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Academic Program Accreditation

MAS in Children's Rights

University of Geneva

Centre of Children's Rights Studies CCRS

External review report | 05.03.2015





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1 Accreditation procedure

The accreditation procedure for academic programs in Switzerland comprises an internal evaluation undertaken by the institution or study program followed by an external evaluation by a team of independent experts. The group leader of this team produces a report which, after approval by the team as a whole, is sent to the accreditation agency AAQ. The AAQ sends the report to the evaluated unit, which may express an opinion on the report's contents. Based on these documents and the self-evaluation report, the AAQ sends its recommendation to the decision-making authority, the Swiss Accreditation Council.

The accreditation demand was made on 21 August 2014, once the period of validity of the previous accreditation had elapsed. The accreditation procedure was formally opened on 26 September 2014. In January 2015, the new framework law on higher education in Switzerland entered into force (Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector). Since then, the accreditation bodies have been reorganized and the Swiss center of accreditation and quality assurance in higher education (OAQ) has been replaced by the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ).

The present procedure being carried out during the transition phase between the old and new legal frameworks in Switzerland, this report has been compiled according to the procedures of the OAQ. It records the outcomes of a process conducted using the standards of March 2013 for the accreditation of continuing education programs in Switzerland. The procedure is based on the Accreditation Guidelines of 28 June 2007 of the Swiss University Conference.

At the outset of this report, the expert group wishes to state its appreciation for the contributions made by the staff, students and other stakeholders related to the unit of accreditation and by the AAQ's administrators. Thanks to the input from all these people, the expert group was able to work effectively and in an atmosphere of shared commitment to quality.

1.1 Presentation of the unit

As drawn from the self-evaluation report, the Master of Advanced Studies in Children's Rights (MCR) is an interdisciplinary postgraduate program on children's rights which has been organized since 2003. The seventh edition of the program started in February 2015. Over the past decade, the MCR has provided advanced academic training to professionals who work in areas related to childhood and children's rights and who hold staff positions within national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as academic institutions. Between 2003 and 2014 the program has been offered as a joint degree delivered by the University Institute Kurt Bösch (IUKB) in Sion and the University of Fribourg.

As a consequence of the entry into force, on 1 January 2015, of the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector, teaching and research activities in children's rights, conducted until then by the IUKB, were integrated into the University of Geneva. As a result, a new interfaculty centre was created, the Centre for Children's Rights Studies (CCRS), which involves the Law Faculty, the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the Geneva School of Social Sciences (G3S) and the Faculty of Medicine. This shift (from a partnership with Fribourg to the incorporation into Geneva) having been conceived and planned by all parties involved well in advance, it did not threaten the stability and the quality of the program.

The MCR program is held over two years and consists of 60 ECTS credits. Studies are offered in seven Modules (one residential week every three months) and the MCR contains lectures, discussions, project work, conference participation and report and an (optional) internship followed by the preparation of the final thesis.

The first three modules provide a theoretical framework for the interdisciplinary field of children's rights studies, while modules four to seven focus on particular themes. Beginning with the seventh MRC cycle five modules will be held at the UNIGE-Valais Campus in Sion and two modules will take place at the University of Geneva. The language of instruction is English.

Lectures are given by the program staff and by internationally known experts in the field of children's rights from the academic world, inter-governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Students are professionals coming from across the world.

Students per MCR cycle			
MCR cycle		Number of students at the start of the program	Number of degrees delivered
1	2003-2004	19	19
2	2005-2006	23	22
3	2007-2008	33	31
4	2009-2010	31	27
5	2011-2012	31	23
6	2013-2014	16	3*
7	2015-2016	20	
Total	2003-2016	173	125

* 9 students of the 2013-2014 cycle are expected to receive the MCR degree in May 2015 after submission of their MCR thesis

1.2 Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report was produced by the unit under accreditation and supplied in advance of the on-site visit. The report consists of two parts:

1. The Main Text – a document of 38 pages addressing each of the Areas and Standards of the OAQ procedure in turn.
2. Appendices – the main text is cross-referenced to a range of Appendices provided initially in electronic form. During the on-site visit, material previously only available electronically was also produced for the group in hard copy and other materials, such as past assessments, were made available for consultation.

