**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**
**Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**
**Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour**
**Undergraduate Programs**

**Date of Review:**                    March 2 - 3, 2015

*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 undergraduate programs delivered by the **Department of Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, 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 Cyclical Program Review of the**
**Undergraduate Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour Programs**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour submitted a self-study in February 2015 to the Associate Vice-President, Faculty to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs.  The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.  Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers, one from Ontario and one from British Columbia and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean of the Faculty of Science, and selected by the Associate Vice-President, Faculty.  The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 2 - 3, 2015.  The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President, Faculty, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current undergraduate and graduate students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the department and the Dean of the Faculty of Science submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (August 2015).  Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented.  Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the QAC to be submitted to Undergraduate Council and Senate (January 2017).

In their report (May 2015), the Review Team noted the department of Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour (PNB) at McMaster University is one of the very top departments of psychology in Canada. The report highlighted that the program is unique, with focused strength in the NSERC areas of behavioural neuroscience, cognitive neuroscience, and evolutionary psychology, which distinguishes it from other departments of psychology both nationally and internationally.

The following program strengths and areas for improvement were noted:

### Strengths

The Review Team noted key strengths of the department and they highlighted in their report that they came away from their visit very impressed by the high level of commitment and involvement of the PNB faculty and staff with respect to undergraduate education. The report noted that undergraduate students, as well as staff and faculty all are very happy with their program(s), and there is a strong sense of *esprit de corps* throughout the Department. The reviewers reported that this is an outstanding department in which top-flight researchers and an extraordinary staff work in concert to provide an exceptionally strong and very well liked set of undergraduate programs.

### Areas for Improvement

The Review Team's report noted that the existing laboratory space should be reviewed to identify any under-utilized space, which could be used for one or more PNB labs. The report also suggested that the department move forward on a plan to introduce a programming course.

The Dean of the Faculty of Science, in consultation with the Chair of the Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour department shall be responsible for monitoring the recommendations implementation plan. The details of the progress made will be presented in the Progress Report and filed in the Associate Vice-President, Faculty's office.

### Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and the Dean's Responses

**Recommendations**

| Recommendation | Proposed Follow-Up | Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up | Timeline for Addressing Recommendation |
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| Department should not be required to lower its program admission standards at this time. | Department has proposed a gradual approach to adjusting the criteria for granting admission to the Honours programs | | |

| At least one teaching stream faculty positions should be added in the next five years | Continue to work with the Dean's office to acquire the faculty that best serves the needs of the students | Chair of Department | Ongoing |
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| As staff retires, the positions should be replaced. A new position should also be added with half of the duties tracking alumni and the other half absorbing the duties of exiting, over-stretched staff | The department's last projected budget was balanced and received a favourable review by the dean's office. The department believes that PNB has a good chance of being able to replace staff that retire during the next 2 – 3 years. | | |
| Identify existing laboratory space for undergraduate labs and should assist Psychology in finding suitable space(s) in which its student lab courses can be held | The Faculty of Science is currently conducting a review of undergraduate laboratory space and simultaneously, is developing a new undergraduate laboratory for the Life Science program. The department will work with the Associate Dean (Academic) to determine if it is possible to use existing, under-utilized space or the new laboratory for one or more PNB labs | Chair of Department and Associate Dean (Academic) | Update at progress report |
| Under the new budget model, that proportion of the Basic Income Unit (BIU) corresponding to each student's enrolment in PNB (and other Faculty of Science courses) that currently flows to the Faculty of Social Sciences should be routinely transferred to | Recently, the budget model was revised so that inter-faculty teaching was reimbursed at a rate of 100% of tuition. In addition, the Dean of Science continues to have discussions with the Dean of Social Sciences with a comprehensive funding | Dean's Office (see note under Dean's comments below) | Ongoing |

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| the Faculty of Science (in addition to the 100% of tuition being transferred from the Faculty of Social Sciences to the Faculty of Sciences for each PNB or other Faculty of Science course taken by a student registered in the Faculty of Social Sciences). | agreement that would recover costs associated with the Honours BA and BA programs in Psychology. | | |
| Department should be reallocated a teaching stream position with primary expertise in the are of Developmental Psychology to replace the recent departure | The department will advocate for a tenure-track appointment as it is eager to expand its research capacity as well as teaching capacity | Chair of Department | |
| Move forward on plan to introduce a programming course.  A method-related Python course would potentially have appeal and generalizability and would likely be of interest to other students across the Faculty | The department is examining how other programming courses (PHYSICS 2G03) meet the needs of Psychology students and continue to explore the possibility of offering a Python programming course as part of the program. | Chair of Department | Update at progress report |

**Dean's Response:**

**Hiring:**  The Faculty recognizes the implications of the possible retirement of a colleague who teaches several large courses.  Other departments face similar issues and the Faculty has instituted a new system whereby each unit will submit requests for new faculty hires.  The requests will include details on the needs relevant to teaching and research and will be evaluated in terms of enrollment, the degree of "fit" with existing research programs etc.  It is inevitable that the Faculty will be able to make far fewer hires than the number of retirements and the system is designed to ensure new hires are placed in those units with the greatest need.  As for Teaching Stream Faculty, the Faculty of Science is home to many outstanding Teaching Stream appointments and is convinced that it would be in a better position to offer high quality programs if its current allocation of 16 was increased.

Given the financial difficulties facing the Faculty, it is not in a position to guarantee that all staff retirements will be replaced; this is particularly true for individual departments that are in deficit. However, for units not running deficits the Dean is, in general, prepared to support Chair's decisions about staffing needs.  It should be noted however that staff hires must be approved by the Provost's office.

**Funding:**  On funding from the Faculty of Social Science for the Social Science programs with very large contributions from colleagues in PNB, the Provost is currently searching for a new Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and the Dean of Science will engage with the new Dean to continue the discussion.  It is not expected that any new hire relevant to the Social Science programs will be approved until the situation is resolved.

### 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.