

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Department of Health, Aging and Society B.A., M.A. Ph.D.

Date of Review: April 27 and 28, 2021

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 undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by the Department of Health, Aging and Society. 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 Department of Health, Aging and Society submitted a self-study in April 2021 to the Vice-Provost Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and 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 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 Social Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a review on April 27 and 28, 2021. The review included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Vice-Provost Faculty, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, Associate Dean, Academic and Associate Dean, Graduate Studies of Faculty of Social Sciences, Acting Chair of the Department of Health, Aging and Society, Graduate and Undergraduate Chairs of the Department of Health, Aging and Society and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Acting Chair of the Department of Health, Aging and Society and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (October 2021 and September 2022 respectively). Specific recommendations were discussed, and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

The following program strengths were identified:

The review team noted that the department and its programs incorporate a number of strengths, including:

- The existence of a respectful, engaged, collaborative culture, and the shared values of faculty, staff, and students. This emerges in various activities incorporating commitments to critical inquiry, diversity, equity and inclusion, community-engagement, and interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship.
- A commitment to, and emphasis on, creative engagement and innovation throughout the undergraduate and graduate programs. This helping to foster, in students, personal growth and a passion for learning. This includes specifically a strong engagement with experiential learning and community engaged learning across the curriculum. The latter helps students transfer abstract learned concepts from the classroom to the 'real world'.
- Strong linkages in teaching and research with other faculties, departments and programs at McMaster University. This further promotes interdisciplinarity and the ability to pose and answer complex social and political questions.
- Student access to highly-published, and well-respected faculty and excellent research centres; the latter providing learning and research opportunities.

The following areas of improvement were suggested:

Many specific recommendations were made by the reviewers (described in the table below). But, in general:

- The review team noted that research and community opportunities for students could be extended, more clearly articulated and publicized.
- They also noted that more core capacity is required for teaching and supervising in the areas of mental health and aging

More specific areas program enhancement described in the report are directly reflected in the recommendations, discussed below.

Implementation Plan

The Department acknowledges the care, effort, and time that the reviewers put into their visit and overall review. They highlighted that the reviewers understood their department and programs - including their strengths and limits - and that they had the best interests of their students, faculty, and staff very much in mind.

The Department highlight that their responses vary in terms of both their magnitude (ranging from minor tweaks to major changes in processes or content), and their state of implementation (ranging from now completed to in progress, to yet to be discussed). They also acknowledge that development and improvement is an ongoing process, and certainly does not end with their responses here.

	Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
Admissions				
1.	Reconsider the designation of the undergraduate programs as limited enrollment programs.	Traditionally we have limited our Aging and Society programs the most in terms of their enrollment numbers (due to their greater use of community resources). A review of the overall situation will be conducted by the undergraduate committee. This review will be informed by a prior scoping review of comparable programs in the faculty.	Department Chair, Undergraduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022 academic year
Curriculum (UG)				
2.	Increase opportunities for field course placements with community organizations that focus on public health, social aspects of health, and mental health.	When the Government of Ontario introduced experiential education into some of the metrics for post-secondary education a few years ago, we undertook a thorough review of our programs and courses. We were able to document that a large proportion of our courses	Undergraduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022

		<p>include an experiential component:</p> <p>All of our undergraduate students are required to take one of two courses that are centred around experiential education: HLTHAGE 3B03 - Advanced Research Inquiry or HLTHAGE 3G03 - Community Based Research.</p> <p>Many of our 4th year thesis students also do projects that include experiential education.</p> <p>Finally, we note that HLTHAGE 3EE3 – The practice of everyday life, and 3BB3 – Field Research - provide multiple opportunities with over twenty community partners.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor and seek improvement of our experiential education offerings and better communicate them to students.</p> <p>More generally, the Faculty Office has recently begun work to set up paid internship opportunities (co-ops) for Social Science students. They are going to be piloted next year, before transitioning to a situation where they are regularly offered to</p>		
--	--	---	--	--

