

January 19, 2008

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What the Educational Curriculum for the Social Welfare Course at
the Graduate School Should Be Like (Report)

Since the end of last year, the Curriculum Review Committee has carried out discussions on what the educational curriculum for the Social Welfare Course at the Doshisha University Graduate School should look like, and has reached its conclusions, which are compiled in the attached report.

What the Educational Curriculum for the Social Welfare Course at the Graduate School Should Be Like

I. Background of Reforms

Since the 1980s, discussions have been underway at the national level regarding what education at graduate schools in Japan should be like, resulting in initiatives to promote qualitative and quantitative improvements in graduate schools. In September 2005, as a result of these discussions, the Central Council for Education released a report titled “Graduate School Education in the New Age: Towards the Development of Internationally Attractive Graduate School Education.”

This report emphasized the following as points that graduate schools must aim to achieve:

1. Make graduate school education practical – strengthen organized development of educational curriculum
2. Improve viability and credibility internationally – ensure the quality of graduate school education

The report organizes into the four categories the functions that graduate schools should take responsibility for with regard to nurturing human resources development.

To be more specific, the four categories are: (1) nurture researchers and other human resources who are rich in creativity and have superior capabilities to do research and development work; (2) nurture highly-specialized professionals who have sophisticated specialized knowledge and capabilities; (3) nurture university teachers who have solid teaching skills and research capabilities; and (4) nurture intellectual and highly knowledgeable human resources capable of providing broad support of a knowledge-based society.

With regard to how this background relates to the Social Welfare Course, there will likely be calls for bolstering the system for nurturing highly-specialized professional in the Master’s Program, and the establishment of a system for nurturing teachers and researchers in the Doctoral Program.

The Science Council of Japan, too, has submitted a number of reports and made various recommendations through the Liaison Committee for Studies of Social Welfare and Social Security (hereinafter referred to as “Kenren”), including the report “Concerning Systems, etc., for Research and Education of Social Welfare,” which was submitted to the Prime Minister in 1974. Of particular note is Kenren’s report “Concerning the Promotion of Research and Education Related to Social Services,” which was submitted in 2000. This report pointed out the necessity of integrating the research and studies being carried out on social services at three levels: “macro-level studies,” which are centered around national policies; “meso-level studies,” which are centered around the activities of local communities, local authorities, facilities, companies, and private-sector organizations (NPO), etc.; and “micro-level studies,” which are centered around the activities of individuals, families, and other small groups (self-help groups, group homes, etc.).

With regard to how this background relates to the Social Welfare Course, there will likely be a need for the curriculum to become structured and making certain elements of the curriculum compulsory.

With regard to the issue of what a graduate school of social welfare should be like, the Japanese Association of Schools of Social Work established the Graduate School Education Review Committee, which has proposed, with regard to master's degree programs, a set of Curriculum Guidelines. Although the Committee has not proposed anything as extensive as a set of guidelines for doctorate degree programs, it has summarized curriculum-related issues and proposed matters for discussion (2006 school year).

The Committee's Guidelines for Master's Degree Programs proposes a model curriculum in which all the subjects are categorized into five groups: Group A – general basic subjects; Group B – subjects classified by level; Group C – comprehensive overview subjects; Group D – master's theses; and Group E – practical training and practical business subjects. Four subjects in the general basic subject group, i.e. Fundamental Principles of Social Welfare, Discourse of Social Work, Studies of the History of Social Welfare Theories and Doctrines, and Research Methods for Social Work, in addition to the master's theses and practical training subjects have been designated as compulsory.

With regard to how this relates to the Social Welfare Course, the Guidelines will likely serve as an effective reference when reviewing how to structure the curriculum, such as how to divide up the curriculum into groups and what parts should be made compulsory.

As for efforts at Doshisha University, the president published "A Draft of Reforms for Graduate School Education and Research (The Need for Strategies for Graduate Schools)" in Extra Edition No. 676 of *Doshisha University Bulletin* in October 2007, and discussions are being carried out in various offices throughout the university. This draft raised a wide variety of issues, of which the proposal for reorganization to establish a Master's Program that focuses mainly on nurturing highly-specialized professionals, a Five-year Doctoral Program that focuses on nurturing researchers, a proposal regarding increasing the enrollment quota, and introducing general subjects and general education programs, appear to be relevant to the Social Welfare Course.

II. Points for Discussion Regarding the Curriculum of the Social Welfare Course at Doshisha University Graduate School

Based on the recommendations and reports described above, we reviewed the curriculum for the Social Welfare Course at Doshisha University Graduate School, and as the party responsible for the curriculum, we organized and summarized the issues into the points described below, and submitted them for discussion to the Council for Graduate School Courses. In summarizing the discussion points, we referred to the curriculums offered at other Courses as described in *A Guide to Graduate School Programs in Social Studies* (2007).

