

Program Progress Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Child Life and Pediatric Psychosocial Care Program

Date of Site Visit: February 27 and 28, 2024

Progress Report Prepared by: Cathy Humphreys, CLPPC Program Assistant Dean and Allison Sohanlal, CLPPC Program Clinical Education Coordinator

Please outline below how recommendations from the initial program review have been addressed.

The IQAP review committee for the Child Life and Pediatric Psychosocial Care (CLPPC) program provided several recommendations as *areas for enhancement* for our program. The following document includes these recommendations and our program's current progress.

Recommendation: Reassess faculty administrative workload and reevaluate the distribution of teaching and service effort to allow percent time for conducting research or scholarly activities. Consider creating a tenure- track faculty position to support CLPPC faculty members seeking to expand their research contribution.
Responsibility for Implementation: Program Assistant Dean, Department Associate Chair, Education, faculty initiative to apply for internal funding awards
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary: Please see comments below for alternate strategies to support expanding scholarly activities
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: Creating a tenure-track faculty position to support faculty in expanding research contributions is not something that can be considered at this time. Funding is not available in the current climate, and creating a new type of appointment with the current faculty complement would also risk compromising learner experience and further burdening the already high teaching loads among existing faculty. The 3 core faculty members were hired in teaching track appointments with a focus on teaching and administration and have obtained permanence in these roles. With a continued interest in research,

this has instead led to harnessing opportunities at McMaster to apply for internal funding awards. Faculty member Allison Sohanlal was successful in obtaining a MERIT Faculty Fellowship receiving mentorship and supervision in her research in the 2024-25 academic year. MERIT funding awarded enabled paying a sessional instructor for a portion of Allison's teaching so she could have protected research time. This type of support through the university has been instrumental in enabling growing a program of research. Allison was also successful in obtaining a Department of Pediatrics Education Research Grant to support another project.

Cathy Humphreys and Sarah Patterson have been actively engaged with and received mentorship within a CIHR funded research team whose PI is a colleague within the Department of Pediatrics and co-director of CanChild. This has led to several publications, poster presentations and a community engagement activity. Faculty within the program will continue to explore such opportunities within our research-intensive department to expand our research contributions.

Faculty workload continues to be reviewed in addition to professional development planning as part of annual reviews. As part of the upcoming Assistant Dean/Director role transition (2 terms nearing completion), strategic workload scheduling has been underway. Part of this includes establishing microcredential offerings to proactively seek a new revenue stream for the program. It is hoped with new revenue generated, this could possibly be utilized instead to support hiring a sessional instructor to redistribute workload and enable a reduced teaching load and dedicated time for scholarly activities/research on a rotating schedule among the 3 core faculty members.

Dean's Comments:

We agree that faculty workload is an important factor in evaluating both the vitality and long-term sustainability of the program. At the same time, we share the Department's view that it is unrealistic to assume a new tenure-track position is the appropriate solution. In its response, the Department has appropriately identified faculty development and workload as areas for ongoing monitoring. As noted previously in response to the Reviewers' report, CLPPC students benefit from being situated in a Faculty of Health Sciences that is among the most research-intensive in Canada, and the program has many opportunities to further facilitate meaningful engagement between practice-oriented students and the broader research community.

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

QAC reviewed this report and had no further comments or concerns

Recommendation:

Reevaluate the procedure for collecting student feedback on clinical placements and preceptors to ensure an optimal student learning environment and identify areas for preceptor education and support.

Responsibility for Implementation:

