

# 2017 Registration Review Report Manitoba College of Social Workers



OFFICE OF THE MANITOBA FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER



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## Executive Summary

The 2017 Registration Review Report for the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) examines their state of progress with regard to the fair consideration of individuals educated outside of Canada. The Fairness Commissioner identifies progress opportunities and MCSW responds with an action plan.

In April 2015, the MCSW Act came into force establishing the college and self regulation of the profession. This first review aims for practical improvements based on an overview of the elements of the Manitoba Fairness Standard. MCSW engaged actively throughout the review to understand and adopt fair registration practices.

MCSW provides a variety of assessment routes to determine the education and experience requirements for entry to practice that are timely, effective and progressive. Alternative assessments allow for professional social work experience to be verified by employers and assessed by MCSW. Extensive support is provided to internationally educated applicants to pursue the right approach for successful licensure. The commitment to fairness and the value of diversity as a key area of professional competence is commendable. The Grand parented route in place for the first three years of implementation of the Act allows for those working in the field to pursue licensure with limitations and options to expand scope of practice. This alternative assessment provides a different level of recognition for a limited time. The Substantial Equivalency route after April 3, 2018 will be the ongoing alternative route to a full General Certificate allowing those with related education, required social work experience and an entry to practice exam to pursue licensure.

During the OMFC review process, MCSW has developed online information for internationally educated social workers, streamlined its processes with third parties, clarified policies on access to records and developed a data dictionary for reporting to the OMFC.

On completion of this review, the Fairness Commissioner identifies a need for MCSW to:

- Continue to improve orientation opportunities and local resource information
- Recognize federal security checks
- Ensure fair access to the substantial equivalency process
- Explore opportunities for gap training
- Collaborate with the OMFC to ensure timely and accurate data reporting

The Fairness Commissioner sees MCSW's Action Plan as a very positive response to the progress opportunities.

## Introduction

The purpose of this Review Report is to share the Fairness Commissioner's understanding, as of January 2018, of the state the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) fair consideration of individuals applying for registration focusing on applicants educated outside of Canada.

The analysis is based on the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner's (OMFC) review of current practices of the College. MCSW provided an overview of the context of the profession, steps to registration and documentation on how it has applied the Manitoba Fairness Standard. Online information was used from the College and relevant third parties including the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW).

The intent of the Fairness Commissioner's first assessment is to understand MCSW's registration practices and to foster ongoing development of fair assessment practices.

## Context of the Profession in Manitoba

The Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) succeeds the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers, the previous voluntary body for Social Workers in Manitoba, in existence since 1966. Manitoba was the final province in Canada to require mandatory registration and professional regulation of social workers.

The Social Work Profession Act came into force on April 1, 2015, requiring all those who use the title and/or representation of social worker to be registered with MCSW.

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

Social Workers are employed in various settings; including, but not limited to: hospitals, community health centers, mental health clinics, schools, advocacy organizations, government departments, social service agencies, child welfare settings, family service agencies, correctional facilities, social housing organizations, family courts, employee assistance programs and private counselling, school boards, and consultation agencies.<sup>2</sup>

Diversity is a fundamental social work value. The perspectives of internationally educated social workers enrich the practice of social work in Manitoba and increase the profession's capacity to respond to our province's diverse population.

As of March 2017, MCSW had 1,830 practicing member registrations, of which 1,642 had social work degrees as assessed as equivalent, 188 were grand parented and 167 were students. It is estimated that there is a fair labour market outlook for social workers in Manitoba, with moderate employment growth and retirements. There were 29 social workers arriving through immigration to Manitoba between 2011 to 2016 (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada).

<sup>1</sup> International Federation of Social Workers, Global Definition of Social Work, retrieved 31 October 2017, <http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/>.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). Practice Settings, retrieved 24 October 2017, <https://caswacts.ca/en/what-social-work/what-social-workers-do>

## Overview of Assessment and Registration Process

The Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) regulates the practice of social work in Manitoba under the authority of *The Social Work Profession Act*, (C.C.S.M. c. S169) the Social Work Profession Regulation (*R.M. 256/2014*) and the General Operating By-Law of the Manitoba College of Social Workers.

In Manitoba, only those individuals who are registered as practicing members of MCSW can refer to themselves as a “Social Worker” or “Registered Social Worker” (R.S.W.) or any variation of the designation.

### Principal Qualifications

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There are three routes for registration as a social worker with MCSW based on different primary qualifications. Domestic applicants apply directly for an assessment of their **academic equivalency** to a bachelor or master of social work degree from a university program accredited by the Canadian Association of Social Work Education or approved by MCSW. Similarly, applicants with a social work degree accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in the United States of America apply directly to MCSW as their degrees are deemed equivalent to a Canadian social work degree. They do not need to have their credentials verified and are not required to complete any further exams or employment verifications.

