

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

#### Master of Public Health

**Date of Review: March 2 and 3, 2023**

*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 Master of Public Health program. 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 Master of Public Health program submitted a self-study in February 2023 to the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its graduate program. 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 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 review on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. The review included interviews with the Deputy Provost; Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Vice-Dean and Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Director of the program and meetings with groups of current students, faculty and support staff.

The Director of the program and the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (April and June 2023). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

- **Strengths**
  - The core values and mission of the Program align closely to the University's mission.

- Application numbers are high, and the Program has reached its targeted admission numbers. Program learning outcomes are based on the Public Health Agency of Canada's Core Competencies and align with graduate degree level expectations.
- The Program curriculum, spurred by the recent 2019 strategic retreat, is well rounded, shows evidence of continuous innovation and creativity, and reflects the current state of the public health discipline.
- Modes of teaching delivery are appropriate, and emphasis is placed on exposing students to applied public health settings and related problems.
- The MPH Program also capitalizes on an accomplished faculty and has extensive links to the community.
- Student registration numbers, attrition rates, time-to- completion, graduation rates, and academic awards are all acceptable and rates of graduation, and employment post-graduation are strong with the majority of students working in the field of public health.
- The Program Director and administrative staff are highly competent and work effectively as a team.
- Academic services to support the program are also appropriate and students have access to a comprehensive assortment of resources.

### **Areas for Improvement**

1. The Program should identify its unique “brand” and vision which will help provide a roadmap for program enhancements.
2. The Program should attempt to track the nature of its student body and increase recruitment of equity seeking groups.
3. The curricular map should be re-examined to confirm that all students will acquire the required competencies irrespective of the courses taken.
4. Reasons for the low student ratings of the Leadership and Applied Public Health should be ascertained, and appropriate corrective action taken.
5. Attempts should be made to ensure that there is no overlap between the course timings of core and elective courses.
6. The Capstone course should be reviewed to ensure its rigor and that it meets programmatic needs.
7. The number of international practicum sites should be increased and opportunities with the Global Nexis program should be leveraged.
8. The practicum search process could be improved based on student feedback to decrease student stress.
9. The needs of thesis students looking for qualitative research depth and thesis opportunities should be assessed.
10. The supervisory committees for thesis stream students’ needs to be re-assessed and should consist of full-time faculty with graduate supervisory status.
11. Data collection on practicum site experience, preceptor qualifications and student feedback should be systematized; reports from this should be reviewed annually to maintain practicum site (and supervisor) suitability.

12. The mix of core and faculty with part-time appointments teaching MPH courses should be examined and steps should be taken to ensure sustainability of this mix for the medium to long term.
13. Budget transparency should be implemented at the program level. Recommendation #
14. The availability of TA support should be ensured, especially for the faculty with part-time appointments.
15. The role of the graduate diploma in Community and Public Health and how it will impact/interact with the MPH program should be clarified.

## Implementation Plan

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

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
<b>PROGRAM LEVEL</b>			
<p>Recommendation #1: The Program should identify its unique “brand”. Clarifying where the Program wants to be in the future will help provide a roadmap for program enhancements. This will allow the Program to be more proactive rather than reactive.</p>	<p>The program supports the idea of strengthening its brand by developing a marketing plan that better highlights: 1) the unique aspects of the program - its research and policy expertise, as well as the choice of thesis and practicum streams; 2) leverages the strategic mission that was developed by the program’s 2019 strategic mission planning exercise</p>	<p>MPH program director, core faculty members, program administrator, HEI communications manager</p>	<p>Commence marketing plan discussions in Fall 2023 and implement in 2024.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: The Program should attempt to track the nature of its student body and increase recruitment of equity seeking groups. The review team acknowledges that this may be challenging, but nonetheless such efforts should be made.</p>	<p>The program has been thinking about diversity in admissions for the past year and partnered with a PhD student to do an environmental scan on diversity in admissions to identify measures that should be collected to track how the program can better</p>	<p>MPH Program Director, MPH program committee and Program administrative team, HEI Associate Chair FA-EDI.</p>	<p>The program will review environmental scan data starting in Fall 2023 and will initiate discussions with MPH program committee and HEI Associate Chair FA-EDI</p>

