

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Physiotherapy M.Sc.

Date of Review: May 9th and 10th 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 **Physiotherapy M.Sc.** program delivered by the 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 Physiotherapy program submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies April 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**

- Unique focus on problem-based learning and small group instruction
- Clear alignment of the MSc Physiotherapy Program with the McMaster University academic plan, and the University's MSc Degree Level Expectations (often exceeding expectations)
- A curriculum that reflects the current state of discipline and that is in line with core physiotherapy competencies
- The variety of clinical learning experiences, including role emerging placements
- Active engagement of graduates and the local physiotherapy community
- 'Admirable' achievement of the distinctive challenges in coordination of instruction (related to a problem-based curriculum) by program administration
- The Clinical Education Team
- Curriculum renewal and revision
- High quality Program as evidenced by several quality indicators
- Well-funded faculty, with a strong research capacity and research expertise
- Impressive number of student projects presented at national and international conferences, and published in journals relevant to physiotherapy

- Expected benefits from the implementation of the new budget model, which when implemented, is expected to result in long-term financial sustainability of the program
- Well-respected Assistant Dean (Physiotherapy), Assistant Dean (Physiotherapy) leadership
- Broadly consultative, ongoing and extensive system of planned program evaluation
- Being co-located with Mohawk College in the Institute of Applied Health Sciences, in order to leverage technology

- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**

- **Workload and Faculty:** Very high teaching workload for the Assistant Dean and Faculty Members, (p1) (p3) (p11); Very high service workload for Assistant Dean and Faculty Members, (p1) (p4) (p12); There is a dearth of mid-career faculty within the MScPT program and several senior faculty who are nearing retirement, (p10); Students reported a perceived disconnect from faculty members (p4) (p7)
- **Extent of teaching by academic staff in non-continuing appointments:** A large component of teaching completed by contract academic staff in non-continuing appointments, (p1) (p3) (p4) (p5); Contract staff reported some concern about receiving academic assignments in July of each year, with no position security or continuity of responsibilities from year to year (p4)
- **Space:** Availability of space in IAHS (especially with the new SLP program starting), (p2); Coordination in space utilization at IAHS, double booked rooms for small group work or student studying. Lack of rooms large enough to fit all students at once ... students and sessional staff report little study space indicative of a program that is nearly 'bursting at the seams' (p6)
- **Technology:** inconsistent use of effective communication strategies including modern instructional technologies, (p2); IT support is typically strong, but can be inconsistent (p6); Additional space and IT support pressures may arise with the new SLP program, (p6); lack of web-based conferencing facilities within the IAHS ... again identified by faculty and contract staff as a need, (p11); purchase of video-conferencing software that would allow more flexibility ... software would facilitate learning in the Clinical Skills laboratories, (p12)
- **Student Mental Health:** Concerns around an impending lack of availability of mental health counseling for graduate students, (p2) (p13); Stress and anxiety of students (p6)
- **Admissions:** Little formal evaluation of the psychometric properties of the MMI and it is unknown whether candidate scores on the interview predict future performance in the program. It is also unknown how well the interview screens out unsuitable candidates (p2); Re-evaluating consideration of international students, (p3)
- **Curriculum:** Concerns raised that problem-based approach combined with a high number of teaching staff with different approaches led to unstandardized learning experiences that did not prepare them for standardized examinations, (p3) (p5); Approximately half of the research projects are supervised by sessional instructors. This was not identified as a problem within the self-study report or during on-site interviews. Increasing the involvement of tenure and tenure stream faculty in supervision of the research projects may, however, be a way to enhance student learning and the quality of the student experience (p8) (p9)
- **Communication and Decision-making:** Dissatisfaction among faculty who reported not being consulted on the cancellation of the NSS decision (p5); There appears to be limited input sought from faculty on School/Faculty-level decisions that directly or indirectly affect the MScPT program and a lack of communication regarding the rationale for such decisions (p10); decisions around program finances (there appears to be a lack of understanding about what resources are available and how resources are allocated), (p10); it seemed clear faculty would welcome a higher level of involvement, and a higher level of transparency about decision making, (p10)

- **Support Staff:** University appears to have no formal annual evaluation process for support staff (p6); this change in staffing operations does not yet appear to be fully understood by tenure-stream or sessional faculty who reported not knowing who to approach when various needs arise, (p10); Full-time and sessional faculty reported that they did not have clear direction around the duties assigned to each staff member, and which member to contact depending on specific situations when they arise (p6) (p11)