There are alternate routes of entry that consider social work experience and/or similar education that can be used by domestic or internationally educated applicants. The **Grandparented route** for those without social work education who are working in the field is available until April 3, 2018. This route requires 4,400 hours of employer verified and MCSW assessed social work experience that can result in a Certificate of Practice that may have limitations on areas of practice or supervision. Practitioners can broaden the scope of practice or achieve a general Certificate with completion of education until this temporary route to licensure expires.

The **Substantial Equivalency route** will be the only alternative assessment route available after April 3, 2018 for applicants with social work related education and at least 5,600 hours of experience in a social work role within three of the past five years. Social work experience is employer verified, MCSW assessed and entry-level knowledge is tested resulting in a general scope Certificate of Practice.



## Assessment and Registration Process

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### Step 1 – Application to Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) for Educational Credential Assessment

#### Academic Equivalency Route

CASW assesses international educational credentials in provinces and territories in Canada except for Quebec and British Columbia. Assessment services are available in both French and English, and typically completed within four to five weeks once required documentation is received. CASW has online information and staff members engage applicants early in the process to provide them with support and information regarding their documentation and the application process.

CASW assesses equivalency to Canadian Bachelor or Masters of Social Work degrees by reviewing the application that includes:

- completed Application Form and an application assessment fee of \$339
- a social work education Verification form sent directly by the applicant's school of social work
- official transcripts/credentials sent directly by the educational institution in a sealed envelope
- course descriptions
- practicum descriptions
- proof of membership in professional associations outside of Canada (if applicable)
- proof of name change, if relevant
- notarized certified translations and the originals if documents are not in English or French

### Step 2 – Application for Registration with the Manitoba College of Social Workers

#### Academic Equivalency Route

Following academic assessment, registration proceeds with completion of overall documentation for those deemed educationally equivalent. The application to MCSW requires:

- Application form and \$100 fee
- Copy of Government-issued photo identification
- Verification of Education Credential Equivalency sent directly to MCSW from CASW, if required
- Proof of name change, if relevant
- Criminal record/registry checks based on a nationwide search from the appropriate law enforcement agency in that country

- Applicant initiated Manitoba Child Abuse and Adult Abuse Registries
- One Professional Reference for those deemed academically equivalent
- Verification of Registration and Licensure for Social Work Regulators (for applicants previously registered in another province or country)
- Verification of Registration and Licensure for Other Regulators sent directly by CASW (for applicants previously registered in another profession)
- Verification of Legal Entitlement to Work in Canada
- Notarized translations may be required if documents are not in English

### **Alternative Assessment Routes**

Internationally educated applicants living in Manitoba, or intending to live in Manitoba, whose educational credentials are not from an accredited or approved institution or not assessed as equivalent to a Canadian Social Work degree by CASW, apply under an alternate assessment route directly to MCSW. MCSW provides information to the applicant regarding entry into the profession where social work experience and/or similar education are considered.

### **Grandparented Route**

By legislation, the Grandparented alternative route provides an opportunity for those practicing without social work credentials in Manitoba to pursue registration within three years of the Act coming into effect. Applicants are required to provide evidence from their employer(s) that they have functioned in a social work role safely, competently, and ethically for at least 4,400 hours in the previous five years.

Applicants provide names of employers, dates of employment with job descriptions and an explanation of how those services fall within the definition of the practice of social work. One or more employers need to provide verification of employment that confirms areas and hours of social work field experience. Those with less than 4,400 hours required for application for licensure have until April 3, 2018 to acquire the hours needed to apply under this route of assessment.

Applicants may receive a Certificate of Practice with limitations that specify practice areas to work as a licensed social worker. Until April 3, 2018 there is a route to expand scope of practice under this limited Certificate of Practice where by registrants can provide additional information and Employer Verification of significant functioning as a Social Worker in other areas of practice in the past 10 years. After review, the limitation on the Certificate of Practice and the scope of Social Work practice could be broadened to reflect any additional practice area(s). Grandparented registrants with limited certification are not authorized to use the title *Social Worker* or represent themselves as a Social Worker in roles or positions outside of the practice limitation identified on their Certificate and in the public registry. Members with a Certificate of Practice with limitations must not let their membership lapse and cannot go to non-practicing registration.

## Substantial Equivalency Route

The Substantial Equivalency assessment will be the only alternative route after April 3, 2018 for those with related education. Using the online application system, those with at least 5,600 hours of experience within three of the past five years in a social work role, submit their employment information and employer verification forms. MCSW reviews official education transcripts to assess the equivalency of similar education and assesses social work experience. Successful completion of the Association of Social Work Boards exam on entry to practice knowledge is needed before MCSW completes an overall final evaluation of the applicant which can result in a General Certificate of Practice. After April 3, 2018, those practicing under a limited Certificate of Practice through the Grandparented route can pursue a General Certificate by meeting the requirements of the Substantial Equivalency route. In advance of this route coming into effect, applicants are encouraged to contact the College for updates regarding this process.

