

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

#### Business Ph.D.

**Date of Review: April 25 – 27, 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 Business Ph.D. 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 Business Ph.D. program submitted a self-study in March 2022 to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its 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 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 Business, 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 April 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The review included interviews with the Vice-Provost Faculty, on behalf of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, the Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research, Area Chairs of the program and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The lead of the program and the Dean of the Faculty of Business submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (March 2023). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

- **Strengths**

It was gratifying to see that overall, the review team is very impressed with the DeGroote PhD program and that students expressed that they are largely satisfied with their program experience, with good prospects for completing the program, publishing research, and attaining academic jobs

in a competitive market. The program was recognized as being well-managed, with a rigorous curriculum, and with strong students and faculty. The ability to recruit academically qualified and capable students was seen as a program strength, as was the commitment to ensuring candidate bring quantitative skills, which are further developed and applied throughout the program curricula. Faculty success in securing external research grants, holding research chairs, and recruiting talented students that leverage faculty expertise were all seen as contributing to research productivity.

- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**

Four areas for improvement were identified by the reviewers:

1. Improving student funding,
2. Addressing time to completion,
3. Addressing variation between fields in the number of required courses, comprehensive examination, and thesis proposal practices. The concern raised was that this variation may create a sense of inequity between students in different fields, and may prohibit learning from best practices across the seven fields.
4. Building more social community between students and faculty to support student mental health as we emerge from the pandemic.

In addition, two initiatives from the previous review are also considered:

- Adding the Strategic Management field, with work already underway in this regard.
- Introducing a Master of Science degree which may help to address program issues pertaining to time to completion and funding.

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

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Follow-Up</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up</b>	<b>Timeline for Addressing Recommendation</b>

<b>FUNDING</b> 1. Explore opportunities to increase PhD student funding, particularly for international students. Possible approaches include matched funding beyond a low base student number per field and allocating a share of funds clawed back from domestic student award winners to some international students who do not qualify for these.	Conduct analysis of minimum and maximum funding for international students in DeGroote program and across McMaster to understand current range of funding. Compare with competitor universities (e.g. Queen's and McGill).	AD Graduate Studies with Program Coordinator to conduct internal/external analysis.	Target completion by April 2023.
	Explore offering some internal awards for international students.	AD Graduate Studies	Target completion by April 2023.
	Explore the viability of increasing the level and duration of funding for doctoral students.	AD Graduate Studies together with Area Chairs will explore options, and develop the most effective and sustainable model.	April 2023

2. Find the resources needed to provide access to databases and/or cooperate with other faculties (e.g., economics) to coordinate investment in these resources	Conduct a survey of required databases by PhD students in different fields. Consider funding options within DSB and work with other faculties on this if appropriate.	AD Graduate Studies & Program Coordinator in consultation with Associate Dean, Research.	Target completion by June 2023.
3. Investigate whether School of Business can offer fifth year funding to students.	Explore a model that will increase annual graduate support amount, and the duration of funding from 4 years to 5 years.	AD Graduate Studies together with Area Chairs will explore options, and develop the most effective and sustainable model.	Target completion by April 2023.
<b>TIME TO COMPLETION</b> 4. Provide course exemptions to students who have taken an equivalent course in another program or at another institution.	This policy is already in place but its implementation should be reviewed. Undertake a more comprehensive review of courses to ensure consistency across courses/supervisors/fields. It is important to ensure that we exempt equivalent courses taken elsewhere not replace them to support time to completion.	AD Graduate studies and Program Coordinator in consultation with Area Chairs.	Target completion by May 2023.
5. Consider streamlining and shortening the comprehensive exam process. Consider a take-home exam geared towards the student's area of research that	This needs to be considered by the PhD Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and by each field to ensure as much consistency as possible across the program.	AD Graduate Studies working with Area Chairs in each field.	Target completion by June 2023.

will expedite program completion.			
6. Encourage and enable students to expedite the development of their thesis proposal. Depending on the field, this may be done by reducing required courses and/or explicitly designing course deliverables and a comprehensive examination that directly contribute to the student's research proposal.	<p>For streamlining comprehensive exam see 5. Above.</p> <p>Work with Area Chairs to consider ways to ensure some of the required disciplinary knowledge has been captured before entry into the program so as to reduce the number of courses required.</p>	AD Graduate Studies and Area Chairs	Target completion by May 2023.
7. Enforce the rule in the PhD handbook that says full-time students must complete their proposal early in Year 3.	<p>Work with Area Chairs to convey the need to take this requirement seriously.</p> <p>Work with PhD Coordinator to better communicate this requirement to all students from start of first year.</p>	AD Graduate Studies, Area Chairs, and Program Coordinator.	Target completion by May 2023
<b>VARIATION BTW FIELDS</b> 8. Commit to exploring how programs can be modified to reflect best practices and more consistency, while respecting real differences in the needs of the fields. This could start by developing similar	Refer to 5 above.	AD Graduate Studies working with Area Chairs in each field.	June 2023