	support equity seeking groups. The program will review the environmental scan and identify potential ways that the program can improve in this area.		
<b>CURRICULUM</b>			
Recommendation #3: The curricular map be re-examined to confirm that all students will acquire the required competencies irrespective of the courses taken. Gaps, if any are identified, in the acquisition of competencies, should be rectified by appropriate mechanisms.	The MPH curriculum committee will form a task force to review curricular gaps	Program Director and Curriculum Committee	Beginning in the 2023 fall term, the curriculum committee will review curriculum map and identify gaps. Necessary changes will be proposed and will be brought forward to GPCC as needed.
Recommendation #4: Reasons for the low student ratings of the Leadership and Applied Public Health should be ascertained, and appropriate corrective action taken.	The curriculum committee, with participation of the HEI Associate Chair Education and Associate Chair FA-EDI, will be will review the student course evaluations, seek instructor feedback and identify, recommend, and monitor the implementation of necessary changes.	Program Director, Curriculum Committee, HEI Associate Chairs	The curriculum committee will review the feed-back in the spring, and provide recommendation within the summer; the instructor will review the recommendations in the fall, and proceed to implementation or course revisions (the latter will be presented to GPCC, if necessary, for approval within the start of the subsequent academic year).
Recommendation #5: While this is not fully under the control of the Program, attempts should be made to ensure that there is no overlap between the course timings of core and elective courses.	Student planning to take electives external to the program will be advised to plan as much ahead as possible, and will be made aware of potential clashes. Core course and internal elective delivering will be adapted as much as possible to	Program administrative team (Program Director, Curriculum coordinator and Program Administrator)	Starting in Spring/Summer 2023 the Program administrative team will conduct a mapping exercise to try and mitigate any major overlap issues

	the needs of students requesting external electives.		
Recommendation #6: Review the Capstone course to ensure its rigor and that it meets programmatic needs.	Environmental scan of MPH capstone requirements will be conducted to refine capstone report	Program Director	Summer 2023 conduct an environmental scan of MPH capstone requirements, Fall term 2023 present findings to curriculum committee for input on final suggestions/improvements
<b>TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT</b>			
Recommendation #7: Increase the number of international practicum sites. The program should leverage the excellent international connections of McMaster faculty; in addition, the proposed Global Nexus should be targeted in this regard.	Since the MPH program at McMaster is relatively new compared to other long-standing programs, the primary objective was to find local practicums. In 2022 we started having the first few students were approved to complete international practicums. We do think it would be beneficial to explore additional practicum sites. Therefore the program director will: 1) meet again with Gerry Wright the Executive director of Global Nexus in to explore ways to collaborate; 2) The program will re-visit the idea of having a practicum fair and explore ways to leverage HEI and program communication channels to extend relationships with new and existing practicum partners	Program Director & Program committee	Fall 2023 the program director will meet with Gerry write Winter 2024 Program will explore the idea of practicum fair and ways to better leverage communication channels to expand practicum relationships
Recommendation #8: The practicum search process could be improved based on student feedback to decrease student stress.	A process evaluation will be conducted along with student focus group to identify gaps in practicum application process	Program director and MPH curriculum coordinator	June-July 2023 the Program director and curriculum coordinator will explore ways to implement

			process evaluation in Fall – Winter 2023-2024
Recommendation #9: The needs of thesis students looking for qualitative research depth and thesis opportunities should be understood better. The program could work with other programs in FHS so students can take qualitative research courses.	There are qualitative courses offered in FHS and cross-listed at McMaster that students in HEI department can take. The Program Direction, supported by the HEI Education Council, will explore the reciprocal relationship to determine how many reserved seats can be made available. Also, HEI will undertake a Department wide review of courses offered, their uptake and their relevance to the existing programs, with the goal of ideally re-direct resources to areas of need, including qualitative research..	Program Director and Education Council	Spring/Summer 2023 Program director follow up with Educational Council and HEI faculty member to explore opportunities to develop a qualitative course in the department. Additionally during the summer 2023 term the MPH PD will reach out to allied programs to identify possibility of accessing seats for MPH, in exchange for seats in the MPH or HRM courses of interests to the allied programs.
Recommendation #10: Ensure that supervisory committees for thesis stream students consist of full-time faculty with graduate supervisory status. Faculty with part-time appointments do not meet university requirements to be part of graduate student committees.	To the program's knowledge only full-time faculty members have served as supervisors; however part-time faculty have served on committees	Program administrative team	Spring/Summer 2023 term the program administrative team will review past thesis committee membership to identify if there has been a pattern of such approval. Should there be an issue we will improve supervisory screening process on the MPH program end that will be implemented Fall 2024
Recommendation #11: Data collection on practicum site experience, preceptor qualifications and student feedback be systematized; reports from this be reviewed annually to maintain	In 2020 the program implemented InPlace to help to better track practicum related data. The PD reviews the information on practicum site experience, preceptor qualifications etc; however has the	Program director and curriculum coordinator	Starting in Fall 2024 the program committee will review practicum quality assurance processes and identify gaps for improvements