## Exams

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- MCSW has reached an agreement with the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) to use their multiple choice Associate level exam for the Substantial Equivalency route of Entry.
- The ASWB provides a comprehensive study guide that helps applicants to prepare and understand the exam works and how questions are asked as well as a practice test.
- The ASWB exam is currently used by MCSW to confirm a general Certificate of Practice without conditions for those in the Grandparented route.
- The CASW Board is developing an ASWB exam policy for early 2018 that will allow for writing the exam three times with a pause and written permission required for a final fourth exam attempt.

## Appeals

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MCSW applicants have the right to appeal registration decisions. To appeal, individuals must submit a letter to the College Board of Directors stating the reasons for their appeal within 30 days of receipt of their registration decision letter. MCSW's Board of Directors without the participation of the original decision makers hears appeals. The appeal process can take several months to complete. Appeals that are unsuccessful at this level can be taken to the Court of Appeal.

## Time and Cost

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Costs for IEAs to complete the registration process vary according to the circumstances of the individual.

### Direct Costs

CASW assessment of credentials	\$339 (+ translation, if required)
MCSW application fee	\$100 (+ translation, if required)
MCSW annual registration fee	\$360 (Practicing) \$180 (non-practicing)
ASWB Bachelor/Master's Exam	\$230 US
ASWB practice test	\$85 US
ASWB Guide to social work exams	\$20 US print or \$15 US e-version
ASWB Transfer Score to MCSW	\$40 US

The time to obtain full registration also depends on individual circumstances and will vary. CASW's credentialing processing time is approximately four to five weeks upon receipt of completed applications. MCSW's time range for full registration upon receipt of all required documentation can be as short as two weeks or as long as several months, dependent upon the level of evaluation required.

## State of Progress

The Manitoba College of Social Workers is committed to the fair assessment and recognition of internationally educated social workers. MCSW has a progressive model of licensure because its assessment recognizes professional work experience, considers academic qualification acquired through a broad range of disciplines and supports people acquiring experience in the field. MCSW provides different paths to enter the profession for those with a variety of backgrounds including accredited education, similar education and work experience in areas of social work practice. The assessment of practitioners' competence as a social worker is forefront rather than reliance on educational credentials alone. A fast process is available for those from accredited programs and for those with verified significant work experience. Notably, volunteer work is also eligible for the experience assessment. There are opportunities to practice and expand competencies under a certificate of practice with one or more limitations. These are progressive practices.

MCSW provides strong procedural and relational fairness in its registration practices. MCSW staff members engage applicants early in the process to provide them with support and information regarding their documentation and the application process. Credentials assessment is coordinated through CASW using a streamlined approach that removes duplicate submissions of academic credentials or other key documents. MCSW has an online application process, which allows applicants to monitor the progress of their file. Every effort is made to assist applicants in person and answer questions at any stage of the process. Credentials assessment criteria and processes are available to applicants as are clear requirements and forms to document employment and obtain employers' employment verifications used in alternative assessments. Good online information is available including transparent registration policies, written reasons for assessment results, advice on alternative documentation and appeal opportunities.

The licensure process is progressive in that those with educational equivalency can be licensed within several months. Professional work experience outside of fieldwork within undergraduate or graduate programs can be recognized through the alternative assessments. This approach allows for a variety of types of experience gained through work or volunteering and hours achieved in the social work domain to be recognized.

On an ongoing basis, those with a Certificate of Practice with limitations in practice areas have an opportunity to obtain a general Certificate by meeting the requirements of the substantial equivalency route. Progressive features for the Grandparented route will remain in place for the Substantial Equivalency Assessment; applicants will be credited social work practice hours, have related education recognized and need to complete a knowledge exam.

## Substantive Progress Opportunities

To build on progressive registration practices, continued work is needed to clarify information for internationally educated applicants on resources in Manitoba and details of the alternative assessment. Documentation requirements are clear and streamlined with CASW and there is an opportunity to continue to ensure coordination and synchronized documentation of previous registration as well as referrals of those who are not academically equivalent.

The substantial equivalency assessment has the potential to be progressive for internationally educated applicants from countries with education that differs from the North American model and who may be effective in providing services in Manitoba's diverse communities. However, it may be difficult for applicants to find employment in social work domains if hiring is limited to licensed social workers. Efforts with employers are going to be needed to make social work roles available so that applicants can complete the required 5,600 hours to be eligible for registration.

