

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### **Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**

#### **Health Research Methodology**

**Date of Review: February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>**

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 graduate programs delivered by the Health Research Methodology program. 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.

This Final Assessment Report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible leading the follow up for the proposed recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

#### **Executive Summary of the Health Research Methodology Program Cyclical Program Review**

The Health Research Methodology Program submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies December 2015. 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.

Two external reviewers and one internal reviewer examined the materials and completed a site visit in February 2015. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences; Dean of School of Graduate Studies; Chair of the Health Research Methodology program, and meetings with groups of current students, full-time and part-time faculty and support staff.

The reviewers noted that “overall, the HRM program, its support staff, faculty and graduate students are excellent and there are no substantive areas of concern. McMaster University should be proud of this program and the trainees and faculty that are associated with it.”

The following program strengths and weakness were also noted:

- **Strengths**
  - Well aligned with the priorities of the University.
  - Curriculum and admissions are well aligned with the program learning objectives.

- Admissions committee is responsive to faculty suggestions and needs.
  - Appropriate gradation in skills from MSc to PhD expectations.
  - Innovative courses in Biostatistical Collaboration and Research Ethics.
  - Methods of assessment are fair and explicit, multimodal, build on each other, and provide opportunities for publication.
  - Faculty are excellent, productive, and supportive of students.
  - Students are well supported by program staff.
  - The Assistant Dean provides excellent leadership.
  - PhD students are successful in receiving external support.
  - Students publish at rates that meet expectations for stage.
  - Quality of supervision is excellent.
  - Program addressed any concerns from the previous review.
  - Associate Dean FHS Graduate Studies contributes to the quality of the program.
- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**
    - Community engagement could be further strengthened
    - Admissions process could be streamlined
    - Smaller class sizes are appreciated but there are enrolment pressures and waitlists for some courses
    - Opportunities for cooperative work placements should be explored
    - There may be a divide between clinicians and non-clinicians and an associated need for a "medical bootcamp"
    - Possible need for "statistical testing bootcamp"
    - Method of evaluation for one health economics course is problematic
    - Succession planning for the Assistant Dean should be underway
    - Scholarship opportunities for MSc students are generally in decline. Internal funding allocation models for some student awards are perceived to disadvantage HRM
    - Some students located off-campus feel isolated.
    - Students are concerned about delays in obtaining support from reference librarians
    - Students and faculty would like easier access to information about key procedures and timelines

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

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Follow-Up</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up</b>	<b>Timeline for Addressing Recommendation</b>
<b>Monitor the roll out of the MPH and online diploma program to assess impact on faculty to ensure they can meet the demand.</b>	<b>Regular meetings to discuss coordination of staffing.</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM. F. Scott, Director MPH Director, GDCE</b>	<b>January 2015, and ongoing</b>
<b>Develop a succession plan for the Assistant Dean and consider hiring an associate for this position given the increased workload.</b>	<b>A plan is developed and in place. A candidate has been identified to be Acting Assistant Dean for 6 months during Dr. Hanna's research leave during 2015-16.</b>	<b>H. Schünemann, Chair CEB S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b>	<b>March 2015</b>
<b>Consider streamlining the admissions process for HRM programs</b>	<b>Internal administrative procedures will be reviewed. Areas of possible coordination with other programs in the department will be considered. Many aspects of admissions are controlled by the School of Graduate Studies.</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b>	<b>August 2015</b>
<b>Offer a brief workshop ('boot-camp') to introduce students to the 'nuts and bolts' skills of conducting statistical analysis.</b>	<b>We will assess the feasibility of developing a short course.</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b>	<b>August 2015</b>
<b>Implement an annual progress meeting with each student, her/his</b>	<b>It is not feasible for the Assistant Dean to meeting individually with</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b>	<b>Completed prior to the review.</b>