As the present accreditation procedure occurred in a period of institutional transition, the drafting of the self-evaluation report was mainly based on the experience of the program as it had been offered between 2003 and 2014 as a joint degree delivered by the IUKB and the University of Fribourg. In addition, the program's future developments as an academic degree offered by the University of Geneva were highlighted.

The self-evaluation report was analytical and covered the list of necessary standards.

1.3 Group of experts

The expert group assembled for this accreditation procedure was approved by the OAQ Scientific advisory board. Its membership was constituted as follows:

Peer leader:

- Prof. Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh, UK

Experts:

- Prof. Jane Cowan, University of Sussex, UK
- Prof. Christine Kaufmann, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Prof. Lothar Krappmann, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Germany

1.4 On-site visit

The on-site visit was undertaken on Thursday 5th February and Friday 6th February 2015, with a briefing session for the expert group on the morning of Thursday 5th February, followed by a preparatory meeting. The subsequent sessions during the visit can be summarized as follows:

- Thursday 5th February. Meetings: with the management of the Center for Children’s Rights Studies (CCRS) and of the University of Geneva (skype connection); with the MCR Steering Committee; with MCR students and alumni; and with external stakeholders.
- Friday 6th February. Visit of the Premises. Meetings: with guest lecturers, assistants, tutors; with technical and administrative staff; and with those responsible for Quality Assurance both at program level and from the Continuous Education Department of the University of Geneva. Preparation by the group of its conclusions and debriefing session for MCR staff.

The group felt that the range of individuals with whom it was able to meet, the nature of the discussions and the variety of supplementary material produced during the course of the visit enabled it to make a full and well-informed appraisal of the program being considered for accreditation and of the infrastructural and other resources of the institution necessary to underpin it. Accordingly, the group makes the comments and recommendations relating to compliance with quality standards which appear in Section Two.

2 Evaluation of the Quality Standards

2.1 Area 1: Implementation and teaching objectives

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to implementation and teaching objectives are met. The MCR carries out a regular cycle of its specialist program. Its learning objectives fit well with its previous situation in the autonomous IUKB. These learning objectives will also fit well with its transition to the University of Geneva, which has a commitment to children’s rights, human rights more generally, interdisciplinarity and continuing education. External stakeholders make a significant contribution to the program, assisting its suitability for the MCR’s professional participants.

Standard 1.01

The range of programs is carried out regularly.

Background information. See table above.

Analysis. The MCR has run steadily, with an intake every 2 years since 2003. Its numbers have fluctuated from a high of 33 in 2007-08 to a low of 16 in 2013-14. The intake in 2015-16 is 20.

With the current need to be self-funding, mainly through student fees, the CCRS requires a sustainability strategy to secure the MCR.

Both the self-evaluation report and the discussions during the visit show opportunities for the University of Geneva to benefit from the MCR and the CCRS more generally; in turn, the MCR can benefit from the cross-faculty position of CCRS and the University of Geneva's learning and student resources.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

To develop a sustainability strategy for the MCR and related activities, taking advantage of the opportunities for, and provided by, the University of Geneva.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 1.02

The objectives of the program correspond to the institution's mission and strategic plan.

Background information. The MCR is currently in transition, between its affiliation with the University of Fribourg through the autonomous IUKB and its inclusion within a broader range of activities in the new CCRS, at the University of Geneva. The self-evaluation report shows the MCR program objectives are related to the mission and strategic plan of the IUKB. The report lists the aims of the CCRS, which fit with the mission of the University of Geneva. During the onsite visit, senior University of Geneva staff underlined the University's commitment to children's rights, human rights more generally, interdisciplinarity and continuing education.

Analysis. The stated, senior staff's commitment to children's rights, human rights more generally, interdisciplinarity and continuing education fits squarely with the MCR program. The program's objectives correspond to the previous IUKB mission and to the new CCRS as part of the University of Geneva.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 1.03

The stakeholders concerned (for example: responsible departments, participants, alumni, professional organisations, employers and research centres) are identified and according to the need involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the program.