comprehensive exam protocols and milestone targets.			
9. Examine whether more course flexibility can be offered to students in fields that have limited flexibility. Some students indicated that they would like the opportunity to choose electives more relevant to their specific research interests.	Given the high number of required courses in each field, adding more electives will not help with completion time. On the other hand exempting students from taking courses they have already taken under previous degrees is already in place (See Point 4 above)	AD Graduate studies and Program Coordinator in consultation with Area Chairs.	Target completion by May 2023.
10. In fields with a high course load, it may be worth revisiting admission requirements and recruiting students with appropriate academic background (e.g., a master's in economics). This would allow them to be granted advanced standing and reduce the number of required courses.	See Points 4 and 9 above.	AD Graduate studies and Program Coordinator in consultation with Area Chairs.	Target completion by May 2023.
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b> 11. Acknowledge and address how isolation associated with the pandemic has affected the program's scholarly and social community.	Proactively share support resources with students and provide training opportunities for faculty supervisors.  Create a monthly event, such as 'tea and talk', or 'coffee and chat' or "pot-luck" or "career talks" as an	Program Coordinator, working with the DeGroote Doctoral Student Association (DDSA) and Area Chairs.	Start Fall, 2022

Create opportunities for students to connect with students outside of course work in areas where these connections are less common.	informal gathering inviting all PhD Students and Supervisors to connect in lobby of DSB building. Area Chairs to ensure at least one faculty member attends each event.		
12. Offer common workshops for students going on the job market.	Scan best practice at other universities. Work with Area Chairs and DDSA to develop support and offer workshops as appropriate.	Program Coordinator	Target: Summer 2023
13. Develop program-wide approaches to acquiring teaching competency and experience and preparation for the job market.	Continue to encourage students to take available courses.	Associate Dean and Program Coordinator	Winter 2023
14. Require PhD students (intending to pursue academic career) to take at least 1 to 2 MacPherson Institute courses prior to PhD completion.	See Point 13 above	See 13. Above.	See 13 above.
<b>ENHANCEMENTS</b> 15. Work with the Strategic Management Area, the University and School of Graduate Studies levels to introduce a strategic management field to round out the field offerings.	Work is already underway to propose a new Strategic Management field. Application to go to School of Graduate Studies and then through standard university process.	Area Chair Strategic Management with Associate Dean Graduate Studies	Winter 2023
16. Properly evaluate the	Work with Area Chairs, the Dean's office and SGS	AD Graduate Studies	Target start date: Fall, 2024

implementation of a Master of Science program to complement the PhD. Assessing this option would require consideration of several issues.			
<p>OTHER AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <p>17. Engage in more active recruitment efforts. These include developing a marketing brochure (including digital ones) for the PhD program that faculty can share in their professional networks, leveraging social media where appropriate and offering information sessions for prospective PhD students.</p>	Work with Admissions Team of Specialized Graduate Programs and the DSB Marketing and Community Engagement Department to develop a recruitment plan.	Program Coordinator and Admissions Officer.	Targeted for May 2023
18. The Program should follow through on the idea of implementing common deadlines for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications to the program.	This work is already underway by the Admissions team.	Admissions officer	September 2022



### **Faculty Response**

The Dean thanked the reviewers for their work and noted their review was comprehensive and helpful to the DeGroote PhD Program going forward. The extremely positive assessment underscores the strengths of the PhD program, which indeed reflects the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of faculty members and staff.

The review team identified four areas of improvement, and Associate Deans Dr. Gillian Mulvale and Dr. Manish Verma have addressed the recommendations.

The Dean addressed the main areas of improvement suggested by the reviewers and the program:

- **Student Funding:** The faculty is committed to increasing the level and duration of funding for doctoral students, in a way that is sustainable and effective.
- **Time to completion:** The faculty is in support of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) working with the different PhD fields to encourage admitting students with more relevant backgrounds so that the required number of courses can be reduced; working with the PhD fields to strongly encourage students to defend their PhD proposals early in year 3 and try to have as much consistency as possible across fields while respecting disciplinary variations.
- **Mental Health:** The faculty will support the various initiatives of the program in this area.
- The faculty is also in support of Adding the Strategic Management field; and introducing a Master of Science degree which can act, in part, as a feeder to the PhD program.

### **Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation**

**McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation, and the Committee recommends that the Business Ph.D. program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted 7 years after the start of the last review.**