<p>practicum site (and supervisor) suitability.</p>	<p>reviews point out this can be better systematized. The program will review data points and processes to enhance processes</p>		
<b>RESOURCES TO MEET PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS</b>			
<p>Recommendation #12: Examine the mix of core and faculty with part-time appointments teaching the courses and take steps to ensure sustainability of this mix for the medium to long term.</p>	<p>The department is aware of the programs reliance on part-time faculty. The model has worked successfully for the world leading HRM MSc and PhD program for over 30 years. Most part-time faculties are alumni, strongly committed and providing high quality teaching. Both full and part-time faculty undergo yearly career reviews, which will be used over the next cycles to encourage full time faculty to take on teaching commitments within the MPH program.</p>	<p>HEI Chair, HEI Associate Chair Education and Program Director</p>	<p>The program director will work with the HEI Chair, the Associate Chair Education and the Educational Council starting in fall 2023 and for the subsequent years career review cycles.</p>
<p>Recommendation #13: Ensure budget transparency at the program level.</p>	<p>The Department Finance Committee will review the program budget with the Program Director and MPH core faculty as a minimum every six months.</p>	<p>HEI Chair, HEI Finance Committee and Program Director</p>	<p>As part of the current budget planning cycle, the HEI department has instituted a thorough review of the MPH budget, with participation of the Program director and core faculty members.</p>
<p>Recommendation #14: Ensure continued availability of TA support, especially for the faculty with part-time appointments.</p>	<p>The Program Director and the core faculty members will review the budget allocation to TA support, both for the internal allocation of MPH budget and to explore within the HEI educational council opportunities for cost-sharing</p>	<p>MPH Program Director, HEI Educational Council, School of Graduate Studies</p>	<p>Starting in the spring 2023 the PD and the HEI Educational Council will hold meetings with relevant stakeholders to optimize the budget availability for TAs.</p>



	models among the various Programs (and particularly HRM PhD and HP PhD)..		
<b>QUALITY INDICATORS</b>			
Recommendation #15: Clarify the role of the graduate diploma in Community and Public Health and how it will impact/interact with the MPH program.	GDCPH is an educational offering that is meant for learners who are looking to gain knowledge and skill in how to apply a public health lens to their current professional work or for those that want to upskill in public health. Learners who complete the diploma may then apply to the MPH and two courses taken in GDCPH can count as two elective courses in the MPH. The expected launch of GDCPH is September 2023 and a new director will be identified by the end of Spring/Summer 2023. It is expected that the new director will be able to further identify ways in which GDCPH will interact with MPH	GDCPH director and MPH program Director	By the end of 2023 Spring/Summer term, the GDCPH and MPH director will have outlined further interactions and impacts of GDCPH with MPH.

## **Dean's Response, Faculty of Health Sciences**

We thank Drs. Monique Potvin Kent, Amardeep Thind, and Nancy Carter for their thoughtful and constructive review of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program. The reviewers note many strengths of the program, including high interest from applicants, a well-rounded curriculum, and participation by accomplished faculty. The review includes 15 recommendations for improving the program in areas that include marketing and recruitment, curriculum, and practicums. We are confident that the program leadership team is carefully considering and will respond appropriately to these suggestions.

Regarding the expansion of international practicum placements, we acknowledge that while this may be a direction to explore, the administrative, oversight, and funding requirements of such placements gives us pause. This suggestion does, however, dovetail with the reviewers' encouragement to better consider the program's "branding" and its aspirations for McMaster MPH's place in the sector. If the focus is meant to highlight public health research, then the enhancement of its thesis-stream may be a key priority. Whatever the outcome of this reassessment, the optimal size of the program is an ongoing question; the program remains quite small relative to demand, admitting fewer than 35 students per year from a pool of over 600 applications annually. The ability to expand the program will undoubtedly depend on the financial case and on the place of the program among the priorities of the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (HEI). In this regard, we view the arrival of the newly approved Graduate Diploma in Community and Public Health as evidence of HEI's investment in a public health agenda with the potential to build capacity to support the MPH.

We thank the Program leaders and staff for mounting the site visit and for their ongoing contributions to excellence in graduate education in the Faculty of Health Sciences. We further thank the staff in the School of Graduate Studies for their invaluable support during this process.

## **Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation**

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the January 25, 2024, meeting. The committee recommends that the Master of Public Health 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.