Background information. The MCR was initiated by the International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IDE), a children's rights NGO situated in Sion. This relationship continues. The MCR engages a wider range of stakeholders, in part due to their involvement in lecturing or tutoring on the program. The MCR has developed its course and program evaluation with students, with an oral session at the end of each module and a final on-line evaluation. The MCR has a core staff group of the Program Director, Co-ordinator, Secretary and Program Officer. This group is responsible for the program's design and delivery (in 2015-16, this group is called the Steering Committee), with a wider group of academic staff and a representative from IDE to advise and steer the program. Draft course regulations are currently being agreed for the MCR, within the University of Geneva requirements, with a MCR Steering Committee with executive responsibilities and a wider, advisory Scientific Council involving both academics and external experts. University of Geneva has quality assurance requirements, including program and course evaluation.

Analysis. The MCR has functioned effectively through its committed core team (the MCR Steering Committee) and wider advice. The new proposed structure continues with this core team, which will have more executive responsibility. The advisory Scientific Council provides opportunities to embed the MCR within the new cross-faculty institutional context.

There was evidence of the MCR program evolving, from cohort to cohort, on the advice of the students. The supportive approach of the Steering Committee, and their close contact with students, create the possibilities for constructive informal exchange. There was less evidence of the MCR: adapting from course to course within a specific two-year MA cycle; having systematic feedback loops between guest lecturers, tutors, and the Steering Committee. Students are not involved directly in the MCR's governance, as the standard practice of student representatives serving on groups is impractical for the program's modular and part-time structure.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

- *To develop further the MCR governance with clearly defined roles of the different bodies, to capitalize on cross-Faculty support, and to consider different mechanisms for student involvement in MCR governance.*
- *To regularize feedback loops between guest lecturers and tutors, and the program.*

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 1.04

Target audience and learning objectives have been defined. The objectives are formulated in terms of professional competences, associated with a particular function, or personal aptitudes.

Background information. The self-evaluation report outlines that the MCR is designed for "professionals who work with children's rights issues", followed by a list of various professions and disciplines. The learning objectives are listed, with specific knowledge and skills. These are also contained within the draft Course Regulations currently being agreed at the University of Geneva.

Analysis. The target audience and learning objectives are stated and clear, suitable to professional competences.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.2 Area 2: Internal organization and quality assurance measures

Overall assessment

Standards in regard to implementation and teaching objectives are met. The MCR is in transition to the University of Geneva. It will be able to benefit from the governance, quality assurance and interdisciplinary structures at that University.

Standard 2.01

The decision-making processes, competencies and responsibilities have been determined and communicated to all those involved.

See Standard 1.03

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 2.02

Measures are taken to ensure the active participation of the academic staff and of the students in decision-making processes affecting education and teaching.

See Standard 1.03

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 2.03

Quality assurance measures exist for the programs. The institution makes use of the results to periodically revise the range of programs.

Background information. In 2005, the MCR was evaluated under the OAQ's accreditation procedure, leading to its unconditional accreditation. The recommendations subsequently influenced the program's development. The MCR will benefit from the full range of quality assurance support and procedures, as it moves to the University of Geneva. This includes support and procedures for student plagiarism.

Analysis. The program will benefit from the support and resources, offered by the University of Geneva. The quality assurance procedures should create a productive formalized cycle of monitoring, evaluation, review and feedback.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

With the new governance and quality assurance procedures, to strengthen and formalize the existing mechanisms for regularized MCR program review and development.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.3 Area 3: Curriculum and teaching methods

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to curriculum and teaching methods are met. The MCR has a structured curriculum, which addresses interdisciplinarity, international scope and the interplay between theory and practice. Evidence was provided on how the program and curriculum has developed over time, showing innovation and dynamism. The expert group recommends reviewing certain assessment support and requirements, particularly in relation to the thesis, ethics and interdisciplinarity. With the governance and quality assurance procedures at the University of Geneva, the MCR can build in a mechanism for regularised program review and development.

Standard 3.01

The program has a structured curriculum which corresponds to the coordinated implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Swiss higher education.

Background information. As detailed in the self-evaluation report, the program is held over two years. The program is 60 ECTS credits.

As stated above, the curriculum has three modules that provide a theoretical overview to the interdisciplinary field of children's rights studies. The subsequent four modules apply such theoretical understandings to several key children's rights themes. These themes are determined by both staff (university staff and guest lecturers) and students (e.g. health became part of a module, due to identified student interest). Further activities, such as the project work, the optional internship, conference participation and thesis are also aspects of the curriculum. The program benefits from being able to 'tap into' the activities and organizations located in Geneva, as an international human rights centre.