The use of the ASWB associate level exam as an entry to practice exam provides opportunities to demonstrate knowledge for suitable candidates and comprehensive exam supports are available. Without the North American accredited education, applicants may require academic remediation. Limited availability of gap training options could extend the licensure process for some applicants with gaps in recognized related or social work education.

MCSW has worked cooperatively with the OMFC to collect registration data for internationally educated applicants as it develops a registration data base for implementation in fall 2018. OMFC understands that MCSW is working with CASW to refer those not deemed educationally equivalent to the Manitoba regulator for further advising on alternate assessment routes. Continued work improving data collection will be helpful to ensure we have a complete, fact-based understanding of timelines and outcomes. This data may also be helpful to support any future considerations to improve the process.

## Fair Practice Analysis

The Fairness Commissioner has developed a Fairness Standard aligned with the purpose of The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act. The Standard is that “Dedicated and fair practices are in place for the assessment and registration of internationally educated applicants. Policies and procedures are documented, consistently followed and periodically reviewed to ensure effectiveness”. This first review of the social work profession aims for practical improvements based on an overview of the following elements of the Manitoba Fairness Standard.

- Information
- Entry to Practice Competencies
- Qualification Requirements
- Documentation Requirements
- Assessment
- Language Proficiency
- Time
- Levels of Recognition
- Appeals
- Access to Records
- Fair Outcomes
- Treatment of Applicants
- Organizational Expertise

MCSW has documented their practices relevant to these elements to inform the Fair Practice analysis. This review also focuses on the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner priorities for timely and effective registration, the recognition of qualifications acquired through professional work experience and the need for supervised practice opportunities as key substantive issues critical to realize progress among Manitoba regulators.

The Fairness Commissioner has the following commendations, comments and concerns on MCSW registration practices based on the Manitoba Fairness Standard.

### Information

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The Manitoba College of Social Workers has a dedicated section for international applicants and a pathway identified in Steps to Registration and a Document Checklist. Internationally educated applicants are encouraged to review relevant areas highlighted to assist them including:

- Financial Supports
- Steps to Registration
- Language Proficiency

- Social Work in Manitoba and Canada
- Immigration to Manitoba
- Alternative Jobs if not Approved
- MCSW's Appeal Process

In the overall website, applicants have clear instructions on registration policies, information on the context for social work in Canada and making appeals. A policy on access to records has been completed and posted online. CASW, as the third party responsible for academic equivalency verification, clarifies that their assessment does not guarantee applicants successful registration with a social work regulatory body or a social work job in Canada and provides excellent questions and answers for clarification. In addition, both CASW and MCSW provide information for those considering immigration with appropriate links to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program respectively. Information is linked with [Immigratemanitoba.com](http://Immigratemanitoba.com) including a fact sheet on social work.

Areas to improve information for internationally educated applicants include:

- Integrate information on alternate assessment into the current materials for internationally educated applicants.
- Continue working on navigation to link the IEA section with overall registration information as well as update Manitoba based resources such as language learning to improve information for potential applicants.

### Entry to Practice Competencies

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- There are no competency profiles available, however, there are extensive descriptions of practice standards set out in the MCSW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice developed in collaboration with other jurisdictions. These form the basis for e-learning modules that are to be completed post licensure.
- Academic standards are based on the scope of social work practice achieved through accredited social work education, which includes practicum requirements and a formal evaluation of competence before achieving a social work degree. The Canadian Association of Social Work Boards and the Council of Social Work Educators set accreditation standards and CASW accredits programs. A practice analysis occurs every 5 years with US programs to confirm equivalency. The MCSW recognizes US applicants based on this equivalency standard. Practice analysis is not done with other countries.



- The Canadian Association of Social Work Education published guides that outline the main domains and learning outcomes of social work practice. Based on this material a matrix is being developed for assessing education through the Substantial Equivalency route.

## Qualification Requirements

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- Academic credential assessments are conducted by CASW under memoranda of understanding with MCSW for applicants with education outside Canada and US. This allows for a formal understanding of the role of a third party, as well as criteria and standards to conduct academic credentials assessment. Those with education from non-accredited schools are assessed by MCSW. It is not always clear in the applicant information who assesses those from non-accredited education programs.
- The first level professional degree (BSW) is generally the completion of a four-year, minimum 700 hour, and full time university degree with credits in: social work intervention methods, social policy, field of practice and social problems, research methods and field work.
- Those from accredited education programs including the USA are mostly processed in the same way as domestic applicants and do not require credentials assessment by CASW. This expedites the process for those coming from comparable education backgrounds.
- The Grandparented route enables applicants with 4,400 hours of social work experience to demonstrate competence gained through work experience and proceed to registration with a limited or full general scope of practice. This is progressive practice to allow those working in the field to obtain licensure.
- The Substantial Equivalency Route will, on an ongoing basis continue as an alternative assessment route. It will enable application from those from non-accredited education backgrounds with at least 5,600 hours of experience within three of the past five years in a social work role. Applicants are assessed for related education, can demonstrate competence gained in work experience and proceed to confirm knowledge in an entry to practice exam of the Association of Social Work Boards.