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

No.	Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1	Address high teaching and workloads	Experienced .8 FTE CLA hired to fulfill teaching roles New tenure track position hired	Dr. Patty Solomon Associate Dean SRS	July 1, 2016 July 1, 2016
2	Implement strategies to address large proportion of program teaching being conducted by academic staff in non-continuing appointments	Experienced .8 FTE CLA hired to fulfill teaching roles New tenure track position hired Plan developed for retirement replacements based on financial review of School	Dr. Patty Solomon Associate Dean SRS	July 1, 2016 July 1, 2016 Fall 2016
3	Address IAHS space issues	Establish a joint (McMaster-Mohawk) working group to lead a review of scheduling and academic planning in the IAHS Create a Scheduling Operational Agreement	Sarah Bouma Director of Administration	August 2016 March 2017

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		<p>Revise the training plan for the new IAHS scheduling officer to include an orientation to the SRS</p> <p>Review SRS room booking protocols to better align scheduling windows</p> <p>Clarify the protocol and SRS access to book in other McMaster buildings (e.g. to accommodate large capacity classes)</p> <p>Increase scheduling efficiency through supporting the IAHS course-review audit and reviewing outcomes in conjunction with space utilization data</p> <p>Hosted consultation sessions with faculty and staff about SLP space planning (January 2016)</p> <p>Review space requirements for SLP (with new SLP leadership) and increase communication of ideas/plans with SRS faculty and staff</p>		<p>July 2016</p> <p>August 2016</p> <p>August 2016</p> <p>Summer/Fall 2016</p> <p>Summer</p>
4	Address communication strategies including lack of modern instructional technologies, IT support, high-definition video cameras and video-conferencing	<p>Meeting with McMaster IT groups (UTS/CSU) and Mohawk IT as part of the McMaster IT services review project</p> <p>Development of a new IT Service Level Agreement between Mohawk-McMaster</p> <p>Explore options to create better access to web conferencing services/software within SRS</p> <p>Explore options to make video conferencing available to SRS</p>	Sarah Bouma Director of Administration	<p>Summer 2016</p> <p>Winter 2016</p> <p>Summer/Fall 2016</p> <p>Summer/Fall 2016</p>

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		staff and faculty for meeting and/or teaching needs		
5	Implement strategies to address lack of availability of mental health counseling for graduate students, student stress and anxiety	<p>Several strategies have already been implemented since the GSA vote:</p> <p>The SRS has been in contact with Student Wellness Director to clarify services that will be available for students in our Program. No student will be turned away from Student Wellness, should s/he require an immediate appointment. Students will still be able to access Student Wellness and will be referred to other services for ongoing counselling.</p> <p>Student Wellness will collate a list of services that will be included in the PT Program Handbook, that the Program will distribute to Faculty and Staff (including Faculty Advisors), and that the Program can use when student issues warrant.</p> <p>The PT Program Co-ordinator attended the Mental Health First Aid Course (June 2016), and a list of Hamilton resources received at this course will be distributed.</p> <p>The PT Program Student Council now has a new position/role: Mental Health Alliance PT Representative. The Assistant Dean (Physiotherapy) will meet with the representative within the next month to further investigate issues from the students' perspective (stress, anxiety due to the program) and</p>	Vanina Dal Bello-Haas Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Summer 2016</p> <p>Summer 2016</p> <p>July 2016</p>

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		<p>to discuss strategies that can be implemented.</p> <p>The outcome of the GSA vote has been brought to the PT Program Student Council's attention. The Council was informed that other SRS student groups intended to write a letter to the GSA and the Council was asked to consider a similar action.</p>		
6	Examine admissions processes, including MMI and international students	<p>With the transition to new PT curriculum September 2017, the admissions process will be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated.</p> <p>Recognizing the need for examination of admissions, the SRS admissions committee will be on hiatus for the 2016-2017 academic year. This hiatus will provide an opportunity for the PT Program (and Occupational Therapy Program) to determine specific Program needs as they relate to admissions and to determine admission criteria that align with the PT Program's mission, graduate outcomes, new curriculum et cetera. The new admissions process may or may not include MMI.</p>	Vanina Dal Bello-Haas Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy	Ongoing over academic year 2016 – 2017
7	Examine unstandardized learning experiences	The Program has been addressing the needs to standardize processes related to teaching and learning for the past four years e.g., developing role documents (Unit Chair, Course Co-ordinators, et cetera); incorporating co-teaching models (tenure-track, tenured faculty with sessional or more experienced with less	Vanina Dal Bello-Haas Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy	Ongoing over academic year 2016 – 2017.