Analysis. The ambition of the MCR – as stated in its ‘3 I’s’ of interdisciplinary character, the interplay between theory and practice, and international scope – requires a dynamic program. The program must both appeal to potential program participants, and their needs, while advancing the field of children’s rights studies. The program thus benefits from renewal and suitable development, which includes consideration of new disciplines to this area of study and revised/ new modules.

Recommendations for quality improvement: see recommendation under Standard 2.03.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 3.02

The range of programs covers the major aspects of the field in question. It allows students to acquire scientific working methods and ensures that scientific findings are integrated. The teaching and evaluation methods used are in line with the stated teaching goals and objectives

Background information. The MCR is an interdisciplinary program. The involvement of the core staff, group discussions, and assessments are key to addressing interdisciplinarity. A range of disciplines are included within the teaching. Students have sessions to explore using research, with associated assessments of relevant methodologies. Ethical issues are woven through various teaching sessions (e.g. film making). Written material is provided in advance by the Steering Committee to students, to prepare students for a module and to provide reading lists and resources.

Analysis. Interdisciplinarity is a challenging objective both for the program and for the students. It benefits from being kept a ‘live’ issue, with ongoing consideration as the curriculum evolves on whether and where it would make sense to include other considerations and/or disciplines.

MCR’s learning objectives correspond to major aspects of the field, in addressing the role of international instruments, in exploring a number of theories and concepts related to childhood and children’s rights, and in addressing relevant methodological and analytical techniques for policy and practice.

The self-evaluation report discusses the range of teaching methods utilized in the weekly modules, alongside independent learning and assessments. These address the range of teaching goals and objectives, in terms of skills and competencies.

Issues in regards to tutors and evaluation are addressed in Standard 3.03.

Recommendations for quality improvement: see recommendations under Standards 1.03 and 3.03.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 3.03

The conditions for acquiring certificates of achievement and academic degrees are regulated and made public.

Background information. The MCR handbook details the following assessment methods: modules 1, 2 and 3 each have a closed-book examination; modules 4, 5 and 6 each have an open-book, take-home examination; a paper of 8-10 pages is required, with a stated task, at the end of the first year (with formative and summative feedback); group project work and presentation; participation at, and reporting on, an external children’s rights conference or event; an optional internship and report; and a 30-40,000 word thesis, which is subsequently presented and assessed by a jury of academic staff and potentially external experts. Staff

during the visit explained how further information on assessment requirements are given both orally and in written form.

Staff discussed how the assessments have been adapted and modified over program cycles to support student learning. Some students and tutors expressed uncertainty about how interdisciplinarity should be expressed in assessments and how it is assessed.

The information for acquiring certificates of achievement and academic degrees is regulated and made public.

Analysis. A number of assessments are both innovative and beneficial. While at times difficult to undertake over distance, the group project work encourages group work skills and presentation. The paper's use of blind peer review (including students' reviews), and then subsequent change and submission, mirror journal publishing requirements. The internship and conference presentation are to be commended.

The program contains a large number of examinations, which encourage wide reading amongst students. The take-home examinations allow for more depth in answers. Consideration could be given to offering fewer examinations, to allow for other written assessments that could beneficially build up academic writing skills for the thesis (particularly if the thesis remained as currently constructed).

The thesis is very demanding for both tutors and students, both in its length and scope. Benchmarking this in relation to other Masters of Advanced Studies' thesis requirements could be useful for comparability. The MCR thesis can involve direct empirical work, as well as secondary analysis. The program is not a research degree and thus logically does not have intensive training in research design, methodologies, and associated ethics. Tutors are currently responsible for research advice for students' work; there seem to be different views on who is responsible (Steering Committee or tutors) for the ethical oversight of students' work. There was evidence that tutors and students do not always know what to expect from each other and there was no formal framework for and discussion between tutors.

