

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

School of Rehabilitation Science Graduate Programs

Date of Review: October 16 - 17, 2013

*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 **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 Cyclical Program Review of the Graduate Programs in the
School of Rehabilitation Science**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the School of Rehabilitation Science submitted a self-study in September 2013 to the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its 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 Alberta, and one internal reviewer were selected by the Associate Vice-President (Academic), Health Sciences and Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies. They reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on October 16-17, 2013. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies; Associate Vice-President (Academic) Health Sciences, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies (Health Sciences), Associate Dean School of Rehabilitation Science; Assistant Dean, School of Rehabilitation Science and meetings with groups of current Ph.D. and MSc students, full-time faculty and support staff. The Review Team also had an opportunity to tour the School of Rehabilitation Science.

The Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Graduate Program and the Associate Vice-President, Academic, Faculty of Health Sciences, submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (January/February 2014). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included. McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee determined that the external reviewers report was extremely positive in its assessment of this program. The QAC recommend that there is no further action required until the program comes for review during the regular cycle. The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the QAC to be submitted to Graduate Council and Senate (January 2014).

In their report (November 2013), the Review Team provided feedback that describes how the graduate programs in the School of Rehabilitation Science meet the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) evaluation criteria and are consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The Review Team members were consistently impressed by the graduate programs offered within the School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS). The faculty and students who make up the program are highly productive with respect to research and have good rates of success with external research funding. Faculty members enjoy a strong reputation nationally and internationally and this is demonstrated through the program's ability to attract a strong pool of both domestic and international applicants. With respect to curriculum and teaching, SRS was quick to respond to the opportunities presented by the online course-based MSc and has developed a program that appeals to both those in the OT/PT field and in other allied professions. With respect to thesis-based programs, there is no doubt that SRS offers a rigorous, research-intensive graduate experience with strong emphasis on problem-based learning and knowledge translation. The Review Team also noted that SRS offers a supportive and collegial work environment. Mentoring – among faculty and between faculty and students – was emphasized repeatedly and there appear to be effective lines of communication among and between faculty, administrative staff, and graduate students.

The following program strengths and weaknesses were noted:

Strengths

- Excellence of faculty and the quality of graduate supervision provided
- Diversity and interdisciplinary of curriculum and trainees
- High rate of external success of students. External fellowships are exceptionally successful and Ph.D. graduates have been successful in moving into funded postdoctoral fellowships and academic positions.
- Positive mentorship between faculty and students and effective communication amongst faculty, administration, and graduate students
- Trainees at all levels are completing on time

Weaknesses

- Funding package for graduate students could be revised
- Minimal opportunities for students to gain teaching experience
- Distribution of students per supervisor is not balanced

The Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program submitted a response to the Reviewers' Report (January 23, 2014). The Associate Vice-President, Academic submitted her response to the Reviewers' Report and the Program's Response on February 26, 2014. Specific recommendations were discussed, along with follow-up actions to aid in addressing the recommendations. The Associate Vice-President, Academic, in consultation with the Associate Dean, Rehabilitation Sciences and Director of the School of Rehabilitation Sciences shall be responsible for monitoring the recommendations implementation plan. The details of the progress made will be presented in the 18-month Follow Up Report and filed in the School of Graduate Studies.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Associate Vice-President, Academic's Responses Recommendations

- 1. The funding package for graduate students is a concern, and although the Assistant Dean is credited for innovative ways of creating funding packages for thesis route students, the School of Rehabilitation Science needs to develop more long-term strategies for both MSc and PhD students.**

Response: The Department plans to consult with the Associate Dean of the School of Rehabilitation Science in developing a plan for teaching assistantships within the SRS.

The Department will also develop a process for the Master's course-based degree option courses to use PhD students as instructors, (to be offered as a teaching assistantship for selected students), to increase Teaching Assistant opportunities while maintaining high quality education within the online option.

