

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Kinesiology

Date of Review: April 10 – 11, 2014

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 Kinesiology. 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 Kinesiology program submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies in February 2014. 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 April 2014. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Dean of the Faculty of Science; Dean of School of Graduate Studies; Chair of the Department, and meetings with groups of current students, full-time and part-time faculty and support staff.

Strengths

- In their report the review team found the graduate programs in the Department of Kinesiology, leading to the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees to be very strong, noting that it has historically been and continues to be among the best in North America.
- They note that the combination of excellent facilities and faculty has allowed the program to flourish.
- The department attracts graduate students that are some of the best both nationally and internationally.
- The quality indicators tracked by the department are impressive, and it is great to see these indicators point to a healthy graduate studies program.
- It is impressive that the department ensures its graduate students have broad skills, such as communication of research findings and teaching skills, as well as awareness of career possibilities outside academia.

Weaknesses

- The major weakness noted was the decline in the number of faculty, particularly in the areas of motor control and biomechanics. These are pillars in the field of kinesiology; this erosion represents a serious threat to all the strengths mentioned prior. It is imperative that this weakness be remedied, with highest priority.
- Related to the above, and this weakness is becoming more apparent every year, is that the department is not able to offer graduate courses on focus areas important to the discipline.

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

Recommendations

1. Declining Faculty Complement

"There is really only one concern; however, it is major and its repercussions imminent. The faculty complement has dropped precipitously in recent years. In fact, both external reviewers were genuinely surprised to see how small the faculty complement was relative to the Department's impact and reputation. The loss of faculty has been 'unmanaged' in the sense that it has occurred due to departures and retirements for which there have been no replacements. The Department now finds itself in a situation where two areas, both of which are pillars in the field of kinesiology, are perilously close to becoming nonviable: motor control and biomechanics. Without these two foundational areas, the Department could no longer lay claim to being a department of 'kinesiology'."

Department Response: "Our Department is cognizant of the current financial challenges facing the University and the Faculty, and remains committed to the Academic Planning Process that is currently underway in Science. There is no denying, however, that continued erosion of our faculty complement is jeopardizing the longstanding reputational excellence of Kinesiology at McMaster, to the point where external assessors warn that the Department may not qualify to offer bona fide training in kinesiology, the discipline we ostensibly represent. The seriousness of the threat posed to our graduate and undergraduate programs has been clearly articulated in two quality assurance reviews conducted over the last two years."

Dean's Response: The Dean noted that the Faculty of Science is engaged in an Academic Planning exercise, the likely outcome of which will be the establishment of a Faculty committee that will evaluate proposals for faculty hires on an annual basis. He also noted that he was keenly aware of the importance of faculty renewal in Kinesiology to continued excellence in graduate education.

Responsibility for Leading Follow Up: Faculty Dean/Department

Timeline for Addressing Recommendation: Update at 18-month follow-up report

2. Admissions

The reviewers suggested accepting all applications from interested students rather than pre-filtering potential candidates.

Department Response: They maintain that their current admission procedures are evidence of a high degree of due diligence on the part of graduate faculty that ultimately saves both the department and the student time and money. That said, we recognize the logic behind the reviewer's suggestion in this regard and we will certainly raise the issue for full discussion at our Graduate Management and Graduate C&P committees.

Responsibility for Leading Follow Up: Department/Department Chair

Timeline for Addressing Recommendation: Update at 18-month follow-up report

3. Teaching Resources

The reviewers suggested streamlining the undergraduate program to allow for more attention to the graduate and research programs.

Department Response: The department appreciates the reviewers' suggestion that they revisit and refine the undergraduate curriculum in order to focus more directly on graduate supervision, teaching and research. The department takes great pride in the delivery of their undergraduate program and any path taken in such a revisiting would have to be undertaken in such a way as to ensure that the integrity and quality of their undergraduate courses is in no way undermined.

Responsibility for Leading Follow Up: Department/Department Chair

Timeline for Addressing Recommendation: Update at 18-month follow-up report

4. Community Engaged

The reviewers note that some of the community engagement graduate TA placement may not be the best use of the TA's time and does not give them the teaching or research related experience that most require.

Department Response: With respect to the concern that graduate students assigned to the PACE are underutilized and perhaps inappropriately deployed, the department has begun drafting a best practices document, identifying appropriate tasks for grad student TAs in the PACE, and skills that students should expect to apply and develop.

Responsibility for Leading Follow Up: Department/Department Chair

Timeline for Addressing Recommendation: Update at 18-month follow-up report

5. Non-academic Career Training for Graduate Students

Graduate students indicated they would like the opportunity for applied practical experience in non-academic careers coordinated by the department.

Department Response: The program is aware that not all of their students will seek/find positions in academia. They will bring the issue forward at their next Graduate Curriculum & Policy Committee meeting.

Responsibility for Leading Follow Up: Department/Department Chair

Timeline for Addressing Recommendation: Update at 18-month follow-up report

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the documentation associated with the review and determined that the external reviewer's report as well as the program response was positive and that no further action was required until the program comes up for review during the regular cycle with a progress report due in 18 months.