< Confirmation >

First of all, in the short-term, a realistic response will be required with respect to the GP Program of the Graduate School. In the medium- and long-term, serious discussions about reforms, such as the reforms related to reports by the Japanese Association of Schools of Social Work and those found after comparison with other Courses at Doshisha University's Graduate Schools or at other universities, will become necessary. Therefore, we believe that for the time being, curriculum reform should be carried out in two rounds, with the first round of reforms being implemented for students being admitted in April 2009, and the next round of reforms being implemented for students being admitted in 2010 and onwards.

< Premises >

The concrete proposals regarding the curriculum presented in the GP Planning Report are “make the existing field work (practical training) compulsory”; “develop overseas field work and make it possible to earn credits for the field work”; and “consider holding case conferences and supervisor workshops and make it possible to earn credits for participation in them.”

Therefore, reforms implemented in line with these proposals should be considered short-term issues.

< Points for Discussion >

○ Master's Program

1. Regarding Compulsory System

There is no notion of compulsory elements in the currently existing curriculum of the Social Welfare Course. Therefore, in order to “make practical training compulsory,” as proposed in the GP Planning Report, it will be necessary to change the curriculum system and adopt a compulsory system. In addition to a way to designate individual subjects as a compulsory subject, there are other methods for implementing a compulsory system, such as a selective subject group system, in which a specified number of credits will be required to be earned from among a group of subjects.

- * If a compulsory system is adopted, should only the field work subjects be made compulsory or should other subjects also be made compulsory?
- * If field work is made compulsory, how should field work be categorized?
- * How should overseas practical training be viewed?

2. Regarding Taking Undergraduate Subjects

As the curriculum at the Graduate School is structured based on the assumption that the student has already studied specialized subjects as an undergraduate, studying the subjects in the Graduate School curriculum alone would be insufficient to learn all the fundamentals related to social welfare. Consequently, consideration should be given to allowing students transferring from other universities, particularly those who did not earn a degree related to social welfare, to study undergraduate-level subjects.

- * Should these subjects be offered for credit, made compulsory but not offer credit for them, or should they be generally recommended to all students in the Course? (At present, the Graduate School of Social Studies does not recognize credits from the undergraduate subjects.)

3. Regarding Taking Subjects of Other Graduate Schools or Other Courses
Doshisha University is a comprehensive university. It has a broad range of Courses in its Graduate School of Social Studies, and in addition, offers a number of other Graduate Schools and Courses, such as Law, Economics, and Psychology, that are deeply related to social welfare study. Allowing students take advantage of taking such an extensive range of choices is certainly an option.

- * In what manner can these recommendations be made?

- * Should credits be given, and what kind of limitations should there be?

(At present, the Social Welfare Course does not recognize credits from subjects of other Graduate Schools or Courses as valid for fulfilling completion requirements; however, other Courses do recognize such credits.)

4. Regarding the System of Connecting Levels

The relationship between the Undergraduate Faculties and the Master's Program, as well as between the Master's Program and the Doctoral Program may also be reviewed or modified for improvement.

- * Establish a Two-year Course and a Five-year Course that students can register for at the time of admission to the Graduate School

- * Discuss establishing a system that would allow fourth-year undergraduate students who have fulfilled certain conditions and wish to enter the Graduate School, to undertake advance registration for the Graduate School. (This system is different from a grade-skipping system, and would ensure that the student receives a college degree.)

5. Regarding Discussions on What the Curriculum Should Be Like

At present, the classes taught by full-time teachers run 180 minutes straight through, including the lecture followed by the seminar, and are worth six credits. By registering for the subject taught by the teacher who is the student's principal supervisor, the student is able to ask for guidance regarding the master's thesis during class hours.

In actual operation, however, the class does not function satisfactorily as a venue for giving thesis guidance. Each class not only has students who are receiving guidance for their master's theses from the teacher of the class, but the class also naturally contains first-years students in addition to second-year students who are receiving master's theses guidance from other principal supervisors. Therefore, guidance for the student's master's thesis actually ends up being given outside classroom hours.

On the other hand, this system has some merits for first-year students, as they can receive inspiration and stimulation by listening to the presentations of the master's theses of the upper-class students who are receiving guidance from the teacher in charge of that subject. Nevertheless, it is difficult to manage a class with students who have a different awareness of the issues, are doing different levels of research, and whose purpose for taking the class are different; for example, students who are receiving guidance for their master's theses and those who are taking the class as a part of their basic studies.

While students whose purpose in attending the class is to write their master's theses will find the classes less than challenging, first-year students will, in the end, be required to undertake special research and give presentations of a high level.

Furthermore, coupled with a tendency among first-year students to maintain as heavy a class load as they can bear in their initial year, hoping to create a bit of a slack in their class schedule in the following year, there is a tendency among first-year students to not have the time to spare to do any in-depth research in specialized fields.