		students. The department will encourage students to take part in this initiative.		
3.	Revise the thesis course (HLTHAGE 4Z03) to incorporate more opportunities for feedback on writing (proposal and thesis) and ongoing feedback on the project.	Advice will be given to thesis supervisors that they need to provide early and continued feedback. However, on the whole, over the years supervisors have provided excellent support.	Course instructor – Gavin Andrews	2021
4.	Align writing expectations and formats (for example, APA 6 or APA 7) and provide extra academic writing supports in first and second year foundational courses.	These possibilities will be discussed in a future undergraduate committee meeting. However, we do like to provide freedom and flexibility with regard to such things as referencing styles (as long as established formats are used consistency)	Undergraduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022
5.	Consider adding inquiry-based components into HLTHAGE 1AA3 for students who enter the program through the Social Science I pathway.	We note that these courses serve a dual role of providing a foundation for students who later enter our program, but also providing an elective for students who will never be in our programs. Yet we do provide inquiry-based approaches through class discussions and small group projects based on real world health issues. We will work to incorporate more inquiry into Level I courses with balancing these dual objectives in mind (and within our resource constraints).	Course Instructor Sarah Clancy	2021-2022

Curriculum (grad)				
6.	Differentiate learning outcomes - or at least establish levels of achievement- for the one and two-year MA programs.	We already make clear the differences between our one and two-year MA programs. However, we will revisit the learning outcomes for the 1-year and 2-year programs and bring them to the fore in our program information.	Graduate Chair and graduate committee	2021-2022
7.	Increase advanced course offerings for methods and gerontology for PhD students.	The two research methods courses are mandatory for all PhD students, but we will discuss alternatives (e.g., advanced method courses or gerontology as reading courses for interested doctoral students, geared toward their dissertation)	Graduate Chair and graduate committee	2021-2022
8.	Consider ways to include community engagement for learning and research into the curriculum.	These opportunities are already widely provided, although we will be able to make them more clear in the new database (discussed below)	Department Chair	2021-2022
9.	Community opportunities might be extended further with a view to future careers – for (post)graduate students	Inquire about the possibility of a student placement officer at the Faculty level	Department Chair	2021
Curriculum (general)				
10.	Reflect on lessons learned from the move to remote teaching and learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that could be used to increase accessibility and remove barriers to learning.	This is an exercise that the Faculty of Social Sciences will be engaging in, and we will be an active participant.	Department Chair, Undergraduate Chair and Graduate Chair	2021-2023
Teaching and Assessment				

11.	Ensure that MRP students have the opportunity to present their work (e.g., to fellow students or the department).	We will consider an annual symposium for MRP students to present their research to their peers. We will also consider regular zoom 'drop in sessions' where one or two students can present their work at a time.	Graduate Chair and graduate committee	2021-2022
12.	Include an external member in the composition of PhD Comprehensive Examination Committees.	We do not intend to add an external member to comprehensive examination committees. We already have an arms-length chair and the process is working well.		
Resources to Meet Program Requirements				
13.	Increase the availability of scholarships for international students in the graduate program. This may require creative solutions if additional financial resources are not forthcoming.	We have already committed a substantial share of our departmental discretionary funds to international student scholarships, something that we commenced with the incoming 2020 cohort. We will continue to seek ways to enhance this.	Department Chair and Graduate Chair	2021-2022
14.	Consider increasing the undergraduate administrative assistant role to a 1.0 FTE as the program grows.	This position is one that we have been actively reviewing at regular intervals in consultation with the Dean's office. This to ensure that our staff resources are consistent with those of other departments. We will review the situation again at the end of the 2021-22 academic year.	Department Chair	September 2022
15.	Find creative ways to reduce reliance on sessional instructors and increase the number of	We have consistently monitored our use of sessional instructors, and it is not inconsistent with		

