

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Occupational Therapy M.Sc.

Date of Review: May 31st and June 1st 2016

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the Occupational Therapy M.Sc. program delivered by School of Rehabilitation Science. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

The Occupational Therapy program submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies March 2016. The self-study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of these two programs, and program data including the data collected from a student survey along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appended were the CVs for each full-time faculty member in the Department.

- **Strengths**
 - Strong alignment of the program with Degree Level Expectations and the mission, vision and strategic priorities articulated by the University and the School of Graduate studies. The reviewers noted that the program's mapping makes explicit the link between program learning objectives and teaching and learning strategies as well as evaluation methods. In addition, the IQAP review team identified clear articulation of the program's contributions to the Strategic Mandate Agreement between the University and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
 - Employment of "sound educational theories and practices that align with institutional priorities". The reviewers note that the use of the Steps and Pillars model is brought to life across the curriculum, and is a reflective and evidence-based model, that is well understood by faculty, students and community stakeholders, and is consistently used in

curriculum development. In a later section of the report the reviewers commend the program “for the comprehensive content of the framework, the effectiveness of the symbols used to convey the integration of the components of the curriculum and for the detailed consultation process used to develop the model”.

- Strong alignment with national competency standards, with outcomes from a variety of sources (certification exam results, graduate follow up surveys, employer surveys and anecdotal reports from stakeholders during the review) supporting the strength of the program in producing graduates meeting entry-to-practice requirements.
- Access to adequate physical space and resources to meet program demands.

Areas for Enhancement or Improvement

- **Areas for Enhancement**

The IQAP reviewers summarize three areas of program enhancement:

1. **Universal Design for Learning:** After describing the program’s initial work in adopting UDL principles, the reviewers describe this initiative as “very progressive”, and support continued work in this area.

Program Response: As noted in the IQAP report, the Occupational Therapy program held its program retreat in May 2016, with a focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and developing and implementing plans to adopt UDL principles across various aspects of the Occupational therapy program will be a priority in the upcoming academic year, led by the Occupational Therapy Curriculum Committee (OTCC). In fact, a School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS) faculty member with expertise in this area, Dr. Wenonah Campbell, has received a two-year Educational Innovation Grant from the McMaster Faculty of Health Sciences to engage with the OTCC members in a participatory project to design and evaluate processes to implement UDL principles within the program. This will include professional development topics for OTCC members, articulation of learning goals for all evaluations of student performance, and initial explorations of strategies to offer more flexibility in assessments of student competence/knowledge. We look forward to collaborating with Dr. Campbell to ensure our efforts are not only evaluated, but shared more broadly at McMaster and beyond.

2. **Tutorial performance evaluation:** The reviewers note that the program has already been conducting evaluation associated with tutorial performance evaluation for students in the second year of the program.

Program Response: The Occupational Therapy Curriculum Committee has undertaken a review of the current initiative to modify how tutorial performance is evaluated in the second year of the program. A report was received by the committee at its July 2017 meeting; a decision was made to modify the criteria and process of tutorial evaluation in both first and second years of the program. The new process will ensure that evaluation of student tutorial evaluation is fair, constructive and

meaningful to students, tutors, and the program.

3. **Curriculum Framework Model:** while the Steps and Pillars Framework received high praise from the IQAP review team, they suggested continued review and revision, along with a multi-pronged communication strategy as revisions are undertaken.

Program Response: The program concurs that the Steps and Pillars Framework requires further review and minor modifications. The framework was initially developed to integrate the educational and professional conceptual frameworks that are drawn upon within the program, which is a requirement of accreditation. Once the accreditation site visit and report from the program's accreditation is completed in the fall 2016, feedback from the IQAP review, Accreditation, and stakeholder input (from students, faculty members and community partners) will be integrated by the Occupational Therapy Education Council to make further refinements to the model. Detailed plans will then be formulated to further communicate the Steps and Pillars Framework to stakeholders.

- **Areas for Improvement**

The IQAP review team identified five areas of improvement in their report:

1. **Resources to support students:** the review team noted that recent changes in counselling services for graduate students were raised by many stakeholders during their on-site visit as an issue of concern. Although they clearly understand the change was prompted by a decision tied to funding by graduate students themselves, they expressed concern about the risks associated with this removal of some service in relation to student and faculty well-being. In addition, they described writing supports for graduate students as an area that could benefit from attention.

Program Response: The program shares the IQAP reviewers' concerns in both of these areas, while recognizing that the review occurred very soon after the change in service for counselling was announced, before the program's or university's response was finalized. In addition, while it may be perceived to be beyond the direct scope of the IQAP review mandate, the reviewers' comments no doubt reflect the concerns expressed by students and faculty alike. Given the impact of these services on both the well-being and academic performance of students in the program, the issue warrants attention. Indeed, the university administration is aware of the issues and have indicated efforts are planned to ensure graduate students are provided adequate supports.

2. **Time and space management:** although the IQAP review team members identify good quantity and quality of space for program delivery, they noted areas for improvement to address

challenges and tensions associated with sharing space between programs (in particular between Mohawk and McMaster programs in the shared IAHS building).

Program response: As enrollments and program offerings have increased and will likely continue to increase for both Mohawk College and McMaster University programs, it will be important for the Joint Building Committee to continue to work constructively to address challenges associated with space and classroom bookings. The School of Rehabilitation Science will have representation on this Committee and a leadership role in addressing the issues.