Moreover, the time when students decide who should be their principal supervisor may also need to be discussed. The principal supervisors who provide guidance for the master's theses of the students of the Social Welfare Course are decided at the end of the students' first year. There are merits to this system, as students who come from other fields or are slow to commit to a research theme can use a full year to think about what they want to research while accumulating knowledge in a broad range of fields. However, it is also true that this system tends to delay the start of the students' research towards writing their master's theses.

6. Ensure diversity through such activities as special research

It would seem that the overall Graduate School curriculum will move towards some degree of structure through a series of reforms; however, the diversity and freedom of the Graduate School's curriculum must not be sacrificed as a result of this. In view of these circumstances, there will also probably be demands to actively promote the implementation of various programs, including, for example, special research undertaken by outside lecturers (which are presently already underway at the university), in order to ensure diversity.

○ Doctoral Program

For the Doctoral Program, rather than being a credit-based system, the Social Welfare Course is set up so that students register for the subjects of their academic advisor. Although no particularly problematic issues have been raised at present, a number of points that might possibly merit discussion are described below.

1. Should a system be adopted in which students are separated at the time of the entrance examination into those who wish to enroll in a Five-year Doctoral Program and in a Two-year Doctoral Program (mentioned previously)?

The establishment of a Five-year Doctoral Program for the purpose of nurturing "researchers who have superior capabilities for carrying out research and development" and "university teachers who have not only solid teaching skills but also the ability to carry out research," as they are described in a report by the Central Council of Education, is certainly a possibility.

2. With regard to encouraging students to register for lectures given by teachers other than the teacher who is their academic advisor

Generally speaking, there is a tendency for isolation to occur in the course of carrying out research or studies. As such, it is probably necessary to set up various systems that will help prevent such isolation as research becomes more specialized.

3. With regard to implementing a credit-based system

In addition to clarifying the process for obtaining a doctorate degree and promoting research in specialized fields, consideration should be given to the possibility of adopting a credit-based system in order to nurture both a high level of learning and research capabilities concerning social welfare studies, obtained through completion of studies of elective subjects. However, with regard to adopting a credit-based system, some issues remain unresolved, including how best to meet the needs of adult graduate school students, who find it difficult to find the time to attend school.

5. Establishing joint seminars and other efforts

In addition to the point about adopting a credit-based system, consideration also needs to be given to a number of other issues, including the establishment of places where joint exercises or activities can be held, such as venues where graduate students can make presentations and a place where students can expand their horizons through the research guidance they receive.

III. Proposals for current issues

Based on an understanding of the issues outlined above, the changes to the curriculum are proposed for possible adoption from spring of next year (2009).

1. Adoption of a system of compulsory subjects

System I and II, Field work, and guidance for Master's theses will be compulsory (thesis guidance will be newly established).

2. Field work will become diversified and be compulsory

Field work will be categorized into three types: practical training (year-round) to acquire competencies as a social worker (as well as a supervisor or other positions); field study-type practical training (whenever needed) to carry out on-site research at facilities and organizations, etc.; and overseas field work (intensive, summer term). Students will be required to complete one of the three types of field work.

3. Regarding the principal supervisor system

Currently, the principal supervisor for the students' Master's theses is decided in their second year, but deciding the principal supervisor will be moved up to the autumn of their first year. However, the issue of how to deal with those students who have not yet finalized their thesis theme by the autumn of their first year will be deliberated separately.

4. Regarding seminars

The current system, which is comprised of Group A and Group B seminars, will be abolished. The system of having classes in which the lecture and seminar run consecutively and are taught by full-time teachers will also be reviewed, with the possibility of abolishing this type of class. In place of this type of class, classes will be established in which the full-time teachers will provide guidance for master's theses.

5. Consider holding case conferences and supervisor workshops and make it possible to earn credits for participation in them
Establish these activities and position them at the subtitle-level to special research. (However, a number of issues related to the adoption of such a system remain unresolved, including who will be in charge of the lectures, how the students will be evaluated, the required hours, and how many credits should be given.)

6. Regarding undergraduate subjects, and subjects of other Courses and other Graduate School Faculties
Students from Faculties outside those related to welfare studies will be instructed to take subjects in the Department of Social Welfare. (Students will only be instructed to take the classes, as they will not earn any credits for taking the classes.)

The system will be changed so that credits earned for the subjects at other Courses and other Graduate Schools will also be recognized as valid for fulfilling completion requirements.

IV. Issues in the Future

Long-term issues that call for discussion include whether or not to allow fourth-year students to register for subjects in the Master's Program; establish a Five-year Doctoral Program; and make the Doctoral Program credit-based.

It is also necessary to engage in concrete discussions regarding the implementation of Points 1 through 6 mentioned above in "Proposals for current issues." Details still need to be worked out for many issues, including how should international practical training be done; what kind of guidance should be given to students who are graduates of non-welfare studies-related Departments regarding what subjects in the undergraduate Departments to register for; and details related to the recognition of the validity of credits from subjects of other Courses and other Graduate Schools for fulfilling completion requirements.