	<p>core HAS faculty with a full commitment to the undergraduate and graduate HAS programs.</p>	<p>other departments. We do not have a consistent number of courses covered by sessionals each year (which would suggest a structural problem). Instead, we have seen substantial variability from year to year, reflecting the need to cover sabbaticals and teaching releases for administrative and research purposes.</p> <p>Our department has a large number of faculty serving in administrative roles outside the department, and also a high proportion of jointly appointed faculty, which we have mitigated with Contract-Limited (CLA) Assistant Professor appointments as much as possible.</p>		
<p>16.</p>	<p>Increase teaching capacity in the areas of mental health and gerontology/aging.</p>	<p>At the time of the review we were already in the process of redressing this through our efforts to fill the vacant Gilbrea Chair in Aging & Mental Health. The search committee has now recommended a candidate, and this person will start their appointment in January 2022.</p> <p>We also are also just starting the process of searching for a tenure track faculty in the area of social psychology and mental health (jointly with the social</p>	<p>Search Committee(s)</p>	<p>January-July 2022</p>

		psychology program). The successful candidate could well have an interest in aging. We expect them to start on July 1, 2022.		
Quality Indicators				
17.	In order to both strengthen and build on the quality of successful programs, creation of full-time faculty appointments in the areas of aging and mental health are strongly encouraged.	(answer as above)	(answer as above)	(answer as above)
Program and General Enhancement				
18.	Consider eliminating the 3-year Health & Aging BA.	We have attempted to do so previously, but the program has proven to be useful for a number of students, at no additional cost to us. To explain... the curriculum is the same for the Honors 4-year degree and the 3-year BA. The 3-year BA allows students who want to move on to other education (e.g., medical school, college diploma) or the workforce, to 'have something to show' for their efforts. The only downside to the 3-year BA is that the Faculty receives a larger provincial grant amount for Honours students. We have mitigated the impact of this funding discrepancy by individually phoning eligible students each year to encourage them to transfer to Honours.		

19.	Consider differentiating the Health & Aging MA and articulating differentiated program learning outcomes to better reflect the choice between Health & Aging or Health & Society.	We will consider this possibility at a future graduate committee meeting.	Graduate Chair and graduate committee	2021-2022
20.	Create a strategic vision for the direction of the Aging & Society BA program.	We will consider this possibility at a future undergraduate committee meeting	Undergraduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022
21.	Increase faculty capacity with aging/gerontology expertise.	(answer as above)	(answer as above)	(answer as above)
22.	Increase faculty capacity with mental health and addictions expertise.	(answer as above)	(answer as above)	(answer as above)
23.	Explore creative ways to increase advanced course offerings for PhD students.	We will investigate ways that we can offer more specialized courses to graduate students that take advantage of faculty expertise.	Graduate Chair and graduate committee	2021-22
24.	Explore ways to enhance the sense of community among undergraduate students.	<p>We always work closely with HASSA (the student association) and will continue to do so. In addition, we hold dedicated sessions with direct entry cohorts to foster a sense of identity and cohesion in them.</p> <p>The first year of the direct-entry program already includes the mandatory course 1ZZ3 which is limited to those in Health & Society I. It was designed with creating a sense of community very much in mind.</p>		
25.	Increase experiential learning opportunities for applied and	These opportunities are already widely provided, though we will be able to	Department Chair	2021-2022

	community-engaged research for graduate students.	make them more clear in the new database (discussed below)		
26.	Enhance the offerings of job-readiness workshops and seminars by including a stronger focus on non-academic jobs and career pathways for undergraduate students, and expand professional workshop offerings to MA students.	We already offer a professional development seminar for PhD students which is well attended and well received. We will consider doing more in future for MA and BA students.	Undergraduate Chair, and undergraduate committee; Graduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022
27.	Integrate opportunities for building workforce skills into the undergraduate curriculum.	We feel that this would detract from the academic nature of our programs, and would be difficult to achieve given the wide-range of careers students enter from our programs		
28.	Continue working to enhance EDI within the curriculum and among HAS faculty and students.	We have addressed this by including EDI as a new standing agenda item in our monthly departmental meetings. Faculty and staff will bring EDI teaching and research issues to the group, whilst the department chair will provide updates on EDI issues at the university level	Department Chair	Ongoing
System of Governance				