Thus, the expert group considered four potential developments:

- Reassessment of the number of examinations and of the nature, length and scope of the final summative piece of work (currently the thesis), to ascertain what would best meet MCR's learning objectives for its professional participants.
- Ethical training, support and procedures should be put in place, especially for any activities involving empirical fieldwork.
- Expectations of thesis support, including ethics and research design, should be made more explicit to tutors and students, with opportunities for tutor discussion and support.
- Students and tutors could be supported to know how to express interdisciplinarity in assessments and how it will be assessed. This could be assisted by providing spaces for interdisciplinary discussions between more than one tutor and student, near the start of the thesis (as suggested by one tutor), and providing examples of past assessments, with feedback.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

To review assessment support and requirements, particularly in relation to the thesis, ethics and interdisciplinarity.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 3.04

The program meets academic standards and is geared towards professional practice. It is based on current academic research and up to date professional practices.

Background information. To add to the discussion under 3.01-3.03, the program has been and continues to be influenced by external stakeholders. Further, certain leading professionals contribute to the on-site modules. CVs of staff and guest lecturers formed part of the self-evaluation materials, indicating staff and guest lecturers' involvement in academic research and professional practices. Current and recent students report on the program's usefulness, for their professional practice.

Analysis. The MCR needs to make overarching curriculum decisions 3 years in advance, so as to allow for marketing in the frame of the 2 year cycle. Within this, there are possibilities within the structure to adapt and include current academic research and up to date practice. More structural changes can be made through regular program review.

The prior governance of the MCR was reliant on the Program Co-ordinator and Program Director to oversee standards, with the advice of the Scientific Committee. This included double-marking and moderation of assessments, and decisions about progression. It is anticipated that the transition to the University of Geneva will introduce further quality assurance in regards to these tasks.

The evidence of stakeholder involvement, and the views of current and past students, suggest that the program is both geared towards professional practice and up to date.

Recommendations for quality improvement: see recommendations under Standards 1.03 and 3.01.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 3.05

Teaching methods are appropriate and take into account the diverse competences of the participants and their professional backgrounds.

Background information. The self-evaluation report describes a diversity of teaching methods. Certain methods particularly seek to build upon the students' backgrounds. These include the 'fare of ideas', where students present their own work on children's rights, and tasks undertaken between modules.

Analysis. The diversity of teaching methods suits intensive week-long modules and capitalizes on the different competencies and learning styles of diverse participants. The innovative ways of building on participants' professional backgrounds are noted. Students expressed interest in learning even more from each other, which could be further built into and around the guest lecturers' sessions. The MCR Steering Committee are reflexive about the program and student learning, seeking to improve what is offered to each cohort and to understand particular cohort's interests.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.4 Area 4: Teaching staff

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to teaching staff are met. The MCR has a committed core staff team (the Steering Committee) and a wider advisory group. It brings in a range of guest lecturers and tutors, who have considerable disciplinary and practical expertise. The tutor role (supporting students' thesis) could be developed further, to ensure common expectations, knowledge of academic standards and exchange on interdisciplinarity. A sustainability plan is required for the Program Co-ordinator post, which is key to the ongoing success of the MCR program.

Standard 4.01

Courses are taught by educationally competent and academically qualified faculty.

Background information. Approximately one-third of all pedagogical activities are carried out by Steering Committee members. Tutors can be external stakeholders as well as academic staff. Guest lecturers contribute substantially to the on-site modules: in 2013-14, there were 48 guest lecturers. CVs were provided to the expert group.

Analysis. The CVs testify to the competence and academic qualifications of the core staff. Some queries were expressed by tutors, about what the academic standards expectations are for the thesis. Overall, the guest lecturers provide diversity of disciplines and expertise, but this diversity requires careful co-ordination as well as continuous intellectual 'linking' work on the part of the core staff to ensure a high quality and integrated curriculum in the modules.

Recommendations for quality improvement (related to recommendations for standard 3.03):

- *To introduce mechanisms enhancing the support for thesis tutors.*
- *To ensure careful monitoring and coordination between lecturers and tutors.*

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard. 4.02

The workload assigned to teaching and to research activities is defined.

Background information. The self-evaluation report notes that all academic staff of the CCRS have job descriptions, which define workload percentages for teaching and research. The Program Officer has 50% of her workload dedicated to teaching, 40% to research and 10% to management and organization tasks. The Program Co-ordinator is part-time in that role, with 70% of the workload allocated to teaching and tutoring and 30% to management, administration and co-ordination.

