

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Evaluation of Graduate Programs
School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality
Cycle: 2019–2020
Date: May 18, 2022

I. Programs

- Graduate Diploma in Couple Counselling and Spirituality
- MA in Counselling and Spirituality
- PhD in Counselling and Spirituality

II. Evaluation Process (Outline of Visit)

- This Final Assessment Report on the aforementioned programs is based on the following documents: (a) the self-study brief produced by the academic unit, (b) the report from the two external reviewers following their virtual visit and (c) comments from the unit and the Faculty.
- The visit, conducted on October 21 and 22, 2021, was led by Julie Gosselin, Department of Psychoeducation and Psychology, Université du Québec en Outaouais, and Éline Champagne, Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences, Université Laval.
- The visit took place virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The reviewers were provided with a comprehensive self-study brief that had initially been presented and discussed at a meeting of the school professors' Forum on June 26, 2019. Louis Perron, professor of ethics and philosophy at Saint Paul University's School of Ethics, Social Justice and Public Service, took part in the virtual visit as internal delegate.
- The external reviewers met with Ioan Nistor, assistant vice-provost, graduate and postdoctoral studies, University of Ottawa; and with the following persons from Saint Paul University: Chantal Beauvais, rector; Jean-Marc Barrette, vice-rector, academic and research; George Smith, dean; Hélène Tessier, vice-dean and director of the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality; and support staff, regular professors and current and former students.

III. Summary of Reports on the Quality of Programs¹

1. EMPHASIZING STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES

Strengths

- Programs recognized provincially (CRPO)² and nationally (CAMFT)³
- The inclusion of spirituality in these programs sets them apart from similar programs in Ontario and across Canada.
- There is a strong sense of identification with the program among students, graduates, professors and other stakeholders, including clinical supervisors.

¹ Based on all of the documents produced during the assessment process.

² College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario

³ Canadian Association of Marriage and Family Therapy

- The programs are aligned with Saint Paul University's vision.

Challenges

- Need to step up measures supporting Francophone student recruitment.
- While the inclusion of spirituality in the programs is a strength, its practical implementation needs to be articulated more clearly.
- Issues of communication between professors, program managers and students.

2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- The programs reviewed are aligned with Saint Paul University's vision. However, the academic unit would do well to clarify the mission of its programs. Such a tool would help promote a shared vision.
- The learning objectives and outcomes of the three programs are clearly stated and meet anticipated graduation requirements.
- The inclusion of spirituality in the programs should be articulated more clearly. For example, there is asymmetry between the admission requirements for the master's program in English (12 units of theology at the university level) and the program offered in French (12 credits of theology or religious studies at the undergraduate level or the equivalent).
- The external review cites a discrepancy between students' expectations and learning outcomes for the master's program. Program managers should therefore "clarify much more explicitly the professional skills, i.e., the basic clinical skills for entry into the profession, that are developed and consolidated in the master's program."

3. CURRICULUM AND STRUCTURE

- The structure of the programs is conducive to developing the desired professional skills.
- The external review notes that there are variations in syllabus format and content. To remedy the situation, the reviewers recommend that a standard template be used for all courses. Academic Regulation I-8.5 – Course Syllabus for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies will be helpful in developing the template.
- The external review also mentions redundancies in course content in the master's program, as reported by several students. The academic unit will therefore have to investigate those reports and take corrective action if necessary.

4. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Program administrators have started an initiative to decolonize the University's programs. This process is being supported by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation organization, which represents a number of First Nations communities.
- For their part, students would like "more theoretical and practical content in order to be better prepared for encounters with First Nation members in therapy and individuals from diverse backgrounds."
- The reviewers note that "forms for evaluating performance in clinical training (internships) do not meet standards currently in force elsewhere in Canada." That observation also forms the basis for a recommendation. In response, the program administrators said that the master's program is accredited by the CRPO, which assesses the internship evaluation forms, among other things. Renewal of accreditation is planned for September 2023.

5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

- Surveys of current and former students and interviews conducted during the visit show a high level of satisfaction with the education received from the programs, which were described as meeting student expectations.
- Lastly, “on several occasions and in different ways, the need for clearer communication between professors, program officials and students was underscored.”

6. SPACE AND RESOURCES

- Documents prepared for this assessment and discussions with the program director make it clear that significant improvements have resulted in better use of space at the Counselling Centre and the purchase of equipment for teaching and distance therapy.
- The external review notes challenges in the use of computer equipment. For example, computers for student use in the library are said to have outdated operating systems, and some analytical tools are reportedly unavailable. In response, the academic unit explained that the workstations in question are updated automatically. In addition, Saint Paul University has a financial agreement with the University of Ottawa for software licences. It could therefore be a matter of occasional computer issues.
- There also seems to be an imbalance in the number of professors by rank. For example, there are many early-career professors, but few mid-career professors, and just a handful of full professors. That could explain the difficulty in recruiting a director for the school.