<p><b>primary supervisor and the program coordinator</b></p>	<p><b>about 175 HRM students on an annual basis. It is a matter of policy that supervisory committees and/or faculty supervisors have primary responsibility for monitoring progress. As alternatives, we have strengthened student orientation procedures and also student tracking and the Assistant Dean offers intervention when progress is problematic. In addition, students and faculty may drop-in to ask program questions with staff (3 drop-in sessions/week) and the Assistant Dean (weekly).</b></p>		
<p><b>Develop regular meetings with HRM and the relevant program partners to facilitate coordination and cooperation</b></p>	<p><b>The Associate Dean has established monthly meetings among program heads. The Assistant Dean HRM meets frequently but not regularly with the Director of Health Policy, and Rehabilitation Science, and also is a member of the program committees for MPH, CIP, MD/PHD, and PMPH. We will discuss with other partners to evaluate interest for more meetings.</b></p>	<p><b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM HRM program partners.</b></p>	<p><b>April 2015</b></p>
<p><b>Explore further opportunities for</b></p>	<p><b>Assistant Dean to request to meet with</b></p>	<p><b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b></p>	<p><b>May 2015</b></p>

<b>building relationships with other departments including Mathematics and Statistics and Rehabilitation Sciences</b>	<b>program heads for Math/Stat and Rehab Science.</b>		
<b>Explore further opportunities for selective development of new on-line courses, or hybrid in class and on-line courses, as needs are identified.</b>	<b>The online GDCE diploma program is scheduled to start fall 2015. A Director of this program will be appointed, and discussions with candidates are underway. After the GDCE begins, we expect improved infrastructure and curriculum leadership for online courses to develop in the Department and we expect feasibility of online offerings to increase.</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM. Director, GDCE</b>	<b>September 2016</b>
<b>Consider making the biostatistical collaboration (HRM 739) and 'research ethics' (HRM 742) courses mandatory for all PhD students and offer in their first year of training</b>	<b>We will consult with field leaders and course instructors to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of this. The courses are currently available to any PHD student who is interested or whose supervisory committee determines that a student needs this.</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM. HRM field leaders Course Coordinator, HRM 739 and HRM 742</b>	<b>August 2015</b>
<b>Work with Graduate Studies to provide orientation on supervision of graduate students for new faculty.  Provide faculty</b>	<b>We will consult with the School of Graduate Studies regarding any orientation material they have developed and consider improved</b>	<b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b>	<b>August 2015</b>

<p><b>development sessions on effective mentorship, challenging issues in graduate student supervision, and career planning.</b></p>	<p><b>orientation for new faculty. The Assistant Dean meets individually with every new faculty member. At the PhD level, supervisors are already asked to attend the PhD orientation with their students. We will also consider better packaging of existing guides and policy orientations to make them more accessible to all faculty.</b></p> <p><b>The Faculty of Health Sciences Program for Faculty Development offers regular sessions on mentorship and teaching skills and these are widely advertised to all faculty in FHS.</b></p> <p><b>We will discuss with other programs to explore the possibility of joint supervision and mentorship offerings to faculty across FHS departments.</b></p>		
<p><b>Develop a policy and create opportunities for cooperative work placements for graduate students</b></p>	<p><b>We have identified a faculty member to establish and Chair a committee to review policies and develop opportunities for cooperative work placements at the</b></p>	<p><b>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</b></p>	<p><b>September 2016</b></p>

	<b>MSc level.</b>		
<p><b>Develop opportunities for career development sessions for graduate students, with student involvement.</b></p> <p><b>Provide career development opportunities for trainees beyond traditional academic paths.</b></p>	<p><b>We will investigate the feasibility of enhancing career development sessions and improving coordination with existing offerings from other sources, such as those in HRMSA and HSGSF student groups. This is to be undertaken as part of the portfolio for the development of cooperative work placements.</b></p>	<p>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</p>	<p><b>September 2016</b></p>
<p><b>Establish awards to reward excellent faculty and graduate students.</b></p>	<p><b>We believe this comment reflects a misperception of the array of award opportunities currently available. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, this includes dozens of awards available to HRM students at the annual FHS Research Plenary. In the department we offer student publication, travel, and presentation awards as well at least three competitive scholarships, all specific to HRM students.</b></p> <p><b>We will evaluate the feasibility of establishing an HRM Alumni award and annual lecture.</b></p> <p><b>The department</b></p>		<p><b>Complete prior to review.</b></p>