Analysis. The current MCR position is that it must be self-funding, and the Program Co-ordinator's current job description reflects the financial constraints of current student enrolment as well as the University of Geneva's policy not to include research in continuous education's job profiles. The program is heavily dependent on the quality and knowledge of the Program Co-ordinator. The current high level of the program cannot be sustained without the Program Co-ordinator being actively engaged in research. Therefore, research needs to be included in the job description as it directly benefits the program. In addition, without research included in the job description, the role is less attractive to those committed to an academic career. The expert group strongly supports including research in the job description. It also is concerned about the University's policy to employ MCR staff based on temporary contracts. In the expert group's view this policy bears the risk for the MCR of losing qualified and experienced members of staff. Moreover, it may be worthwhile to look at other Swiss universities that are currently in

the process of reviewing their practices with regard to temporary employments due to recent court decisions.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

To develop a sustainability plan for the Program Co-ordinator post, as part of a sustainability strategy for the MCR and related activities as a whole (as stated in standard 1.01).

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 4.03

The mobility of the teaching staff is facilitated.

Background information. As stated above, there are over 40 guest lecturers who contribute to the on-site modules in any one program cycle. Academic staff in CCRS have opportunities to benefit from wider teaching networks, such as the European Network of Masters' of Children's Rights.

Analysis. This standard was not considered particularly relevant for the MCR.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 4.04

Teaching staff are academics or expert practitioners. They are competent in the fields concerned. They use appropriate teaching methodologies, particularly in the field of adult education.

This standard is addressed in 3.04 and 4.01.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.5 Area 5: Students

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to students are met. Conditions for admission to the institution and the program are made public. The MCR's structure of week-long modules and off-site structured and independent learning facilitate a range of professionals to participate, who have work and/or caring responsibilities. The MCR Steering Committee provide a supportive environment for students, including learning support. The transition to the University of Geneva should encourage broader support resources to be developed and made available to students – such as academic writing skills, additional language support, ethics and visa advice.

Standard 5.01

The conditions for admission to the institution and into the program have been made public.

Background information. The admission requirements and selection procedures are contained within the current course regulations. They are announced on the program's website and in the MCR brochure and flyer sent out in marketing.

Analysis. This standard is met.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 5.02

Equality of men and women is assured.

Background information. The self-evaluation report reports on the numbers of men and women taking the MCR over its cycles. More women participate than men (71% vs 29%).

The MCR's structure of 1 week-long modules successfully facilitates the participation of a range of people in work and/or with caring responsibilities. Some evidence suggests that take-home examinations can be problematic for some people in those circumstances, who are unable to reserve the examination time. Students can apply for mitigating circumstances, should they be in that situation.

Analysis. The panel agrees with the self-evaluation report that the percentages of women and men attending the MCR likely reflect the professional field. The on-site visit confirms that the MCR's structure largely assists those with work and family responsibilities to participate in the MCR.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 5.03

The mobility of students is possible and is promoted by mutual recognition of credits between universities and between disciplines.

Background information. The MCR structure allows for students to participate from around the world. The self-evaluation report notes the regional abode of participants, over the cycles. It is also possible for participants to come as visiting students, for specific modules.

Students are required to participate in one external seminar or conference, during the program. Students have the option of undertaking an internship.

The self-evaluation report notes the MCR's interest in establishing agreements with other institutions to provide for mutual recognition of study achievements.

Analysis. The MCR fulfils this standard as relevant to its structure and participants. Of note is the innovative requirement to present at an external seminar or conference, as well as the potential for an internship.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 5.04

Measures are taken to ensure adequate learning support and counselling to students.

Background information. The Program Co-ordinator, along with the Program Director and Officer, invest considerable time to provide a supportive program for students, including learning support. Tutors provide further advice at the thesis stage, for students. The handbook and other online materials are a vital resource for students, given that students are predominantly off site.

The transition to the University of Geneva will provide opportunities for broader resources to be available to the students. As indicated from discussions at the site visit, certain students would

benefit from support on academic writing, research design and ethics, and additional language skills. These broader support resources are not currently available through IUKB.

Certain University of Geneva resources are not available to continuing education students: for example, the La Maison des Langues that provides additional language support. Some continuing education programs have developed their own solutions.

