



Program Progress Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

PROGRAM NAME

Medical Sciences Graduate Program

Date of Site Visit: March 22-23, 2022

Progress Report Prepared by: Judith West-Mays, Assistant Dean of Medical Sciences

**Please outline below how recommendations from the initial program review have been addressed.
[Please fill in one table for each recommendation from the original Final Assessment Report]**

Recommendation: For the program to continue to thrive and promote bench-to-clinic interactions it is recommended that McMaster reinvigorate the clinician-scientist model and/or enhance opportunities for clinicians to engage with research faculty.
Responsibility for Implementation: Assistant Dean
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed X. In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: The program continues to encourage doctoral supervisory committees to include a clinician where appropriate. Recent initiatives to add associate committee members (often clinicians) to committees has been implemented. The program will continue to support collaboration between research program students and MD/PhD students to exchange different perspectives.

Dean's Comments:

We support the program's response and have no further comment.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

QAC reviewed this report and had no further comments or concerns.

Recommendation:

We encourage the program to consider adopting a core course. This would serve to provide a standard knowledge model and perhaps more importantly provide students an opportunity to develop a program-based sense of community.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean; Executive Committee**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Completed**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

The program's Executive team has thoroughly discussed the possibility of having the highly enrolled course, MEDSCI 771 (Research Methodology in Health Sciences), as a core course. It was decided that while this is a very popular course, based on the diversity of research interests in our program, there should remain flexibility for course selection. Other initiatives have been developed that provide a sense of community within our program including organized events by the program and the student association (MMSSA) as well as the student run mentorship group.

<https://medsci.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/current-students/beyond-the-lab/>

Dean's Comments:

We agree that core curriculum is best driven by common learning outcomes and we support the program's focus on events, including their annual research day, for building cohesion with the cohort.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We recommend increased awareness and promotion of McMaster's FIAP program.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean and Admissions Director and Program Staff**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Completed**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

A description of the FIAP program is posted on our website and will continue to be highlighted in our newly updated website. Nonetheless, have taken action to make it more visible to our stakeholders and it is on the first section on our "How to Apply" page and the link takes you to the FIAP site.
<https://medsci.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/prospective-students/how-to-apply/>

Dean's Comments:

We agree that the FIAP process should be highlighted. We encourage the program to liaise with the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge (IHLL) to improve the awareness of the program among the Indigenous communities they serve. The Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies for Health Sciences is working with the IHLL and the Associate Dean of Indigenous Health to develop a working group on graduate issues for Indigenous Health and this will facilitate the connections to the Medical Sciences program. However, the effectiveness of the FIAP process is fundamentally limited by the degree to which potential applicants can see themselves and their aspirations represented in the institution. The Faculty of Health Sciences continues to focus on developing institutional capacity to support Indigenous learners and research, including the hiring of Indigenous faculty and policies that facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the supervision of graduate students.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We recommend continuing to introduce the Area Coordinators during the fall orientation, and adding a mandatory group-based midsemester check-in meeting. This second meeting would provide students an opportunity to ask Area Coordinators question(s) that they may not have had at the orientation meeting.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean, Area Coordinators, Program Staff**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Completed**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

A mid-semester check in meeting with Area Coordinators as well as a general meeting run by the Assistant Dean has been set for this year and we will continue to implement in the future.

Dean's Comments:

We support the program's response and have no further comment.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We recommend that SGS provide greater support and timely response(s) to student, faculty, and administrative inquiries.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean, Program Staff and SGS**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Ongoing**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

SGS was made aware of this and will follow-up to better understand this perception. We encourage our students to notify program staff if they encounter difficulties in receiving support from SGS. Our staff are often aware of extenuating circumstances that may explain perceived delays at SGS and, if required, will advocate on behalf of the student.

Dean's Comments:

We urge caution when interpreting the attributions of faculty, students, and staff about the cause of delays. In all cases, the program should work collaboratively with stakeholders across campus and take ownership of effective advisement of its students.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We recommend that supervisor contributions to student stipends are not scaled back when a student is awarded a tri-council (or other) grant, or that the Program adopt a consistent policy for stipend reduction in the event a student is awarded a tri-council – or other – scholarship.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean, Executive Committee, FHS Manager**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: We are still in discussions on this and the Associate Dean has requested that all FHS graduate programs provide a policy for scholarship reductions. We will determine a required 'top' up amount to the students' stipend when they are awarded a tri-council – or other – scholarship. We will look to other similar graduate programs for comparison.
Dean's Comments: The Faculty of Health Sciences will implement the forthcoming recommendations of the McMaster Taskforce on Graduate Student Funding. This includes the implementation of a standard policy that governs the maximum adjustments to contributions following major scholarships. The standard policy will ensure that all students who win awards will see a financial benefit.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above.

Recommendation: We encourage the program to provide master's students with funding letters indicating that a TA is not guaranteed in the funding package.
Responsibility for Implementation: Assistant Dean, Executive Committee and Program Staff
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Completed
Additional Notes/Commentary:



Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

TA guarantees are explicitly stated in offers of admission. If there is no mention of a TA, there is no guarantee. We have also made this clear on our website.

Dean's Comments:

The funding conditions are already clearly specified in letters of offer.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We encourage the development of a student-run and program specific seminar series emphasizing topics such as academic and industry opportunities and diversity in the workplace.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean, Executive Committee and Student Body (MMSSA)**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Ongoing**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

☒ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

We are offering numerous lunch and learn events and other student-run (MMSSA) seminars that address career opportunities in academia and industry. <https://www.instagram.com/macmedsci/>



Dean's Comments:

We support the program's response and have no further comment.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.

Recommendation:

We recommend a mechanism to include student input as part of the Medical Science program governance structure.

Responsibility for Implementation: **Assistant Dean, Executive Committee and Student Body**

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: **Completed**

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Our program has student representatives attend our executive committee meetings.

Dean's Comments:

We support the program's response and have no further comment.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above.