head of Faculty. Chair.
2. Steinunn Hrafnsdóttir, Professor and Deputy Head of Faculty. Representative of permanent teaching staff. Nominated by the Head of Faculty and appointed by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences.
3. Sigrún Harðardóttir, Lecturer. Representative of permanent teaching staff. Nominated by the Head of Faculty and appointed by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences
4. Alexandra Elísa Gunnarsdóttir, BA student. Representative of undergraduate students. Nominated by the Head of Faculty and appointed by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences
5. Íris Dögg Lárusdóttir, PhD student. Representative of postgraduate students. Nominated by the Head of Faculty and appointed by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences
6. Ellý Alda Þorsteinsdóttir, Social Worker and Director General at the Ministry of Welfare. External representative of former students, industry or society, nominated by the Head of Faculty and appointed by the Dean of the School of Social Sciences.
7. Gro Ellen Mathisen, Professor in HR and organisational psychology. Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stavanger. Appointed by the Chair of the Quality Committee of the University Council.
8. Rasmus Antoft, Associate Professor in Sociology and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Aalborg University. Appointed by the Chair of the Quality Committee of the University Council.
9. Christofer Edling, Professor in Sociology and Dean at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Lund University. Appointed by the Chair of the Quality Committee of the University Council.
10. Jón Kristján Rögnvaldsson. Administrator Officer of the Faculty.
11. Sigrún D. Flóvenz, Project Manager at the School of Social Sciences. Secretary of the self-review team.

The self-evaluation process started in September 2018. The Centre for Teaching and Learning assisted the committee, providing its expertise in revising learning outcomes. Assistance also came from the Social Science Research Institute. It provided surveys and arranged focus groups with the assistance of the student representative on the committee. The role of the committee was to evaluate the collected data, discuss strengths and weaknesses of the study programmes and suggest action plans.

This report is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter describes the Faculty characteristics, academic vision and student support. It identifies problems and suggests actions and solutions. It also

describes the main conclusions of the Faculty´s previous self-review and the actions taken since. Its main conclusions reflect the Faculty´s under funding and high Teacher/student ratio. However, it also emphasises the high overall students' satisfaction which has consistently been above the UA on issues with regard to personal development and self-confidence, ethical judgement, consciousness of sustainability, responsibility to the community and of equality. Some actions are nevertheless needed to improve student satisfaction in particular areas and in line with the University strategy (HÍ21).

Chapter 2 is the main part of the review, where all study programmes are evaluated by the staff and students. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and actions and solutions are proposed for each programme. The main quality enhancements which were suggested by staff when working on the report were a) Improving the assessment and feedback on course work, b) revision of the MA clinical professional programme, c) revision of diploma postgraduate courses, d) revising the academic vision of the education in line with new standard on ethics by IASSW. Other improvements are based on the particular characteristics and student survey outcomes for individual programmes.

The third chapter is a summary of the main conclusions for the Faculty as a whole based on the action plan of the first two chapters.

Summary and Main Conclusions for the Faculty

Lessons Learned from QEF1

The Faculty has undertaken a review of education and research policies in several ways to respond to the results of the self-review in 2014. The present situation is in some ways an improvement of the situation that was relevant in the Faculty in June 2014. There is a strong will of the staff to evaluate and improve the study programs and services for the students and still increase the quality of teaching for the students.

Since the last self-report was done in June 2014 there has been an increase in the number of full-time lecturers at the Faculty. Three new academic positions have been added which improves teacher/student ratios and reduces over-time of staff and increases the quality of teaching in special areas. One position is in the area of multi-cultural social work, one in school social work and one in Professional Rehabilitation. At the same time, one professor and one assistant professor have retired and one has reduced his position to 20%. However, assistant teachers have been hired to assist in teaching and assessment. Emphasis has been put on reducing overtime so teachers can research more.

In the previous self-review report the students noted that there was a lack of elective courses. The Faculty has increased the number of such courses and each student can now elect selective courses up to 18 ECTS. Selective courses were five in 2014 (total 22 ECTS) but are now eight (total 34 ECTS). The students also emphasized a lack of individual study assignments and the assessment could be improved. Various measures have been taken to improve the situation considering these recommendations.