The MCR Steering Committee currently seek to provide advice for students gaining visas (while recognising that it is the students' responsibility to acquire a visa). There is no one central hub for visa advice at the University of Geneva.

Analysis. MCR students currently benefit from the supportive approach of the MCR Steering Committee. Tutors can provide individualized support, but some students' needs go beyond tutors' resources. The transition to the University of Geneva provides possibilities of a broader range of support services and resources, and their development would substantially assist the learning of certain MCR students. Possibilities are to develop further on-line resources and to pool resources currently developed by individual programs.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

To develop, and make available to MCR students, broader support services and resources, particularly in regards to visa advice, academic writing, research design and ethics, and those studying in an additional language.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.6 Area 6: Facilities and premises

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to facilities and premises are met. Student cohorts benefit from the setting of the UNIGE-Valais Campus in Sion, in terms of a dedicated environment for the program, while also capitalising on Geneva close by as an international hub. Certain resources (e.g. improved IT material and support, improved food access, and more frequent public transport) would improve the student experience while attending modules at the Sion Campus. Further resources will be available to students, with the transition to the University of Geneva. Students will benefit from advice on accommodation in Geneva, as two modules will be offered there in future.

Standard 6.01

The program has adequate resources available to attain its objectives. These resources are provided on a long-term basis.

Background information. The UNIGE-Valais Campus in Sion has a range of seminar and conference rooms, and teaching and translation technology. The IT resources and IT support are not always satisfactory and timely. The campus has kitchen facilities and some social space, and a library. Much of the campus accommodation is taken up by non-MCR students; MCR students are provided with advice on where to find accommodation. As further detailed in the self-evaluation report, students have access to specialist and more general library resources on site or online. Efforts have been made to improve bus service to and from the Sion campus, and the modules' timetable is adapted to the available buses. However, the bus service remains limited.

The expense costs to both students and guest lecturers were commented upon during the site visit.

The transition to the University of Geneva will offer a wide range of facilities online and onsite, the latter being of particular use when the modules are held in Geneva.

Analysis. The more remote nature of the IUKB campus has the benefit of creating a sense of belonging for MCR cohorts. Students and staff express problems, however, in relation to expense, travel and lunch availability during onsite modules. The IT resources and support can still improve in order to ensure the smooth functioning of teaching and independent study onsite.

The transition to the University of Geneva will provide increased resources and facilities there. The MCR will be able to capitalize on the international hub of Geneva, in having two modules available there in future. Students will need advice for accommodation in Geneva, both for expense and availability.

Recommendations for quality improvement:

To ensure the quality and operability of the IT resources and support available at the IUKB premises.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

2.7 Area 7: Learning outcomes and professional competences

Overall Assessment

Standards in regard to learning outcomes and professional competences are met. Participants and alumni confirm the positive impact of the program, on their professional practice and career. In particular, they note the value of applying theory to practice and the positive effects of interdisciplinarity in the various problem-solving approaches.

Standard 7.01

The learning outcomes of the participants are assessed according to the competences to be developed.

See discussion and recommendations in regards to standards 3.03 and 3.04.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

Standard 7.02

Participants and alumni confirm the positive impact of the competences acquired on their professional practice and/or career.

Background information. The self-evaluation report discusses three sources of information: the end of program evaluation results; the Master Classes offered four times to date, to alumni and others; and informal contacts. Further evidence was given during the panel's site visit, with stakeholders, current students and alumni. The University of Geneva could assist the MCR in undertaking a systematic impact study.

Analysis. The evidence confirms that graduates appreciate considering practice and policy critically and, in particular, applying theoretical ideas to practice. Graduation from the MCR seems to assist students to find new posts, move to other positions within their organizations or better achieve in their employment.

Recommendations for quality improvement: none.

Conclusion: standard fulfilled.

3 Strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for quality enhancement

Strengths

1. The MCR is intellectually coherent and this should remain a priority. The ‘3 I’s’ – international, interdisciplinary and the interplay between theory and practice – are all valued by students, staff and other stakeholders. To achieve them requires consistent investment, dynamism and review/planning.

