

## Program Progress Report

### Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

#### MSc eHealth

**Date of Site Visit: October 21-23, 2020 (virtual)**

**Progress Report Prepared by: Dr. Nicole Wagner**

**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]**

<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>A. Support for a Design-focused Capstone project should be considered as an alternative, complement or replacement for the Research paper.</p>
<p>Responsibility for Implementation:</p> <p>eHealth Program Team</p>
<p>Anticipated Timeline for Completion:</p> <p>Co-development project through 2022/23 academic year; pursue committee approvals in 2023 for implementation in 2024.</p>
<p>Additional Notes/Commentary:</p>
<p>Progress (check one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p>X In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)</p>
<p>Department's Comments:</p> <p>The eHealth Program Team has had several productive working sessions dedicated to this topic since it was suggested by the reviewers. A change of this nature would have wide reaching implications for the program and its stakeholders. In the 2021/22 academic year, we applied for and were awarded a garden grant for \$24,240 from the MacPherson Institute to assess the desirability, feasibility, and co-development of a capstone project for the eHealth program. Through the 2022/23 academic year we will engage current students, alumni, and other stakeholders in the project, resulting in recommendations regarding the suggested capstone to bring to the Associate Deans and through committee approvals in 2023.</p>
<p>Dean's Comments:</p>

We support this as being more consistent with current approaches to develop positive experiential learning experiences while not overtaxing the faculty. We are also excited to see this new direction in the eHealth program, showing fresh ideas and a new way to reach stakeholders.

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

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

Recommendation:

- B. If thesis option is continued to be supported, a deemphasis on industry internship and more focus on directed studies and research supervision should be considered.

Responsibility for Implementation:  
eHealth Program Team

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:  
2021/22

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

Although the eHealth Program receives relatively few applications to the thesis stream, and selects few students into the stream, we believe that maintaining the stream helps to support eHealth research at McMaster as well as Faculty engagement with the eHealth Program. As such, we plan to continue to support the thesis stream. Throughout the 2021/22 academic year, the program implemented several process changes to support the improved operations of the thesis stream:

- The CDRM identifies the thesis students and encourages them to consider research internships where appropriate, at the discretion of the student and based on their learning and career intentions.
- A single academic advisor oversees all the thesis students to ensure that they are guided consistently and appropriately, and secure thesis supervision in a timely manner.
- A structured set of communications and deadlines have been established to ensure that thesis students are aware of expectations and minding important timelines for their progress.

Dean's Comments:

We agree that the thesis stream should be continued and strengthened. We support the actions outlined, and we encourage earlier interactions with supervisors. We ask that the program should address the comments from reviewers by considering whether the thesis-based curriculum is

appropriately reflected in learning outcomes that are more clearly directed toward developing eHealth research competencies.

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

See above.

Recommendation:

- C. The program must establish improved collaboration/ connection with relevant eHealth researchers and health-related entrepreneurship programs (health technology) at the university.

Responsibility for Implementation:  
eHealth Program Team

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:  
2022/23

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

The eHealth Program Team continues to develop and enhance systematic annual processes to meaningfully engage eHealth researchers at the university. Current and potential engagement opportunities include but are not limited to: guest speaking, student supervision (thesis, internship, and scholarly paper), admissions committee, and the advisory board. Should we move forward with the implementation of a capstone project, we anticipate further opportunities for engagement with researchers, entrepreneurs, and health innovation programs on and off campus for these projects.

Further, we have been working with Media Production Services (MPS) at McMaster to develop a new website for the program. One goal of this new website will be to highlight the work and of those at the university involved with eHealth research and eHealth program activities. There is a great deal of activity around eHealth topics across the university that would benefit from visibility and engagement.

For ongoing engagement with other health tech-related programs, we are pursuing a Community of Practice model to establish regular interactions. With guidance from the MacPherson Institute, we will identify suitable community members and develop an engagement plan with multiple touchpoints per year. This will enhance community around health tech education at the university.

We anticipate completion of the website and community of practice establishment in the 2022/23 academic year, with ongoing attention to each.

Dean's Comments:

Engineering's Masters of Engineering Design is developing a virtual care learning stream and intends to share courses and perhaps resources with the eHealth program. They are expected to complement one another and give external and internal stakeholder a more comprehensive experience in addressing digital healthcare. More broadly, we encourage the program to focus on active strategies of engagement, including outreach to department chairs where eHealth and health technology researchers are most active.

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

See above.

Recommendation:

- D. There must be at a minimum one leading eHealth expert researcher/ academic associated with the instructor body to provide the necessary discipline specific expertise required to articulate the program's vision, mission and delivery of the right content.