Finally, the Department plans to develop a strategy for international trainees with clinical backgrounds to more quickly obtain their permanent resident status to improve the feasibility of enrolling international trainees.

The Associate Vice-President, Academic acknowledged that there have been significant challenges in today's funding environment and that the School of Rehabilitation Science is keenly aware of these challenges and has undertaken a review of additional internal funding opportunities, such as teaching assistantships. The AVP Academic also noted that the monies for funding Rehabilitation Science program students, aside from centrally allocated and external scholarship supports, will likely need to come from within the School of Rehabilitation Science.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program in consultation with Associate Dean of School of Rehabilitation Science

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 2. Upcoming retirement of senior faculty members will require a transition plan to ensure the on-going quality of supervision and level of productivity.**

Response: The Assistant Dean has been proactively engaging new faculty in mentorship to prepare them to take on a greater role in supervision. All new faculty members have been placed on committees, as a means of providing director mentorship on supervision. The Assistant Dean also meets individually with new faculty about their development as a supervisor and regular luncheons are scheduled where senior and junior faculty meet to discuss issues on graduate supervision.

The Associate Vice-President, Academic noted that the program has discussed an effective process by which junior faculty become engaged and thoroughly support while gaining experience in supervision of trainees. The Associate Vice-President, Academic expressed her confidence in the department's assessment that the program is able to provide excellent and ongoing supervision to its graduate students.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 3. The Review Team encouraged the program and students to consider focusing on meaningful teaching experiences as a way of developing their teaching dossier.**

Response:

The Program has suggested developing a database of skills/areas of content expertise that students wish to make themselves available for internal guest lectures/teaching sessions. This would then be circulated to faculty to let them know which students could be contacted for guest lectures or other requested educational experiences.

The Program also proposes to amend the comprehensive process to allow those interested in education to make their knowledge translation component be an educational project (evaluation of curriculum, development of a course outline/resources, and in-depth development of an educational module/resource)

Finally, the Program will invite McMaster's Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (MIETL) to do an annual presentation in the Rehabilitation Science Skills Series that would address development as an educator.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

4. The Review Team recommended obtaining balance between offering a diversity of courses to meet all the trainees' needs and not overextending faculty teaching assignments.

Response: The Rehabilitation Curriculum Committee will continue to review the enrolment of all courses annually and will discuss implications for the course offerings.

The Program will continue to obtain feedback from trainees through the monthly training meeting, and specifically request an annual discussion on curriculum offerings.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program working with Program and Faculty curriculum committees

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

5. The Review Team suggested clarifying expectations of program requirements for both students coming from internal and external Master's programs, as some trainees who have come from external Master's programs felt disadvantaged because the expectations or program requirements were different for them.

Response:

The Program noted that the expectations/requirements are no different for students who continue into the Ph.D. program from McMaster's Master's program in comparison to those who have done their training elsewhere. Some applicants with a Master's degree from an external university may not have taken a previous theory course, so they would be required to complete those courses upon entering the program. The Program noted that they think this idea is a misconception among students and will not require any change in the current practice; however, they will investigate further.

The Associate Vice-President, Academic advised that the program has indicated that it is currently reviewing their comprehensive examination process and MSc to PhD transfer process, in addition to a review of the program fields. These changes are expected to be reviewed by program and Faculty curriculum committees in the coming months, and will aid in further clarifying program expectations for students and hone existing program strengths.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

6. The Review Team recommended looking at formal opportunities for students to be involved in guiding the program.

Response: The Department plans to develop, in consultation with students, a number of topics that they should be providing feedback to the program on during the course of the monthly meetings. These

topics would include: curriculum, software needs, space/resources, topics for the skill series, and any other issues identified by trainees.

Responsibility for Following Up: Assistant Dean, Rehabilitation Science Graduate Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee determined that the external reviewers report was extremely positive in its assessment of this program. The QAC recommend that there is no further action required until the program comes for review during the regular cycle with a progress report due in 18 months.