## Documentation Requirements

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- CASW clearly indicates the documentation and transmittal procedures for internationally educated applicants. Original documents must be sent in a sealed envelope directly from the applicant's educational institution including courses, grades and credit hours.

- CASW credentials documentation is provided directly to the MCSW with applicant's consent. This eliminates duplications and streamlines the process for applicants. CASW is also reviewing whether it can use World Education Services (WES) expertise in verifying the authenticity of documents to further streamline its process. Currently MCSW also requests verification of licensure from other jurisdictions, but is working with CASW to eliminate the duplicated request.
- MCSW currently requires that applicants who reside outside Canada within the last 12 months obtain a criminal record check from the appropriate law enforcement agency in that country. These are valid six months from the time of issue. The OMFC recommends consideration of security checks conducted through immigration that would have greater reliability than those acquired by an individual.
- The variety of options and clear formats available to confirm work experience is progressive practice. Applicants to the Grandparented route must provide MCSW with Employer Verifications for paid or unpaid work. Employer verification forms assist in documentation of the kinds of positions and hours functioning in the role of a social worker. This will continue in the Substantial Equivalency process. Those with a social work degree are only required to provide a Professional Reference.
- Applicants are notified to contact the college for questions about alternative documentation allowing for options for those in situations where official documentation is not available.

## Assessment

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- MCSW has a memorandum of understanding with CASW to evaluate education credentials. In order to continue improvements MCSW is committed to undertake a quality assurance review of the process including staff qualifications and issues of concern related to obligations under The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.
- CASW does not consider distance education degrees or work experience that is not part of the educational process that integrates classroom theory with onsite service provision. The assessment is not structured to make any academic recommendations but refers applicants who do not meet education requirements to other accredited schools. Despite this limitation in advising applicants on remediation, CASW has clear instructions on its educational evaluation. In addition, MCSW is working with CASW to ensure that applicants not granted educational equivalency are referred to MCSW for advice on alternate routes to licensure.
- MCSW demonstrates progressive practice in assessment of combined social work experience and similar education. The routes and

requirements are clear for those without a social work degree or those not deemed to be equivalent by CASW under the alternate routes. Effective communication is needed for applicants regarding the transition to the ongoing alternative pathway in the spring, especially given the increase from 4400 to 5600 required work experience hours.

- Assessment of work experience in the alternate assessment routes is progressive practice. Applicants' document hours in paid or unpaid social work that is verified by employer (s) to confirm that the type and hours of work completed is in the social work domain. Applicants have the opportunity to obtain required hours and address practice gaps through work. International applicants may require advice and guidance on employment needed to meet the practice hour requirements.
- Little guidance is available on options for academic remediation for those not assessed as equivalent or from similar education with gaps in key areas of knowledge that are required for social work practice in Manitoba. MCSW indicates there are discussions with provincial and territorial partners including the Canadian Social Work Program on the potential to develop gap-training programs.
- Discussions with the University of Manitoba are needed to explore accessible options to address gaps for practitioners in Manitoba. A common gap for international applicant is lack of understanding the context of social work in Manitoba/Canada. Other trends in gaps to inform program development will need time to assess. OMFC has developed a guide for development of gap programming that can assist discussions. A key feature is that regulators recognize completion of gap programming.
- The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) entry to practice examination has been reviewed and is currently doing its sixth analysis to update the blueprints for the social work licensure exams used in the USA and some Canadian provinces including Manitoba. A diverse spectrum of practitioners were surveyed for input and the exams are tested for gender and racial bias for a renewed 2018 exam. It will be important to monitor if any bias exists for Canadians taking the US exam. ASWB also has a disability and English as a Second Language accommodation policy for those taking the exam. Pass rates of those taking the exam from all jurisdictions are published online. After failed attempts, test takers need to know where and how they need to improve before taking the test again. This guidance should be provided before the fourth attempt.
- In its short history, MCSW has reviewed and updated its registration policies and continues to publish policies, as they are developed in order to maintain clarity and transparency of assessment practices.

## Language Proficiency

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- MCSW does not have a language proficiency requirement for registration but emphasizes that Benchmark levels nine to 12 are needed for effective practice. MCSW highlights the value of having French and variety of languages given the diversity of Manitobans. MCSW website advises applicants on the need for communication skills expected by employers and guidance on learning resources. Further information is needed on local language training resources.