The students also noted that there was a lack of suitable rooms and facilities for teaching and that the student groups were oversized. These factors are because of forces that are outside the power of the Faculty to solve but further work needs to be done to improve the working environment at the Faculty.

A special supervisory teacher of BA thesis has been appointed and improvements made on the Handbooks of BA and MA studies. Furthermore, the learning outcomes of the BA and the MA for Professional recognition programs have been revised. The uneven workload between courses has been improved by comparing dates for essays and assignments to be handed in. In some way this has succeeded, but still need some improvements. A special working group has been established to review the MA and diploma studies.

However, some of the key problems in the self-review remain such as high student/staff ratio, which for example has a negative effect on the quality of assessment and underfunding of the clinical master studies, that is caused by the University funding system that does not recognise social work programmes as clinical programmes.

Faculty Characteristics

The Faculty of Social Work is one of six faculties within the School of Social Sciences which is the largest of the University´s five schools. The Faculty of Social Work became an independent Faculty on 1 July 2008 following the restructuring of the University. The Faculty was formerly a department at the

Faculty of Social Sciences. This restructuring has proven to be a good step. The Faculty has more independence, decision making is much easier, lines of communication are simpler and there is more understanding towards educational needs of students. Administration is also more effective. Students get better service, there is better use of time, because now it is possible to focus on issues concerning only the Faculty of Social Work in meetings, and all this results in improved team cohesion.

The Faculty offers one BA Study Programme, six Postgraduate Diplomas, five MA Programmes and one PhD Programme (Appendix 1, Table 1).

The Faculty is a medium sized faculty within the School of Social Sciences with 13 tenured lecturers representing 10.4 FTE in 2018, of which only one is male member in a 0.2 FTE (Appendix 1, Table 2). Of these, 2 are adjunct lecturers, 6 assistant professors, 3 associate professor and 2 professors Six of 13 Faculty members are 59 years old or older. In the academic year of 2017–2018 a total of 122 sessional teachers contributed 7.38 FTE and were responsible for around 52% of the hours taught in the Faculty. In 2017-2018 the number of students was 347, 240 undergraduate students, 104 master students, and 4 PhD students. Currently undergraduate students are 69% of the student body. In the academic year 2017-2018 the Faculty offered 49 courses.

Teaching and Learning

The Faculty has a high retention rates and 72% complete their studies in the BA Programme within four years (Appendix 1, Table 3). The Faculty has always aimed at having a high retention rates in the BA studies and MA studies with professional recognition. The completion rate is very high for the graduate professional recognition Master study or 90%. The high graduation rate is partially due to the fact that the graduate clinical programme in social work has strict attendance requirements (80%) and is organised in teaching modules that the students need to follow. This creates a solid and focused group where students support each other from start to finish of the studies. As is evident from the table the number of students, retention and completion rate of some of the postgraduate diplomas need consideration. These diplomas are usually part-time, and the students are usually working full-time.

Overall students were very satisfied with the quality of both their BA and MA study programmes. The students are also pleased with their access to and communication with teachers. Currently the Faculty offers a three-year BA degree in social work, followed by a two-year MA course to earn professional qualification as a social worker. The BA study is mainly academic and research based, although a heavy emphasis is put on collaboration with the field. Additionally, two MA programmes, research based social work and Gerontology, are offered. The Faculty also offers six postgraduate diplomas in different specialities. These postgraduate diplomas are provided sporadically, depending on the number of students, and the needs of the labour market. The PhD programme is still weak with only six students in the programme. The study programmes are very different in size and scope. The largest number of students are in the BA studies and in the professional clinical master.

The Faculty's results are positive in comparison with the UI regarding attitudes towards the quality of teaching, academic support, organization and management of the study programme. The results were also more positive than the university average (UA) concerning the development of personal skills as the studies had increased their skills to communicate in writing, increased their self-confidence and

their consciousness of equality. These results are in line with the most positive aspects discussed in focus groups reviews carried out as part of this Self-Review in November 2018.