IV. Program Improvement⁴

The programs evaluated here meet the standards of the discipline. The following recommendations aim to maintain or increase the established level of quality of the programs.

The numbering of the recommendations follows the numbering used in the external reviewers’ report.

Recommendation 1: Appoint an individual to oversee the master’s program and the graduate diploma program, with a release from teaching in view of the administrative workload, in accordance with the collective agreement in force.

Recommendation 2: Clarify the mission of each program.

Recommendation 3: Clarify the definition and role of spirituality in the programs, and the way in which spirituality is reflected in every aspect of the programs. Develop an explicit policy on the definition and role of spirituality in the programs.

Recommendation 4: Design a standard syllabus template for all three programs so that it can be used as a program planning, preparation and review tool in future.

Recommendation 5: Consolidate, standardize and review the documentation from the three programs (online and hard copy), and clarify in writing the policies and procedures pertaining to program operations.

Recommendation 6: Develop an effective strategy for recruiting and retaining Francophone students from Quebec and elsewhere in the three programs.

⁴ Based on the external reviewers’ report.

Recommendation 7: Update the clinical education evaluation forms to ensure they better reflect the standards in force.

Recommendation 8: Provide access to software and technology services needed to perform program-related assignments, i.e., ensure computers in student spaces have up-to-date versions of Windows, and procure low-cost licences for software needed for research functions.

Recommendation 9: Recruit an additional accredited professor for the position of director of the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality in order to improve the stability and consistency of the school's management as a whole.

V. List of Courses Not Offered for More Than Three Years and Reasons

All of the courses have been offered at least once in the past three years.

VI. Conclusion

The School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality offers high-quality graduate programs that meet the standards of the discipline. "The programs assessed are relevant for the practice of the professions for which the students are trained. In addition, current and former students are satisfied with the quality of the professional education received." The greatest strengths of the programs include their recognition provincially (CRPO⁵) and nationally (CAMFT⁶) and their spiritual aspect, which sets them apart from similar programs in Ontario and across Canada.

The evaluation process confirmed the strength and stability of the graduate programs offered. It also identified recommendations for their continuous improvement. The committee would like to thank the external reviewers for conducting such a thorough evaluation, the program administrators for producing a self-study brief that meets the requirements of the Office of Quality Assurance and all of the stakeholders for taking part in this periodic academic evaluation process.

Schedule and Timelines

A progress report outlining actions taken and results obtained will be submitted to the GPEC in June 2024.

The next self-assessment cycle will take place in 2026–2027, with the self-study brief to be submitted no later than June 2026.

⁵ College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario

⁶ Canadian Association of Marriage and Family Therapy

Unit Response to the External Assessment Report and Action Plan

Faculty: Faculty of Human Sciences

Department: School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality

Programs evaluated: Graduate Diploma in Couple Counselling and Spirituality, MA in Counselling and Spirituality and PhD in Counselling and Spirituality

Cyclical review period: 2019–2020

Date: January 14, 2021

Note: The final version of this document will be submitted to the Senate and the Quality Assurance Council, and will be published on the University website.

General comments

On December 1, 2021, the director of the Faculty of Human Sciences and Philosophy and the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality received the external assessment report that was produced as part of the periodic evaluation of its graduate programs. We note that, according to the reviewers, the programs that were assessed are aligned with the University of Ottawa's strategic vision and Saint Paul University's action plan. The reviewers drew attention to the high level of satisfaction among current students and professionals who are graduates of the programs under review. The professors, lecturers and staff who work in the programs are described as dedicated and as identifying strongly with them. The programs also have an excellent reputation, and the master's program is recognized for professional certification purposes in psychotherapy in Ontario. We are pleased to see that in the opinion of the external reviewers, the master's and PhD programs are of high quality in general and student satisfaction is high. We take all of the recommendations seriously and are certain that in considering them, our graduate program will become even stronger. The recommendations and our responses are presented below.

Recommendation 1: Appoint an individual to oversee the master’s program and the graduate diploma program, with a release from teaching in view of the administrative workload, in accordance with the collective agreement in force.

Unit response: We concur with this recommendation, in that it ties in with the review of all course releases granted at the school for undergraduate or graduate workloads, which is a Faculty priority.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
1	Review the roles of each study level manager and the school director.	Forum and school director	March to April 2022	
2	Prepare a description of these roles that reflects the actual workload for each one.	Forum and school director	March to April 2022	
2	Review the course releases granted for each of those roles based on the amount of work required, and appoint persons in charge in accordance with the new structure.	Dean and school director	September 2022	

*Priority level: 1. URGENT — IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT — ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).

Recommendation 2: Clarify the mission of each program (see curriculum section).

Unit response: The mission of the programs is aligned with the University’s mission as a whole. That said, the school’s programs have been created and modified over the years to reflect learning outcomes and objectives, and to ensure their consistency. However, the report states that the program objectives are clear. Consequently, unless we have misunderstood what the reviewers meant, it is difficult for us to determine which actions to take.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
N/A				

*Priority level: 1. URGENT — IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT — ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: ACTIONS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND DISCUSSED AND BE IMPLEMENTED BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN FOUR YEARS).