	offers four annual faculty awards for teaching excellence and excellence for supervision in HRM.		
Disseminate information about TA and RA opportunities for graduate students and ensure that TA roles provide experience beyond administrative support for the course.	TA opportunities for courses outside HRM are managed and advertised in a central competition under the terms of a collective agreement. For opportunities for PHD students who TA in HRM courses, we will review duties to ensure that the scope of the duties is not restricted to administrative support.	S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.	May 2015
Develop a database/social networking site for student research interests to facilitate networking	<p>We will establish a contact list for students and keep it up to date.</p> <p>We have had discussions with the HRMSA student group about the feasibility of a social networking database of interests and have agreed to offer them support for the development and maintenance of such a site given that we cannot manage it centrally.</p> <p>We have also had discussions with HRMSA to consider using McMaster's learning portfolio as a tool to highlight student</p>	S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM. HRMSA executive.	October 2015



	<p>accomplishments and experiences on avenue to learn. All registered McMaster students have access to the learning portfolio and can select which items to share with other avenue users.</p>		
<p>Consider if there is sufficient expertise in qualitative methods and health services research to meet the needs of the students. Similarly, biostatistics is an area that will likely require additional faculty recruitment in future.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean to discuss with the Chair, CEB in relation to departmental hiring priorities.</p> <p>A group of CEB educational program heads and the Department Education Coordinator to meet in February 2015 to discuss coordination of education needs. We agreed to develop joint mapping of teaching assignments to existing faculty to identify gaps in the department.</p> <p>A proposal for improved coordination of education resources is expected to be a deliverable of the current departmental review process initiated in Fall of 2014.</p>	<p>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</p> <p>H. Schünemann, Chair CEB</p> <p>CEB: Working group on education coordination: S. Hanna L. Schwartz A. Iorio A. McKibbin F. Scott S. Monteiro</p>	<p>June 2015.</p>
<p>Use the expertise in health sciences education to develop and test</p>	<p>The Assistant Dean met with a faculty member from Program for</p>	<p>S. Hanna, Assistant Dean HRM.</p> <p>F. Scott, Director</p>	<p>February 2015 and ongoing.</p>

different modes of teaching	Educational Research and Development in February 2015 along with the Director MPH to discuss this issue and we agreed to continue a joint initiative to develop and evaluate experimental approaches in selected HRM and MPH courses.	MPH S. Monteiro, CEB & PERD.	
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**Dean’s Response:**

The Dean noted that they fully supported the program’s response to the reviewers’ recommendations.

**Roll out of the MPH program and new diploma:** The Dean also noted that prior to receipt of the report from the review team, actions were already underway to ensure that the implementation of the new diploma program and Master of Public Health program would have the appropriate faculty engagement, to ensure the success of the new programs as well as the continued success of the HRM program.

**Succession planning for Assistant Dean:** The succession planning is well underway and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies will meet with the candidate for Acting Assistant Dean during Dr. Hanna’s research leave.

**Collaboration with other programs:** The Dean noted that HRM has a track record of effective collaboration with other graduate programs and confirmed that the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for the Faculty supports these efforts. The Dean also confirmed that HRM had collaborated with other programs to develop realistic and effective plans for collaborative course offerings in the upcoming academic year.

**Orientation session for new faculty supervisors:** The Dean supported the reviewers’ suggestion that the School of Graduate Studies should develop an orientation session for new faculty supervisors of graduate studies. She also supported the program’s response outlining the additional supports offered by the program and Faculty to mentor new supervisors.

**Additional career development support for students:** The Dean noted that, while it wasn’t included in the program’s response, “My Grad Skills” courses (now available to all McMaster graduate students), offer additional career development supports that supplement what is offered by the HRM program and Health Sciences Graduate Studies Office.

## **Quality Assurance Committee Recommendations**

The reviewers' report was positive and the program has laid out a very clear plan for moving forward. Overall, the committee had no concerns about this review.

The QAC recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.