2. The transition to the University of Geneva’s provides particular opportunities for the MCR:

- To capitalize on the University’s official commitment to children’s rights and to continuing education
- To utilize the quality assurance and support resources of the University of Geneva, to benefit MCR program evaluation, monitoring and quality and student experience
- To take advantage of Geneva as an international hub, and to have two modules based in the city

The University of Geneva can benefit from the MCR, and the CCRS more widely, in both their working methods and content expertise.

3. The MCR is developed and adapted to suit its professional participants, with flexible learning.

4. The MCR demonstrates creative teaching methodologies and assessments. The MCR program has shown development over time, demonstrating the Steering Committee’s reflexivity over learning.

5. The MCR Steering Committee creates a respectful learning environment, which is responsive to students. The MCR benefits from a strong and dedicated core team and a broader advisory committee.

6. The MCR benefits from longstanding and meaningful involvement with IDE, a key external stakeholder. It also involves a broader network of external stakeholders as guest lecturers, tutors and students. This ensures that the program is policy- and practice-relevant.

7. The MCR and the CCRS more widely are looking forward strategically, to identify and take forward opportunities for quality, development and sustainability.

Areas of development

1. As is the stated intention, interdisciplinarity needs to remain a dynamic issue and a priority. This needs to be undertaken at multiple levels, such as: the curriculum content and awareness of the potential contribution of ‘new’ disciplines; ensuring that core staff actively facilitate the translation of, and comparison and contrast between, the different disciplinary paradigms presented; further capitalizing on students’ backgrounds; supporting tutors and students on how to express interdisciplinarity in assessments; and taking advantage of and embedding the cross-Faculty links of the new CCRS structure.

2. The MCR would benefit from accessing a broader range of support resources. These include: improved IT resources and support; student learning resources, such as academic writing skills, additional language support, ethics and research design; and visa advice.

3. Given its current reliance on self-funding and subsequent staff arrangements, the MCR and the CCRS more broadly should develop a strategic sustainability plan within its new context of the University of Geneva. This needs to include security and recognition of core staff – and particularly the Program Co-ordinator being placed in a secure and academically-recognized position. The plan should also address strategically the potential range of programs and initiatives, to ensure the ‘flagship’ MCR program is valued alongside related new initiatives.

4. Evaluation could be strengthened in three ways: greater involvement of students in governance; greater influence of student suggestions between modules, within a cohort cycle; a feedback loop between lecturers to and from their teaching contributions to the MCR Steering Committee.

5. The thesis task could be reconsidered, starting with the specific learning objectives it seeks to address. Currently, the thesis is extensive in length and some students and tutors feel under-prepared for its academic requirements in terms of writing and research design. Tutors and students can be unsure of what to expect from each other.

6. If students undertake empirical work within their studies, whether it is for the thesis or other tasks, then a structure must support students to enable their ethical practice to be exemplary and acquire appropriate methodological skills. This includes increased ethical training for students, ensuring that students have sound ethical advice on their particular empirical work, and an institutional monitoring process.

Given the strengths and the areas of developments, according to the analysis provided under chapter 2 of this report, the main recommendations are:

To develop a sustainability strategy for the MCR and related activities, taking advantage of the opportunities for, and provided by, the University of Geneva.

To develop further the MCR governance with clearly defined roles of the different bodies, to capitalize on cross-Faculty support, and to consider different mechanisms for student involvement in MCR governance.

To regularize feedback loops between guest lecturers and tutors, and the program. To ensure careful monitoring and coordination between lecturers and tutors.

With the new governance and quality assurance procedures, to strengthen and formalize the existing mechanisms for regularized MCR program review and development.

To review assessment support and requirements, particularly in relation to the thesis, ethics and interdisciplinarity. To introduce mechanisms enhancing the support for thesis tutors.

To develop a sustainability plan for the Program Co-ordinator post, as part of a sustainability strategy for the MCR and related activities as a whole.

To develop, and make available to MCR students, broader support services and resources, particularly in regards to visa advice, academic writing, research design and ethics, and those studying in an additional language.

To ensure the quality and operability of the IT resources and support available at the IUKB premises.

4 Recommendation for accreditation

The expert group recommends accreditation, with no conditions.

AAQ
Effingerstrasse 15
Postfach
CH-3001 Bern

www.aaq.ch