Recommendation 3: Clarify the definition and role of spirituality in the programs, and the way in which spirituality is reflected in every aspect of the programs. Develop an explicit policy on the definition and role of spirituality in the programs.

Unit response: Indeed, there is a need to review and clarify the role and definition of spirituality in the school’s programs. How should spirituality be defined in the programs and syllabi? The answer to that question could result in changes in our programs at every level.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Raise the issue for discussion at the Forum.	Forum	April to September 2022	
3	Discuss issue.	Forum	Fall-winter 2022–2023	
3	Present recommendations to the Faculty and, if applicable, begin identifying necessary changes.	Faculty Council and Senate	Fall 2023	Potentially

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Recommendation 4: Design a standard syllabus template for all three programs so that it can be used as a program planning, preparation and review tool in the future.

Unit response: Saint Paul University is about to introduce Simple Syllabus, a template program proposed by the University of Ottawa that would be applied to all of our syllabi. We should shortly have the final version of the template, which would become the standard template for the school's syllabi. This syllabus is currently being piloted at two schools in the Faculty.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Adopt the University of Ottawa-proposed Simple Syllabus standard template at the same time as the rest of the University.	Faculty and University	September 2022 or January 2023	No

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Recommendation 5: Consolidate, standardize and review the documentation from the three programs (online and hard copy), and clarify in writing the policies and procedures pertaining to the operation of the programs.

Unit response: The school is working on updating the website and other documents, including course descriptions, particularly in the context of the review of program certification by professional accreditation organizations in Ontario. This update will also reflect planned and current changes regarding the creation of two separate master’s programs: (1) Master’s in Individual Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality, and (2) Master’s in Couple and Family Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Identify adjustments required for renewal of CRPO certification; work underway.	School director, director of clinical education, Clinical Education Committee, Counselling Centre manager, Forum	September 2023	To be determined
2	Submit requests for the creation of two separate master’s programs to the school Forum, the Faculty Council and the Senate of Saint Paul University.	Forum, Faculty Council, Senate	May 2022 to October 2023	Possible further adjustments and name changes
1	Complete the necessary updates as changes must be noted in the various relevant documents.	Study level managers, director of clinical education, Counselling Centre manager	Work underway	

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Recommendation 6: Develop an effective strategy for recruiting and retaining Francophone students from Quebec and elsewhere in the three programs.

Unit response: The school and the University are working together to enhance Francophone student recruitment and retention. In addition, a grant application was submitted to the Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS). If successful, it would double the number of Francophone students at the school beginning in September 2024. We are waiting to hear about the grant, which if approved, would allow us to hire three regular full-time professors and 1.5 support staff. The University and the school are also working to establish partnership agreements with other Francophone universities in Canada.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Establish partnership agreements with other Francophone universities in Canada.	Vice-rector, academic and research	2022–2023 academic year	To be determined
3	Finalize items needed for agreement with the Université de Hearst.	Vice-rector, School of Counselling, Forum	Fall 2022 to winter 2023	A few changes will be required.
3	Step up program-related advertising aimed at Francophones.	Saint Paul University, Communications Unit	Spring to fall 2022	

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Recommendation 7: Update the clinical education evaluation forms to ensure they better reflect the standards in force.

Unit response: The master’s program is accredited by the CRPO, which has been provided with copies of the procedure manuals and internship evaluation forms. Renewal of accreditation of the program by the CRPO is planned for September 2023. In preparation for the renewal, all of the manuals and clinical education evaluation forms will be re-evaluated by the CRPO.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Check with the CRPO to ensure that the manuals and clinical education evaluation forms are compliant, in fulfilment of the requirements of the accreditation renewal process.	Director of clinical education, Counselling Centre manager, Clinical Education Committee	Winter 2022, fall 2022, winter 2023	To be determined based on CRPO requirements

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Recommendation 8: Provide access to software and technology services needed to perform program-related assignments, i.e., ensure computers in student spaces have up-to-date versions of Windows, and procure low-cost licences for software needed for research functions.

Unit response: This recommendation is difficult to understand. The school is striving to improve the supply of software available to students. Software at the Saint Paul University Counselling Centre and Library is up to date, and is updated automatically. In addition, Saint Paul University remits software licensing fees to the University of Ottawa, which the latter then pays. We are unsure what the reviewers meant.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
2	Consult students to understand the nature of the computer problems. We will ask the University of Ottawa to remedy the situation, if necessary.	School of Counselling and Psychotherapy	December 2022	

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Recommendation 9: Recruit an additional accredited professor for the position of director of the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality in order to improve the stability and consistency of the school's management as a whole.

Unit response: The director of the School of Counselling is currently drafting a request for an additional professor position. The request will be submitted to the University Faculty and Executive Committee in 2022. If the CNFS approves our grant application, we will be able to fill three new positions.

Priority	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Program changes?
1	Submit a request for another position.	Director, School of Counselling	February to March 2022	No

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