## Time

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- MCSW's licensure process is structured efficiently. The application system allows applicants to log in and track the progress of their application online or call for advice or updates with regard to the completeness of their application.
- MCSW reports that international applicants who have completed the CASW assessment and deemed educationally equivalent are typically registered within two months of submission of all documents.
- While the standard timeframe is six months before the file is closed, the current practice for international applicants is that applications remain open until there is an outcome. MCSW is considering the standard timeframe for those applying with different circumstances.
- For applicants who may need to return to university to complete academic and/or clinical requirements that are part of post-secondary programs, there will be a much longer route. Tracking of applicant processes and outcomes will provide information on the experiences of internationally educated applicants.

## Levels of Recognition

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- Where MCSW has questions related to applicants' known capacity to practice in a safe, competent or ethical manner, the registrar may grant registration with conditions on areas of practice, supervision and/or further training. This is progressive registration practice.
- The Certificate of Practice for Practicing Social workers with limitations can be applied for those who meet the minimum requirements. It is an option for the Grandparented route only until April 3, 2018.
- On an ongoing basis those with limitations on their Certificate can obtain a General Certificate by completing the Substantial Equivalency process.

## Appeals

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- MCSW provides a wide range of pre-decision, pre-appeal information before and during their application process. At the point of decision, the advising role changes and information is available for applicants on their appeal rights and a clear outline of the appeal hearing process. In any appeal process, the applicant will be provided with a complete copy of their file.
- Registration decisions made by the Registrar can be appealed to a panel of the Board of Directors. Appeals can be made if registration is denied or if one or more conditions have been applied within specified timelines.
- MCSW has received training from their legal counsel on conducting appeals and providing written reasons and will continue to apply plain language to information.

## Access to Records

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- MCSW provides extensive feedback to answer applicants' questions that includes their access rights.
- A policy on Access to Records has been developed and approved by the MCSW Board.

## Fair Outcomes

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- It is expected that the MCSW licensure model should allow for strong licensure outcomes for internationally educated applicants.
- MSCW indicates that no applicants assessed by CASW with equivalent education or degrees in social work were denied registration since April 1, 2015 when the Act came into effect. MCSW and CASW will need to track denied registrations to verify information and to formalize a referral process.
- MCSW does not track internationally educated applicants and is working with the OMFC to define indicators and a timeline to begin annual reporting including information provided by the CASW.

## Treatment of Applicants

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- MCSW has made extensive efforts in contacting applicants to discuss missing or non-acceptable information and providing alternative suggestions. Formalization of this protocol is in development for Board consideration.

- MCSW and CASW provide written reasons for unfavorable assessment results along with information on applicants' rights to appeal. Applicants are also invited to contact the Manager of Registration and Professional Practice to ask any questions.
- Ryerson University's Internationally Educated Social Work Professionals (IESW) Bridging Program is an option for internationally educated applicants. This program provides education regarding the Canadian context of social work practice, as well as employment experience and connections. However, recognition from MCSW can only be granted based on labour mobility provisions after licensure is granted in Ontario.
- The extensive description of practice standards set out in the MCSW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice was developed in collaboration with other jurisdictions. These form the basis for e-learning modules that are to be completed post licensure. Other than online information, there are no tools to assist applicants prepare for assessment and orientation to work in Canada or the entry to practice exam. Providing earlier access to the online models ethics and standards of practice would assist applicants through the assessment process and orientation to social work practice in Manitoba.
- Particular attention is needed to communicate and clarify the transition from the temporary grandparented assessment to a substantial equivalency assessment.

## Organizational Expertise

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- MCSW have attended training on their regulatory responsibilities and continue to network with other provincial and territorial colleagues and profession memberships.
- In advance of the first registration review, MCSW consulted with the OMFC in development and preparation for implementation of the Act as well as in the development of its registration data base.

## Progress Opportunities

The Fairness Commissioner sees the following opportunities for progress regarding the Manitoba College of Social Worker's assessment and registration practice:

1. Continue to develop information for internationally educated social workers including orientation opportunities and local resources.
2. Adopt security clearance check conducted by the federal government for landed immigrants as a reliable source and to eliminate unnecessary documentation requirements.
3. Ensure internationally educated social workers have fair access to substantial equivalency processes in order to maintain licensure opportunities.
4. Work in collaboration with key stakeholders to explore opportunities for gap training for Manitoba applicants.
5. Continue to work with the OMFC to improve data collection to help provide a strong, fact-based understanding of timelines and outcomes for internationally educated applicants in Manitoba. This includes the need to explore data collection from CASW to ensure we have a good understanding of applicants from Manitoba who engage the national process.

## Fairness Commissioner's Recommendation

To ensure compliance to *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act*, the Fairness Commissioner recommends that the Manitoba College of Social Workers take action regarding these progress opportunities.