3. **Use of media to enhance teaching and learning:** The IQAP review team lauded faculty members' interest in adding additional media and technologies to enhance the educational programs, while acknowledging input that supports and infrastructure may need to be improved to optimize use of these media.

Program Response: A number of faculty members have embraced technologies such as clickers, flipped classrooms etc.. Challenges with infrastructure within the classroom environments do need to be addressed; in particular, use of video in the large classroom (especially in room 367) has been limited by the equipment in the classroom. In addition, supports to create on-line modules, videos for exams or assignments, use of computer labs for written examinations all warrant attention in the future. Support to faculty through training of support staff and infrastructure will both be important.

4. **Admissions:** The IQAP review team was supportive of the planned initiative to conduct a review and evaluation of admissions policies and procedures. In addition, they suggested attention be paid to admissions for people of aboriginal/indigenous descent.

Program Response: The Occupational Therapy Education Council discussed ideas for an Admissions Working Group at its June 2016 meeting, with terms of reference for the working group drafted in July 2016. Although the initial terms of reference did not make specific reference to issues associated with admissions for people of aboriginal/ indigenous descent, this aspect will be added. It is anticipated that the working group will report back to the OTEC in July 2017, with recommendations emerging from the group's report to be considered and approved by OTEC for implementation starting in the 2018 admissions cycle.

5. **Harmonization of IQAP and accreditation reviews:** The IQAP review team noted significant similarities between the two review processes, and identified significant efficiencies that could be achieved by combining these reviews.

Program Response: The program is strongly in support of this recommendation; in fact, in December 2014, discussions were held with the acting Dean, Graduate Studies to discuss the possibility of

harmonizing the two reviews. However, it was recommended that the program needed to prepare separate self-study reports, and separate site visits were subsequently organized. In June 2016, a meeting was held with a MIETL staff member to discuss strategies that may be implemented in future to harmonize the two reviews. The example of a combined IQAP/Accreditation review for the University of Ottawa Occupational Therapy program may represent one approach to such harmonization. Next steps in formulating a plan for this will include comparison of IQAP and accreditation review reports, and recommendations to the School of Graduate Studies and MIETL to support programs with professional accreditations to undertake harmonized IQAP and Accreditation reviews in future.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations with the Department’s and Dean’s Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1. Identify appropriate alternative counselling resources and communicate to students and faculty as soon as possible	Follow up with Centre for Student Wellness to identify alternative community resources; formulate strategy to communicate information to students.	OT Assistant Dean & director, Centre for Student Wellness	July, 2016
2. Find a solution to address student needs for support to improve their writing skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication with School of Graduate Studies regarding needs of students in professional and course-based graduate programs for writing support. • Consider assigning TA supports within the program for profession-specific student writing support. 	Assistant Dean, Occupational Therapy	Initiate for 2016-2017 academic year

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
3. Develop ways to optimize IPE opportunities with the PT and OTA/PTA assistant programs co-located in the IAHS building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current IPE opportunities re OTA/PTA • Consider development of new PBL opportunities that may include collaboration with Mohawk OTA/PTA program. 	OT Curriculum Committee	2016-2017 year and continuing
4. Develop strategies to improve access and utilization of various media to enhance teaching, learning, and the overall student experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue exploration of technology supports b) Share learning re technologies amongst faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) SRS Associate Dean and Director, Administration b) OTCC 	ongoing
5. Explore and address issues related to building space, with focus on class scheduling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a joint (McMaster-Mohawk) working group to lead a review of scheduling and academic planning in the IAHS • Create a Scheduling Operational Agreement • Review SRS room booking protocols to better align scheduling windows • Clarify the protocol and SRS access to book in other McMaster buildings (e.g. to accommodate large capacity classes) 	Sarah Bouma, Director of Administration	<p>August 2016</p> <p>March 2017</p> <p>August 2016</p> <p>August 2016</p>

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
6. Conduct planned review of admissions policies and procedures, with inclusion of attention to aboriginal/indigenous students.	Terms of reference to be formulated and consideration regarding aboriginal / indigenous students will be incorporated	Admissions working group with advisory group to be struck by the Occupational Therapy Education Council.	Admissions working group report required by July 2017. Implementation of recommendations to be initiated in the 2017-2018 academic year.
7. Combine future IQAP and accreditation reviews of the occupational therapy program, adjusting timelines for IQAP reviews if necessary.	Review policy and processes associated with combining IQAP and accreditation. Set plan in writing for future combined IQAP/Accreditation reviews. Communicate with OT Accreditation Council (if required)	OT Assistant Dean, Associate Deans (SRS, Graduate Studies, Health Sciences) MIIETL and School of Graduate studies.	By 2018-2019 academic year.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the program's thoughtful response to the concerns raised, including those pertaining to IAHS space management and aspects of the program's admissions procedures. While the review did not identify any major weaknesses, it did highlight that the program faculty and students were concerned about recent changes to graduate student access to counseling services at the Student Wellness Centre. The Faculty agrees with the program's response to this concern, and recognizes that the matter lies beyond the scope of the IQAP review and program's control. We acknowledge that student wellness is important to graduate education. We also appreciate that the concerns about reduced counseling supports have been heard by the university administration and the graduate student leadership and that this matter needs follow up at many levels in the university.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.