The Faculty needs to consider that assessment and feedback on coursework have lower scores compared with the UA. The Faculty will focus on trying to improve this. However, the funding model of teaching and evaluation of coursework is quite limited and teachers do not have enough time and pay for evaluating student work. The students mentioned that the study programme could be improved with more connection to the field. This was also stated by the external international experts' group after their visit in November 2019. It is not easy to establish more connection than is done today, as there are many part time teachers from the field teaching in the programme. Besides, students can choose two electives in voluntary work and have a lot of field visits.

Almost half of the BA students were satisfied with the variety of the teaching methods, which is quite low but still higher than the UA. The MA students also criticized the lack of variety in teaching methods and suggested implementing the flipped classroom model. This was also mentioned by the external international experts. The Faculty needs to consider how to provide more variety in teaching and give the teachers an opportunity to adopt to new methods. Furthermore, the Faculty scores rather low in coordination of studies and family life (50%, UA 60%) which needs to be considered.

The diploma programmes need to be revised and the Faculty needs to consider if there are possibilities for more coordinated teaching within the programmes. That would be in line with the strategy of the overall education in the Faculty and economically more feasible.

The external international experts in their visit in November 2019 found that there are a vast number of courses compared to number of Faculty, both on undergraduate level and on the diploma level. They wonder if this is economically sustainable as there are few students on the diploma level and the Faculty members report too high work load. They think that the Faculty would benefit from developing an overall study strategy and remove courses that do not fit into this strategy. The experts also suggest that the faculty could develop a remote learning policy and sell courses as lifelong learning courses to part time students. This is worth considering.

Some of the actions proposed for quality enhancement are not all in the hands of the Faculty, but rest within the School of Social Sciences, the University and the authorities.

Management of Research

The Faculty itself does not have a separate strategy from the School of Social Sciences in teaching and research. The teaching and research strategy is the University five-year strategy, HÍ21, and the School of Social Sciences strategy agreed in 2016. The Head of the Faculty is responsible for implementing the strategy and reports regularly both to the School Board and the University´s Steering Group from implementing HÍ21 and attends annual anchor meetings organized by the Steering Group to follow up the status for the implementation. In the evaluation policy meetings teachers discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the structure and education strategy on the development of teaching and research.

The research and educational institution ICE-CCFR within the Faculty of Social Work has been operated since 2006. Its aim is to support research in the field of social work related to children and family affairs, policy, services and development. Most of the Faculty members have been active within the

research institution and many of them have been working on research projects and published reports in cooperation with the ICE-CCFR. The Institute organizes together with the Faculty of Social Work open meetings, symposia and seminars where the Faculty members and others share the results of their research.

The research within the Faculty is mostly individualized and based on available research time but the external funding is limited. The research output of academic members of the Faculty is considerably lower than the average for the School of Social Sciences and UI (Appendix 1, Table 4). There are hardly any established research groups at the Faculty but now the Faculty is preparing a research group on care research, which will involve many Faculty members. The Faculty members are preparing an application to the Icelandic Research Fund (Rannís).

All of the Faculty members are participating in both Icelandic and international research teams, such as NORDRESS, NordForsk and several Cost projects which have published both books and articles.

In the international experts' view the Faculty would benefit from developing a research strategy on how they want to organize and profile the research and there is also a need for a clearer plan for external funding. The experts suggest that PhD students should be involved in the network and even relevant members from other schools and external partners.

Follow-up Processes

The implementation of the Action Plan will be a standing item on meetings of the Faculty Board and similarly Faculty Head will report on the progress regularly to the School Board. Faculty Head reports formally to the School Dean on the status of the implementation and plans for next year together with other relevant QA matters no later than 1 December and this will be followed up in the School Board. The School Dean will subsequently make use of this report in a status report for all Faculties in the School, which will be submitted to the Quality Committee no later than 15 January. The Quality Committee writes a short report to the Rector no later than 1 February, which will subsequently be discussed in a meeting between the Chair of the Quality Committee, the Director of Quality Management and Rector, Vice-Rectors. Deans of Schools and the Managing Director of the Central Administration.

