

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Rehabilitation Sciences, M.Sc. and Ph.D.

Date of Review: November 5 and 6, 2020

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 Rehabilitation Sciences. 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

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Rehabilitation Science program submitted a self-study in October 2020 to the Vice-Provost 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 and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a remote review on November 5th and 6th, 2020. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research, Assistant Dean of the department and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Assistant Dean of the program and the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (January and February 2021). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

Strengths

- The Program has considerable infrastructure to support the development and maintenance of strong supervisory relationships.
- The Program Handbook is comprehensive, clear, and helpful for students and faculty
- The participation rubric for participation in the course-based stream is effective in promoting engagement.
- All of the students (current and alumni) in our meetings expressed a positive opinion of their learning experience in the RS program. The summaries from exit interviews and focus groups revealed many positive comments.
- The exemplary leadership of Dr Julie Richardson, Assistant Dean, in terms of her vigilant oversight of the program, creation of the dynamic milieu and generous mentorship to the students and faculty in the RS program, is an essential stimulus for the productivity and success of the program.
- The pedagogical support for the online Master's program is excellent, with some variation in the instructor delivery method, the program is well delivered. This reflects the considerable contributions pedagogical support for on-line teaching and leadership of Prof. Shami Dhillon. as noted by the instructors which has enhanced that program's delivery and success.

Areas for Enhancement or Improvement

- Monitor the dual degree program with respect to the effectiveness of interview question regarding time management competence and capacity of the learner to excel in a demanding program that requires trainees to rapidly develop research and clinical skills in a compressed time.
- Seek methods to reduce turnover in the administration support position(s).
- Build in a succession plan to provide future leadership opportunities for faculty in managing the RS program and to introduce leadership redundancy into the RS program.
- Clearly communicate the funding situation for dual degree learners. Investigate ways to support them financially during the clinical component of their program.
- It is unclear whether the course-based program conducts exit interviews. If not conducted this may be an area for program investment in order to retain the excellence in learning for this particular program.
- Consider enhancing formal opportunities for learner input into the program functions.
- While community partnerships are a strength of the Program, the path to greater internationalization is not clear. The Program should endeavor to establish a more coherent internationalization plan.
- Encourage a reflection about structural bias (i.e., sexism, racism, ableism) within the teaching and assessment activities and where students may be experiencing oppressive content.
- The Program may work to find ways for faculty to have better balance in their workloads, so that they may engage in more teaching.

- The students indicate a desire to have more courses taught by faculty whenever possible.

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

Implementation Plan

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
<p>Students need to be more aware of the Wellness resources available to them within the university</p>	<p>Currently the university resources relating to wellness are available to RS students within the RS Student Handbook. In response to the recommendation, we created a folder within the Avenue to Learn RS Graduate Student Resources course shell, to upload important links and resources pertaining to student wellness. One of the resources made available is a video created by the Graduate Wellness Team that presents the services offered through the McMaster Student Wellness Center.</p> <p>Access to these resources is also discussed during the student orientation by staff from the Student Wellness Centre. To increase the students' awareness about these resources we will send out a reminder email once every term of where the resources can be accessed. We will then seek feedback from the students about the success of this communication.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean</p>	<p>Immediately Jan 2021 – June 2021</p>
<p>Monitor Dual degree program with respect to competency of time management and capacity of learner</p>	<p>The admissions committee will continue to target questions related to time management and learner capacity. As the reviewers note this is a new program and we are learning from the students' experiences that are admitted. The Assistant Dean (AD) will continue also to have frequent meetings with this group to monitor progress.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean RS in consultation with AD of PT and OT programs.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring during meetings with students and further emphasis and implementation in 2021 admissions cycle interviews for Dual Option program.</p>
<p>Seek methods to reduce turnover</p>	<p>The level of the position and the part time nature (21 hours per week) may be two</p>	<p>RS Assistant Dean, Vice</p>	<p>Ongoing will be reassessed</p>

<p>in the part-time position of administration support with the program</p>	<p>reasons for the high turnover for this position. The level is appropriate for the responsibility. The position will continue to be reviewed with consideration of the needs of the program and the availability of resources. The part time nature can be addressed by finding other employment within SRS or university. We will attempt to accommodate requests from persons in this position so that stability can be maintained.</p>	<p>Dean SRS and Director of Administration</p>	<p>June 2021.</p>
<p>Build a succession plan to provide future leadership opportunities for faculty in managing the RS program to introduce leadership redundancy into the RS program.</p>	<p>Dr Richardson the incumbent AD at the time of the IQAP review will be retiring as of July 2021 and there are plans for succession for this position. The faculty who serve on the admissions committee, the oversight committee, supervisors and curriculum committee all contribute substantially to the RS program and many of the more senior faculty who have had a number of students graduate are well placed to take the AD role.</p>	<p>SRS Vice Dean RS AD</p>	<p>Jan-June 2021</p>
<p>Clearly communicate the funding situation for Dual degree learners. Investigate ways to support them financially during the clinical program</p>	<p>It is made very clear to students both at the interview and in their letter of offer they will be responsible for funding their education during the two years of training in the professional program. We will continue to look for opportunities to provide funding support for these two years. However, unless there is a substantial donation in this regard it seems the program/and the SRS would be unlikely to fund this. We will also further encourage these students to apply for OGS scholarships.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Exit interviews for the course based program maybe an area to retain excellence for this program</p>	<p>We undertook a survey prior to IQAP of learners who had recently completed the course program. We plan to enhance this survey and conduct it on an annual basis. Conducting exit interviews are time intensive and more difficult to achieve with working clinicians. We will monitor whether the survey for the course-based program over the next 2-3 years provides richness in feedback.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean</p>	<p>Jan-June 2021</p>
<p>Consider enhancing formal opportunities for learner input into program</p>	<p>This is an excellent suggestion and we have recently recruited a student to join the interview panel with the Assistant Deans of PT, OT and RA for the Dual option program admissions.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean</p>	<p>Immediately Evaluate June 2021</p>