## Manitoba College of Social Workers – Action Plan

In response to the Fairness Commissioner’s recommendation, MCSW proposed the following Action Plan as of January 12, 2018.

MCSW’s Action Plan will form the basis of its relationship with the OMFC moving forward. Follow-up meetings will be held annually after the 2018 Registration Review to discuss implementation of activities and updates to the Action Plan. Action Plan updates will be posted on the OMFC’s website on an annual basis, following these meetings allowing any interested party to see the progress to date.

Progress Opportunity	Action(s)	Completion Date
1. Continue to develop information for internationally educated social workers including orientation opportunities and local resources.	With the support of OMFC, develop information regarding local resources for Internationally Educated Applicants, including English language training. Make this information easily available to applicants and members on MCSW’s website.	July 31, 2018
2. Adopt security clearance checks obtained by the federal government for landed immigrants as a reliable source in order to eliminate unnecessary documentation requirements.	Review and assess the components of the federal government’s security clearance checks to determine their compatibility with <i>The Social Work Profession Act</i> , the Social Work Profession Regulation and MCSW’s General By-Laws and policies. Adopt the federal government’s security clearance checks fully and/or partially if congruent with MCSW requirements.	August 30, 2019
3. Ensure internationally educated social workers have fair access to substantial equivalency processes in order to maintain licensure opportunities.	<p>a) Contact the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) to arrange that those applicants whose educational credentials are not assessed as equivalent to a Canadian Social Work degree are referred by CASW to MCSW.</p> <p>b) Complete analysis of the first year of MCSW’s Substantial Equivalency Route of Entry program (April 2018 – March 2019). Based upon the findings of that analysis, determine the need for gap training. Develop a plan to address any identified fairness or access deficiencies, as they pertain to IEA.</p>	<p>a) January 1, 2018 (complete)</p> <p>b) July 31, 2019</p>



Progress Opportunity	Action(s)	Completion Date
4. Work in collaboration with key stakeholders to explore whether there is a need for gap training for Manitoba applicants.	Complete analysis of the first year of MCSW's Substantial Equivalency Route of Entry program (April 2018 – March 2019). Based upon the findings of that analysis, determine the need for gap training. If there is a need for gap training, continue discussions with stakeholders regarding the development of gap training, as appropriate.	July 31, 2019
5. Continue working with the OMFC to develop and implement data collection to provide a fact based understanding of internationally educated applicants' outcomes and timelines including information from CASW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Develop and implement a temporary database to track Internationally Educated Applicants.</li> <li>b) Develop and implement a long-term database to track Internationally Educated Applicants as part of MCSW's ongoing database project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) January 1, 2018 (complete)</li> <li>b) January 1, 2019</li> </ul>

**MCSW Comments**

The Manitoba College of Social Workers appreciates the opportunity to review its processes and practices and reflect upon their impacts on Internationally Educated Applicants. Our Code of Ethics guides us to pursue social justice and “to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity...” We look forward to continuing to identify opportunities to improve the service we provide to Internationally Educated Applicants through our collaboration with the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commission.

**Action Plan Follow-Up**

A planned follow-up meeting with MCSW and the OMFC will be scheduled in January 2019 to discuss the status of the action plan implementation.

## Statement of Compliance

MCSW's Action Plan is a positive response to the progress opportunities identified in this report.

I have appreciated MCSW's proactive engagement in this first registration review and the openness to fine tune a progressive approach to register internationally educated social workers.

These actions support fair practice and align with the intent of *The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* to improve licensure processes for internationally educated applicants in Manitoba.

I look forward to our future work together and MCSW's continued cooperation with our office.



Ximena Munoz  
Manitoba Fairness Commissioner

## Appendix I: 2017 Registration Review Process

The OMFC's 2017 review process has several key steps: meeting to discuss the focus and process of the review, agreeing to a review schedule, documenting, evaluating and preparing a progress report, and achieving an action plan to move things forward. The process is designed to support regulators to further evolve registration practice and realize progressive change.

Activity	Description	Date
<b>Standards Workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting between OMFC and MCSW to provide orientation to the MB Fairness Standard, the focus of the review and process</li> <li>Resources and Review schedule provided</li> </ul>	September 14, 2017
<b>Progress Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCSW review report on its fair practice progress</li> <li>Includes analysis of MCSW registration process in relation to the MB Fairness Standard including timely registration, recognition of professional work experience and supervised practice opportunities</li> <li>Progress opportunities identified</li> <li>Recommendation from Fairness Commissioner to address progress opportunities</li> </ul>	November 29, 2017
<b>Progress Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCSW and Fairness Commissioner discuss report and possible actions MCSW is considering to address progress opportunities</li> </ul>	December 5, 2017
<b>MCSW Action Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCSW's Action Plan submitted to OMFC</li> </ul>	January 12, 2018
<b>2017 Registration Review Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report submitted to MCSW</li> <li>Report contains the review findings, MCSW's Action Plan, and the Fairness Commissioner's Compliance Statement</li> </ul>	January 23, 2018
<b>Registration Review Closeout Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCSW and Fairness Commissioner discuss Registration Review Report, potential OMFC support for actions and how MCSW's action plan will inform the relationship moving forward</li> <li>Registration Review Report submitted to Minister of Education and Training, the Minister of Family Services and uploaded on OMFC website</li> </ul>	February 2, 2018

