

## Final Assessment Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Review  
Biochemistry Program (Graduate)

**Date of Review:** July 24-25, 2012

**Review Team Members:** Dr. Joseph Lam, University of Guelph  
Dr. Samantha Gruenheid, McGill University  
Dr. Alex Adronov, McMaster University

### Summary:

The Reviewers noted the Biochemistry program is a flagship program for McMaster University and is an outstanding program with the reputation of one of the best in Canada. Graduate students have excelled in the program and are very satisfied with their experience. The program is at the leading edge of graduate education in the field and students have excelled in obtaining external funding, publishing and successfully moving on the next stage of their career. Recommendations from the last review have been addressed and the Reviewers have no major concerns.

The Reviewers offered some suggestions for the ongoing development to the program, which are listed below.

On the whole, the Program and Faculty of Health Sciences are very pleased with the review and are heartened by the positive assessment of the quality of the program. The Program is in agreement with the Reviewer's recommendations which will further enhance the student experience.

Following a review of the IQAP Reviewers Report, the Chair's response and the Dean's response, the Quality Assurance Committee had no further recommendations. The Program will be reviewed again following our normal quality assurance schedule.

Suggestions	Implementation Plan
Add a section to the Committee Meeting forms to track overtime students	The Program will work with the School of Graduate Studies to change the form. The Associate Chair, Graduate Education currently meets individually with overtime students to review their degree completion plan.
Facilitate faculty member presentations/talks on the research ongoing in their labs and host an annual research forum for graduate students.	The Program will advertise the current department seminar series to graduate students. The annual Faculty of Health Science Research Plenary is an excellent opportunity for graduate students to showcase their work and the Program will encourage students to participate.

<p>Admissions: Work towards implementing an electronic database for the handling of new applications</p>	<p>The program has been investigating this for a number of years to allow faculty members who are offsite or traveling to review files from applicants who have received conditional offers of acceptance. It would also alleviate the administrative burden. The program will explore this further with technology support staff at McMaster with a view towards developing a secure protected database to go live for the 2013 recruitment period.</p>
<p>Teaching and Assessment: Provide more clarity on the distinction between the Comprehensive Exam and a regular supervisory committee meeting and whether the exam designation is necessary</p>	<p>All Ph.D. candidates at McMaster are expected to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the discipline in their field of research and a Comprehensive Exam is required as outlined in the Graduate Calendar. While we continue to evaluate forms of comprehensive examinations that best serve the needs of our students, we have no formal plans at this point to modify our comprehensive exam structure.</p>
<p>Time to Completion: Improvement of Time to Completion</p>	<p>Times to completion for the Ph.D. were brought up for consideration. Over the past 7 years the program has reduced the average time of completion from 4.7 years to 4.3 years, putting us well within the national norms. The program values steady progress through the program with a view to on-time completion and also places a strong emphasis on scholarship output to maximize future competitiveness, which often requires additional time in program.</p>
<p>TA Allocation: Do not assign TA positions to senior Ph.D. students in their final 2 years to assist with time to completions</p>	<p>The program reviewed this issue recently and decided that Masters students would be assigned TA positions, giving more dedicated time to spend on their research program, course work and acclimatization to the program. The move to reduce the load for Masters students requires that all in-time Ph.D. students be assigned TA positions in order to fulfill the TA requirements to the undergraduate program. Further is program is bound by the collective agreement for TAs which obligates the program to provide TA positions to doctoral students for four years. The program does not assign TA positions to Ph.D. students beyond year 4 allowing overtime students to focus on degree completion.</p>
<p>Offer Workshops or non-credit courses to Ph.D. to enrich their educational experience in certain</p>	<p>The program agrees with this and will launch a survey in the Fall 2012 term to collect information</p>

technological areas

from current students on the value of non-credit workshops and to identify relevant topics. The anticipated roll out of any new workshops would occur in 2013 for topics the students have deemed high-priority.