<p>functions</p>	<p>Students also currently contribute as program ambassadors and within the student council. We will explore the opportunity for a student representative on the curriculum committee.</p>		
<p>The program should establish a more coherent internationalisation plan</p>	<p>The RS program is committed to develop globally aware graduates with the internationally competitive skills which enables them to participate and contribute to addressing global issues and remaining globally connected through research and scholarship. The RS program has in the past year initiated some links with a graduate program in Rwanda which included co-supervision and curriculum sharing. We will look to formalising this relationship in the future and set one goal on Internationalisation for the program in the next 2-3 months. In addition, the FHS is planning a major review of its Office of Global Health and it's internationalization strategy in Spring of 2021, and this will be a timely opportunity for the program to position itself within this initiative. The Vice Dean, SRS, is a member of the FHS Committee on Internationalisation which will be exploring formal international collaborations.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean RS and SRS Vice Dean</p>	<p>Jan-March 2021</p>
<p>Encourage reflection about structural bias (i.e. sexism, racism, ableism) with the teaching and assessment activities and where students may be experiencing oppressive content</p>	<p>The AD met with the student representatives on the SRS Anti-racism anti Black and anti-oppression committee (ARABAO) and members of the student council to respond to this recommendation.</p> <p>In the Fall of 2020, the RS student council undertook an anti-racism survey of the RS students which was anonymous. We have also attached the specific related activities with the RS program during Fall 2020. We have further activities planned during Jan-July 2021. The students feel that we are hypersensitive to equity diversity and inclusion and have an "eyes wide open", safe, aware and informed approach to these issues". There is also mechanism being introduced at the SRS level where both students, staff and faculty who experience or witness issues can access resources and report the incidents. The program has also</p>	<p>RS Assistant Dean, ARABAO representative s and RS student Council and Faculty within the RS program.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Formally evaluated again June 2021.</p>

	<p>successfully graduated students with significant disabilities including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, spinal cord injury, visual impairment and mental health issues. However, these issues are of immense importance and can easily become sidelined. Therefore, we will continue to prioritize reflection of these issues within the student body and at a faculty level within the program.</p>		
<p>The program, may work to find ways for faculty to have better balance in their workloads so that they can engage in more teaching</p>	<p>The faculty workloads are not determined at a program level but rather by SRS faculty meeting with the Vice Dean SRS in consultation with the AD of the programs. We will continue to monitor workloads so that opportunity to teach within RS can be afforded to faculty over time.</p>	<p>Vice Dean and Assistant Dean RS</p>	<p>Jan 2021- 22</p>
<p>The students indicate a desire to have more courses taught by faculty when ever possible</p>	<p>Since the previous IQAP, we have developed four new courses for the thesis-based programs: Measurement of Outcomes in Rehabilitation Science (REHAB 719);Special Topics in Statistical Methods for Rehabilitation Science (REHAB 717), The Role of Rehabilitation in Chronic Disease Management (REHAB 716) and Mobility Across Adult Life Course – A Rehabilitation Perspective REHAB 718). At the present time we offer 9 courses within RS and the thesis-based students have access to further courses in other programs through cross referencing. There are no plans to develop further courses but we will keep monitoring the need and requests from students in novel and areas which create unmet needs for students.</p>	<p>Assistant Dean RS</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Dean's Response, Faculty of Health Sciences

The Dean thanked the reviewers for their work and appreciated that the reviewers identified strengths of the program including the “exemplary” leadership of the Assistant Dean, Dr. Richardson, and also of Dr. Dhillon for her leadership of the online program. The reviewers state that the faculty in the School of Rehabilitation Science are among the most productive rehabilitation researchers in Canada. The program has implemented the infrastructure support required for strong supervisory relationships for thesis students, as well as to promote participation among students in the course-based program, which they describe as a “gem” among the offerings. The Dean was encouraged to hear that students

expressed positive views of the program. The reviewers state that the Rehabilitation Science programs have effectively addressed all suggestions from the previous IQAP review.

They are grateful for the reviewers' thoughtful work in identifying areas for improvement and their specific recommendations and have reviewed the program's response to the review and strongly support School's detailed plan for addressing the recommendations.

While noting that the learning environment and experience seems to be "superb", the reviewers suggest enhancement of safe and effective pathways for students to express concerns about wellness, interpersonal difficulties, and EDI issues. They agree and endorse the steps taken by the RS program and the School, including clearer communication regarding wellness supports. They particularly note the potential role of the SRS ARABO committee as a conduit for students and faculty to reflect on issues of structural inequity, to communicate personal concerns, and to be involved in concrete EDI action in the School. The program has supplied additional documentation about ARABO with their reply to the reviewer's report.

In regard to the reviewers' suggestions for a more coherent internationalization plan, they note that this will need to be addressed within the context of the emerging plans of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and indeed, the whole institution. A review of the Faculty's Office of Global Health is planned for spring of 2021, and we expect a significant reappraisal of the internationalization strategy for the institution, as a whole. The School of Rehabilitation Science is well positioned to provide leadership in this endeavor and to benefit from the renewal of internationalization efforts.

They thanked the program for their excellent IQAP self-study and their commitment to address the recommendations, acknowledged that the site visit occurred during the disruption associated with COVID-19, and congratulated and thanked the reviewers, program, and SGS staff for their innovation and can-do attitude in mounting a site visit online.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the Feb 2021 meeting and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than eight years after the start of the last review.