Appendix 1. Key Figures.

Table 1. Overview of present Study Programmes within the Faculty

	Cycle[1]	Degree	Credits (ECTS)
FRG261 Social Work	1.2	BA	180
FRG311 Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
FRG312 Child Protection	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
FRG313 Multiculturalism, diversity, refugees and asylum seekers	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
FRG314 Supervision in Social Work	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
FRG321 Professional Rehabilitation	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
FRG441 Social Work	2.2	MA	120
FRG442 Social Work with Professional Recognition	2.2	MA	120
FRG443 Family Therapy	2.2	MA	120
ÖLD311 Gerontology	2.1	Postgrad. Dip.	30
ÖLD441 Gerontology	2.2	MA	120
ÖLD442 Nordic Master's Programme in Gerontology	2.2	MA	120
FRG501 Social Work	3	PhD	210

[1] See National Qualification Framework for Higher Education No. 530/2011.

Table 2. Faculty members, number (No.) and full time-equivalent (FTE) as of 1 June 2018, and sessional teachers in 2017.

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
Professors	0	0	2	2.0	2	2.0
Associate Professors	1	0.2	2	.2.0	3	2.20
Assistant Professors	0	0	6	5.20	6	5.20
Adjunct Lectures	0	0	2	1.20	2	1.20
Total	1	0.20	12	10.40	13	10.60
Sessional teachers	18	1.25	114	6.13	122	7.38

Table 3. Total number of students, number of entrants, retention rate for first year, number of graduates and graduation rate (4-year mean).

Programme	No. of students			No. of entrants[3]	Retention rate	No. of graduates	Completion rate[4]
	Total no.	Full time[1]	Part time[2]		%		%
FRG261	262.0	165.0	77.0	57.0	72	71.0	72
FRG311	14.8	0	11.5	6.0	43	4.8	100
FRG312	6.8	0	6.3	3.3	-	3.0	-
FRG313	1.8	0.3	0.8	1.0	-	0	-
FRG314	12.3	0	11.5	6.0	-	0	-
FRG321	6.5	0	4.0	3.8	-	0	-
FRG441	12.0	1.5	4.0	1.5	50	3.0	65
FRG442	66.0	61.0	1.0	29.0	90	34.0	90
FRG443	6.3	0	1.3	0	-	1.5	100
ÖLD311	5.8	0.3	4.3	2.3	50	3.3	73
ÖLD441	5.3	0.8	2.5	1.5	-	0.8	100
ÖLD442	3.5	0	1.5	1.0	50	2.3	7
FRG501	3.5	2.3	-	1.0	-	0.5	-

[1] > 22.5 ECTS completed. For PhD students > 1 ECTS completed.

[2] 1-22 ECTS completed.

[3] For all programmes except PhD, no. of students completing at least one examination in first term.

[4] 2-year rate for diploma, 4-year rate for BA/BS, 3-year rate for MA/MS, 5-year rate for PhD.

Table 4. Research output of Faculty members, based on the Evaluation System for the Public Universities in Iceland, expressed by mean research points (A) and research points from peer-reviewed publications (B).

	2014		2015		2016		2017		Mean	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Faculty	23.5	9.3	25.0	13.4	22.0	13.7	21.0	9.6	22.9	11.5
School	35.0	20.6	33.3	19.9	33.9	23.0	30.1	19.2	33.0	20.7
University	32.8	21.4	32.0	20.9	31.4	21.2	29.6	19.4	31.5	20.7

Appendix 2. Action Plan for Teaching and Learning and Management of Research in QEF2

	Actions	How	Deadlines	Responsible party

1. FACULTY LEVEL

	Actions	How	Deadlines	Responsible party
1	Get external view on the study programmes	Seek consulting from Faculty Council	Spring 2019 and onwards	Undergraduate, master's, and doctoral study committees, Head of Faculty
2	Increase co-operation on research	Create formal research groups in order to apply for funding, conduct research, and enhance the research environment of doctoral students	2019	Head of Faculty
3	Increase co-operation in teaching	Encourage teachers to teach courses together	2019	Undergraduate, master's, and doctoral study committees, Head of Faculty
4	Increase efforts to get more external funding	Consultation with experienced researchers, collaboration with the Head of Research in the School of Social Sciences	Spring 2019 and onwards	Head of Faculty