29.	Provide sessional instructors with a vision/mission/principles document based on the culture and expectations in the department.	We will consider this at a future undergraduate committee meeting. We have already created a version of the Faculty's Instructor Handbook that is specifically tailored to our department. We have started to issue this to all new sessionals and CLAs	Undergraduate Chair and undergraduate committee	2021-2022
Academic Services				
30.	Think about how to more explicitly promote links with centres and networks to encourage student involvement, and possibly attract students from other units.	As suggested by the reviewers, a database of community partners, research centres, and networks will be developed and disseminated (including their varied activities offered) so that opportunities are clearer for graduate students and undergraduate students alike.	Department Chair	2021-2022

Dean's Response, Faculty of Social Sciences

The IQAP review team consisting of external members Dr. Lynn Martin (Lakehead University) and Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (University of Calgary), and internal member Dr. Tina Moffat (Anthropology), conducted its review of the undergraduate and graduate programs of the Department of Health, Aging and Society on April 27-28, 2021. I thank the reviewers for their thoughtful review and recommendations regarding how to enhance the educational programs in Health, Aging and Society. The recommendations will be helpful to both the department and me in the coming years as we undertake further efforts to strengthen the programs. Herein I provide my response to the report.

Overall, the assessment of the Department and its educational programs is highly positive. The reviewers emphasize the respectful, engaged, collaborative culture, and strong values shared by the faculty, staff, and students; the department's commitment to critical inquiry, equity and on community-engaged, and interdisciplinary work; and the educational programs' emphases on critical thinking,

creative engagement, and innovation. The reviewers highlight the large extent of community engagement across the curriculum through multiple types of opportunities for students.

The extensive review report also offers a large number of recommendations, many of them focused on quite detailed aspects of the department and programs. In its submission the program responds to each recommendation by outlining how it will act on each, with a particular focus on those within the Department control. In this response I focus on those recommendations and areas for improvement for which the Faculty plays a critical role or where Faculty initiatives can support the department's response.

Community engagement and experiential opportunities. While noting that there are already many opportunities for community-engaged, often experiential learning, the reviewers recommend further expansion of these efforts at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Such an evolution of community-based, experiential programming is consistent with the priorities of the Faculty of Social Sciences, which recently hired a Senior Manager for Experiential Learning and has identified as one of its strategic priorities expanded experiential learning opportunities and expanded engagement in both learning and research with our local community. These Faculty-wide initiatives can support Health, Aging and Society in its work on these aspects of its programs.

Strengthen opportunities for career development and professionalization for students. Similarly, such work aligns with the priorities of the Faculty of Social Sciences, which recently hired a Manager of Career Services to support career development and preparation by undergraduate students. This Manager will develop both careers-related programming and events, often in collaboration with department and program student societies, and individual-level career guidance. The Faculty of Social Sciences is also developing a co-op option, starting with a pilot involving three department and subsequently to be expanded to all interested departments in the Faculty. Together, we believe that expanded experiential opportunities, career counselling and career-focused events, and the co-op option will strengthen opportunities for career development and professionalization for students in Health, Aging and Society as well as across the Faculty. At the graduate level, professionalization is a high priority for the Faculty's Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and is the focus of a cross-faculty initiative of the School of Graduate Studies. This can support the Department in its own efforts in this regard.

Increase Resources Available to the Educational programs.

The reviewers identify multiple areas for which additional resources would strengthen the program. The Faculty is working with the department in each of those areas. The Faculty has increased the staffing in the undergraduate assistant role. It has increased support for the recruitment of international graduate students (a Faculty-wide initiative). It has supported the recruitment of a new faculty member with a specialization in mental health (joint with the social psychology program; start date Nov 2, 2022) and the recruitment of a new Gilbrea Chair in Aging and Mental Health whose research focuses on social dimensions of dementia (start date January 1, 2022). This hire also addresses the recommendation to strengthen capacity in aging/gerontology. Both hires will reduce reliance on sessional instructors.

In closing, I would again emphasize that Health, Aging and Society is a strong department with growing programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. I know that the Department will take the recommendations seriously and act on them in ways to advance its programs. The Faculty will support the Department in this work.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the December 2022 meeting, and the Committee recommends that the Health, Aging and Society undergraduate and graduate programs should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted not later than eight years after the start of the last review.