Responsibility for Implementation:  
eHealth Program Team

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:  
2022/23

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

The eHealth Program Team is working to strengthen ties to leading eHealth expert researchers/ academics both on and off campus to ensure that our curriculum and mission are in alignment with stakeholder needs. During the 2021/22 we held an eHealth roundtable event to re-engage stakeholders previously involved with the program. In 2022/23 we will be hosting an annual Advisory Board meeting to continue with these efforts. The Advisory Board composition will include expert representation from both industry and academia to ensure that our curriculum and mission remain appropriate and will meet at least annually going forward. This is intended to ensure that the

expertise of the program team is supplemented by the rich eHealth community that we have both at McMaster and in the surrounding community.

We want to acknowledge that Dr Lokker (FHS faculty lead) has an active research program in mobile health, machine learning, health informatics, and aging, with collaborations across faculties. She was recently recognized as a Women in Tech Changemaker (<https://cto.mcmaster.ca/mcmaster-women-in-tech-cynthia-lokker/>).

Dean's Comments:

We consider this approach with the advisory board a good way to stay up-to-date with the industry. We are confident that the current leadership of the program can articulate the vision and plan the curriculum. Regarding the participation of research-oriented faculty, we agree that Dr. Lokker contributes this perspective. More broadly, we support the program's view that the complement of instructors has sufficient expertise to support the program's current orientation to practice. Beyond this, the expansion of capacity in eHealth research for the institution overall depends on both resources and whether this becomes a shared priority among the Faculties.

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

See above.

Recommendation:

- E. The program leadership must be provided with teaching release in order to create space for the effective management of the program, and to be able to develop and enhance their understanding of eHealth as a discipline.
- F. The core teaching complement should either have or be given opportunities to develop interest and expertise in the field of eHealth as currently most of the instructors do not have an eHealth background which is affecting the learning outcomes and student appreciation of the topics.

Responsibility for Implementation:  
eHealth Program Team

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:  
2021/22

Additional Notes/Commentary:  
Recommendations E & F are grouped here since they are related

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

As noted in the Faculty Response page of the Final Assessment Report, the Program Director does receive one teaching relief, but the program leads from each faculty do not, as is consistent with other program operations. While this may limit the amount of time that each has available to pursue interest and expertise in eHealth, funding opportunities to attend training and conferences as their schedules allow are provided through the eHealth Program budget for the program team. In the 2021/22 academic year, there were courses taken and presentations given by various members of the program team.

Of note, 6 of the 8 courses offered by the eHealth program are taught by faculty members or sessionals who are active in eHealth research and/ or practice. We suspect that this may not have come across clearly in our site visit and/ or documentation. We hope that our enhanced website will help to make the expertise in and supporting the program more visible.

Dean's Comments:

As noted, the Director is provided with teaching relief. The duties of the Faculty leads are established in accordance with the specific terms of their hiring and appointments, and the appropriate arrangements vary among the three Faculties. The approach outlined by the program is consistent with most, if not all, other programs on campus. The instructional leadership is well suited to cover the topics and interdisciplinarity needed for eHealth instruction.

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

See above.

Recommendation:

- G. There should be continuity and stability in terms of instructor assignment to the program, such that instructors should be assigned to teach a course for multiple years to allow them to develop their own expertise in eHealth and to prepare high-impact content material for the course.

Responsibility for Implementation:

Senior leadership of contributing faculties

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:

2021/22

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress



☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

At this time, all four of the required eHealth courses are taught by teaching-track or permanent research faculty members. This allows for the continued development of the courses and their content over many years. There are four electives offered by the program (students access many electives from other programs) of which two are taught by permanent research faculty members and two have been taught by the same sessionals (who work in the field) for 3+ terms. As such, the instruction of eHealth courses is of high quality, stable, and expected to be so for the foreseeable future.

Dean's Comments:

We agree that there are benefits to instructional continuity and the program outlines how this continuity is currently reflected in the provision of core courses. Obviously, unexpected disruptions are possible. More generally, this continuity is normally weighed against the benefits of fresh perspectives and approaches, and there are often resource constraints.

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

See above.

Recommendation:

Miscellaneous items from detailed recommendations  
(executive summary items covered above)

Responsibility for Implementation:

eHealth Program Team

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:

2022/23

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

1. The reviewers' granular comments included some related to the content and structure of the program curriculum that we found to be unclear. Upon following up by email for clarification, the program team agrees that the items of concern are in fact covered in our curriculum. We suspect that this may not have come across clearly in our site visit and/ or documentation,



perhaps because of the zoom format.

2. The reviewers suggested that the program could enhance the support of elective selection for students since they have a broad list to choose from. The program team is in the process of developing career pathway guidance documentation that outlines the subset of electives that may be of interest to students depending on their career goals within the broad field of eHealth. These will be available on our new website and included in student communications such as the program handbook.

Dean's Comments:

We are satisfied with this response and have no further comment.

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

See above.

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Dean, DeGroote School of Business

April 10, 2024

Heather Sheardown  
Dean, Faculty of Engineering

April 10, 2024

Dina Brooks, Executive Vice Dean and  
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April 10, 2024