2. STUDY PROGRAMMES

2.1 Undergraduate Studies

	Actions	How	Deadlines	Responsible party
1	Smaller groups of students	The department must find ways to break up large groups of first-year students, e.g., in Mathematics	2020 and ongoing	Head of Faculty
2	Improve the teaching quality in large undergraduate classes	Consider dividing up classes; consider flipped classroom, online teaching assistance	2019	Head of Faculty
3	Improve the teaching quality in first-year undergraduate classes	Most experienced teachers and researchers teach courses	2019 and onward	Head of Faculty
4	Exams	Make sure no course has 100% final exam	2019	Head of Faculty
5	Syllabuses are viewable before the semester starts	Teachers hand in their syllabus at least 4 weeks before the teaching starts.	2019 onward	Undergraduate committee

6	Course workload is insufficiently coordinated	Review syllabus before each semester	2019 onward	Individual teachers and undergraduate study committee
7	Methodology	Increase number of courses in methodology, add a mixed-method course to the undergraduate programme	2019	Undergraduate committee and Faculty meeting
8	Increase collaboration in teaching	Teachers form groups around courses	2020	Head of Faculty
9	Practical training of students	Students get training in Excel	2020	Undergraduate committee and Faculty meeting
10	Student surveys	Regular meetings with student representatives	2019 onward	Head of Faculty
11	Set policy regarding teaching hours	Implement regulations	2020	Head of Faculty, Faculty meeting

2.2 Master's Studies

1	Increase the number of master's theses finished	Introduce measures, such as courses in research design and writing	2019	Head of Faculty and Master's study committee
2	Increase teaching on governance, corporate social responsibility and business ethics	Introduce new courses in the Master's programme	2019	Master's study committee, Head of Faculty
3	Revise the structure of the new modular system	Increase specialisation of the programmes and make it easier to choose electives	2019, ongoing	Master's study committee, Head of Faculty
4	Teaching diversity	Analyse teaching diversity and consider measures to increase it	2019	Master's study committee, Head of Faculty

2.3 PhD Studies

Ch. 2.3.1	Students			
1	Set up clearer lines of communication between the doctoral study committee and doctoral students	Use existing channels (e-mail, web, social media, verbal interaction) more efficiently and consistently.	1.1.2019	Doctoral studies committee
2	Set up faculty doctoral student association		1.2.2019	Students, with faculty support
3	Provide training in using databases	Workshops	Annual	Doctoral studies committee commissions from outside source
4	Improve orientation for new students	Collect information from different sources	2019	Doctoral committee
5	Formalize the process of evaluating students' work in written form	Consult teachers on using rubrics	June 2019	Head of Faculty

Ch. 2.3.2	**Teaching and Learning**			
1	Develop vision for the PhD-programme	Consider the role and purpose of the PhD-programme		Doctoral study committee, Faculty meeting
2	More formal assessment of annual progress, measured by ECTS	Develop standard form, to be filled out by student annually and assessed by supervisor and doctoral studies committee.	Spring 2019	Doctoral study committee
3	Improve student access to doctoral level courses	Participating in joint efforts at other universities and in other units of the University of Iceland. Actively seeking out opportunities. Providing more financial support for travel.	Spring 2019 onward	Doctoral study committee, Head of Faculty
4	Establish structured seminars for Ph.D. students	Create a course programme	Spring 2019	Doctoral study committee
5	Introduce doctoral students to research groups	Establish formal research groups	2019	Faculty meeting

3. Management of Research

1	Increase co-operation in research	Form formal research groups in order to apply for funding, conduct research and enhance the research environment of doctoral students	2019	Head of Faculty
2	Act to get more external funding	Consult with experienced researchers, collaborate with the Head of Research in the School of Social Sciences	Spring 2019 and onwards	Head of Faculty