### Review participants:

Barb Timmerman, MSW, RSW, Executive Director/Registrar

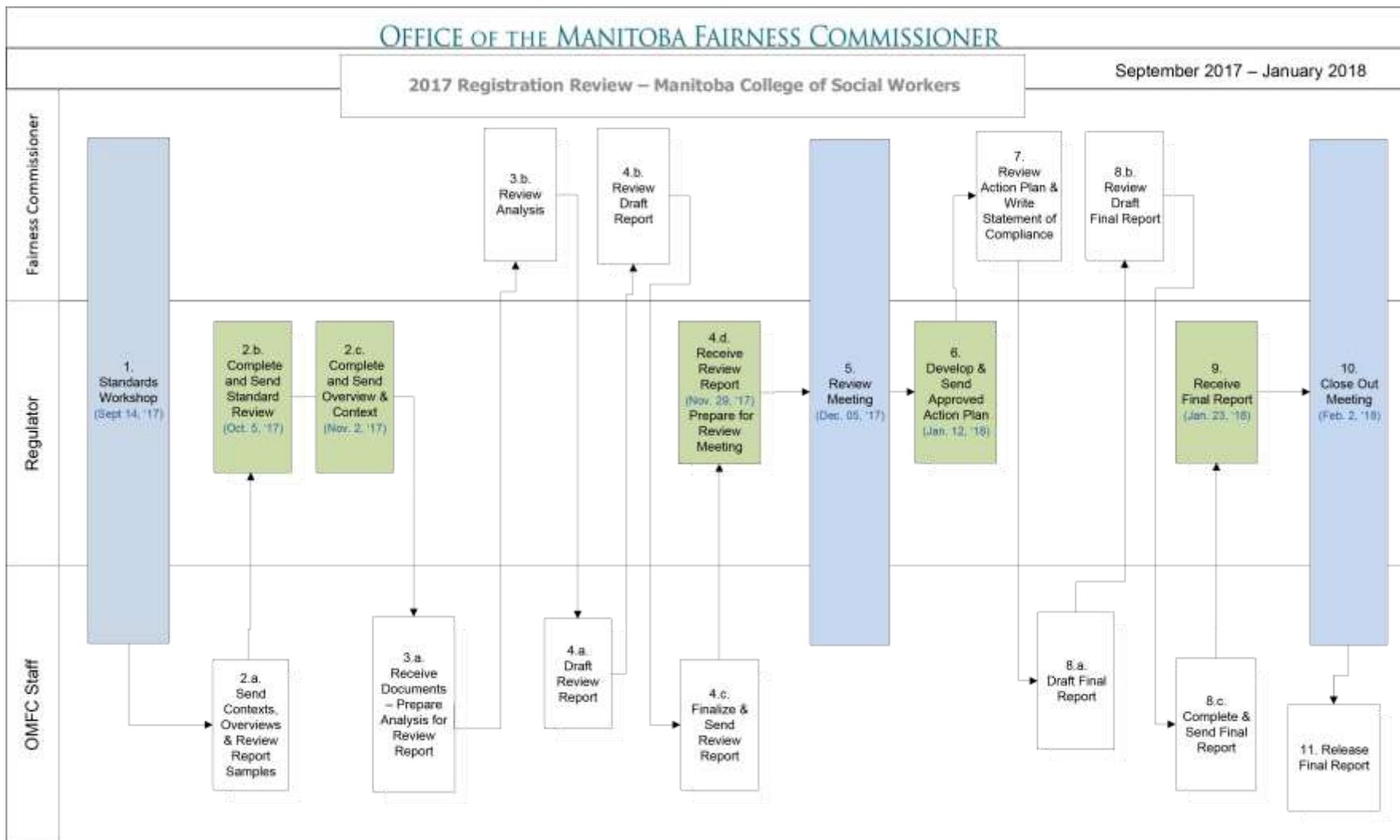
Liisa Cheshire, MSW, RSW Manager, Registration and Professional Practice



# OFFICE OF THE MANITOBA FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER

## 2017 Registration Review – Manitoba College of Social Workers

September 2017 – January 2018









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