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		<p>experienced sessional) when resources and availability allow; providing policies and procedures to sessional faculty; implementing an annual sessional orientation session.</p> <p>The Program has also developed a new role, Clinical Lab Oversight Coordinator – this individual has been standardizing processes related to the Clinical Lab courses (which many sessionals teach within) and the OSCE processes. As well, the Program hired an individual to work with the Sessional charged with Unit 1 and Unit 2 Clinical Lab courses to develop objectives for individual clinical lab sessions and to develop a clinical lab handbook. It will take some time to see the full benefits of these strategies.</p> <p>Within the new curriculum, strategies will be implemented to underscore student expectations related to Problem-based tutorials e.g., only tenured or tenure-stream faculty will be tutors in the first PBT course to set the stage for expectations. Training of tutors and other related to the new curriculum will be necessary and will be used as an opportunity to address expectations and consistency.</p> <p>The Assistant Dean (Physiotherapy) will meet with to the Department Education Coordinator to develop a</p>		<p>July 2016</p>

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		<p>strategy to more fully understand student concerns.</p> <p>The Department Education Coordinator will be tasked with reviewing current PBT tutor training and developing a plan to enhance training for consistency.</p>		July 2016
8	Examine perception of faculty disconnect from students	<p>The PT Program had MIIETL conduct several focus groups across different cohorts of students, as part of accreditation and IQAP self-studies. This perception was not raised in any of these focus groups. As well, this concern has not been raised by students on course and faculty evaluations, or on graduate surveys. The Program is unclear of the source of this perception, as the data/evidence does not seem to triangulate with the student's comments to the IQAP review team.</p> <p>The Assistant Dean (Physiotherapy) will develop a plan to delve into and more fully understand students' perceptions.</p> <p>The PT Program will monitor sources of data/evidence for this theme.</p>	Vanina Dal Bello-Haas Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy	Ongoing over academic year 2016 – 2017. August 2016
9	Address communication issues related to decisions, and decision-making	<p>Revamping of SRS Council meeting format</p> <p>Leadership retreat</p>	Dr. Patty Solomon Associate Dean SRS	Ongoing Fall, 2016
10	Clarify formal annual review process of staff	McMaster's current practices (Collective Bargaining Agreement) does not enable an annual review process for unionized administrative staff.	Sarah Bouma Director of Administration	N/A

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		McMaster HR is exploring this as an option for future implementation.		
11	Clarify staff members' roles and responsibilities	Review the roles/responsibilities summary shared with faculty (July 2015) and revise the summary to better reflect current admin staff responsibilities. Disseminate to faculty and staff.	Sarah Bouma Director of Administration	July 2016
12	Examine involvement of tenured and tenure-track faculty involvement in REBP	<p>The IQAP team noted the "Impressive number of student projects presented at national and international conferences, and published in journals relevant to physiotherapy" as a strength. The detriment to students re: not having involvement of tenured and tenure-track faculty involvement in REBP is not evident at the present time.</p> <p>As part of curriculum renewal, the REBP course and the REBP project will be reviewed and revised.</p> <p>Involvement of tenured and tenure-track faculty involvement in REBP will be discussed at future PT Program Curriculum Committee meeting (s).</p>	Vanina Dal Bello-Haas Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy	<p>Ongoing over academic year 2016 – 2017.</p> <p>December 2016</p>

Faculty Response:

The review highlighted the demands that the curriculum and learning methodology place on the faculty members. Given the importance of this approach to the program's reputation, the Faculty fully agrees with the strategic decision made by the School of Rehabilitation Science to hire additional faculty. The response of the program regarding IAHS space concerns, communication strategies, mental health services, admissions, and support staff was very thoughtful, as was the program's explanation for the large number of academic staff in non-continuing appointments. The Faculty agrees with the detailed

response to the external review and thank the program and School for their thoroughness in addressing the concerns that relate to the mandate of the IQAP review.

Going forward, the goal is to ensure that the MSc Physiotherapy Program continues to thrive as a leading program that trains the next generation of clinical practitioners for physiotherapy practice. The Faculty appreciates the opportunity to respond to the review and to reiterate their continued support of this valued program.

McMaster 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. The progress report should contain an update on the admissions criteria. A subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.