Program Student Affairs Committee, Program Clinical Education Coordinator, Program Assistant Dean
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: 2028
Additional Notes/Commentary: Please see below for additional details
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: In the fall of 2024, a new process encouraging bidirectional feedback was implemented for all child life clinical internships. An informational video on bidirectional feedback was developed and is provided to preceptors as part of a package of preceptor videos created by this program's Clinical Education Coordinator. In addition, a document has been created that is provided to interns and preceptors that provides the rationale for the removal of anonymous preceptor surveys at the end of the term and the switch to interns providing preceptors with constructive feedback throughout the internship (or at minimum, at the midterm and final evaluation points). This document includes a page of suggested areas of feedback to help guide students in what areas to focus on related to the preceptor role and actions that help to enhance the internship experience for child life learners. Evaluation continues on this new approach as we strive to enable candid and fair evaluations from current students. A survey at the end of each internship/semester continues to be provided to interns to provide feedback about their overall internship site experience (rather than preceptor specific). Once survey results from at least 2 interns at the site have been received, the themes collected are given to the clinical site child life program managers to provide greater anonymity. The Clinical Education Coordinator provides reassurance to students that only themes from their surveys are shared and their feedback helps to inform future education and support needs for preceptors. An anonymous survey is also sent out to all preceptors to encourage feedback about their preceptor experience, comment on the support provided by this program's Clinical Education Coordinator, add suggestions for topics of future training/information videos and an open comment box for any other suggestions or concerns they would like to bring forward. While we have not yet developed a retrospective survey to stream 1 alumni and students who have completed internships (to provide anonymous feedback about their experiences and sense of psychological safety at each internship site), this is being planned within the Clinical Education Coordinator's program of research that explores perspectives of the current clinical education system in Canada. This program of research includes a team of child life researchers who are alumni of our program and child life specialists from across Canada with diverse internship experiences. As analysis is near completion for several projects, this retrospective study is being planned for 2027. In addition to the Clinical Education Coordinators' ongoing program of research, she is also an Interprofessional Practice Lead with the PIPER program at McMaster. This position provides an opportunity to continue to liaise with other health professional program clinical education leads to share best practices and current approaches to evaluating clinical placements.

Dean's Comments:

We are satisfied that the program has put in place proactive, thorough, and practical evaluation processes that respond well to the recommendation. We are particularly pleased to see this work informing planned educational research and to see the program drawing on the expertise and lessons learned from other clinical education programs through its relationship with PIPER.

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

See above

Recommendation:

Provide clearer pathways for students to report and access support for navigating challenging situations of grievances in the internship experience.

Responsibility for Implementation:

Program Student Affairs Committee, Clinical Education Coordinator, Assistant Dean

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:

Ongoing to enable evaluation

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Please see below for updates. These continue to be evaluated to adapt as needed.

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

☒ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

While the Clinical Education Coordinator provides consistent support for students during their two 13-week internships (instructs internship and clinical skills seminar classes and meets individually with students twice a month for clinical supervision), we recognize it is important to provide additional pathways beyond this role and the program's Assistant Dean role for students to seek support.

More detail has been added to our Clinical Education Handbook (handbook is shared with both students and preceptors) to clarify pathways for students to report and access support for challenging situations within internship experiences. This includes a list of direct contacts within the CLPPC program, within the Faculty of Health Sciences (e.g. ORCAA, office of the Vice-Dean/Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for Health Sciences, SGS) and within the larger University (e.g. Equity and Inclusion office, University Ombuds). This is reviewed prior to the start of clinical placements during CLPPC 710: Child Life Residency 2. A new homebase on Teams has also been established which includes resource links such as those described above in addition to things like SAS, graduate writing resources, graduate forms and policies, etc., for student's ease of access.

We have additionally sought the involvement of the Director of ORCAA for 2 sessions within the first year of our Stream 1 program (and 1 for Stream 2s) in 2024/25 and 2025/26. The Director's involvement in presenting/discussing university policies, professionalism in practice discussions, reporting and addressing learner mistreatment, etc. has anecdotally provided learners with a clearer

indication of ORCAA and what this office can support them with. The program's Clinical Education Coordinator and Assistant Dean also have pre-set touchpoint meetings with Louis to discuss any arising issues with flexibility to build in others if needed.

Dean's Comments:

The program's response clearly demonstrates that students are expected to understand how and where to seek support when concerns arise. As is common across graduate programs, identifying and addressing issues early, when they are most manageable, can be challenging. The development and continued expansion of the ORCCA office represents an important step in addressing this challenge by offering students a confidential avenue for consultation outside of the program, thereby strengthening institutional support and early intervention.

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

See above

Recommendation:

Increase the support for racialized students in the CLPPC 703/Research Methods in Pediatric Psychosocial Care course.

Responsibility for Implementation:

Program Student Affairs, Program Curriculum Committee, CLPPC 703 Faculty/Course Instructors, Program Assistant Dean

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:

Ongoing quality assurance

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Please see notes below for current updates.

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

☒ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

The CLPPC 703 Research Methods in Pediatric Psychosocial Care course is a required course for all students in the program. For context, this course falls in the first term for both stream 1 and stream 2 students. Since the initial IQAP report, there have now been a total of 209 students who have taken this course. Of these, 199 successfully completed it, and there have been a total of 10 failures over the 10 times this course has been offered (an increase of 3 failures from our program review in 2024). All 10 of these students failing this course have been Stream 2 learners who are working health professionals juggling work and family responsibilities. Of those, the 3 that were Black students were also international students who had not had previous academic experience

writing or conceptualizing research (from international medical schools). All however spoke English as their first language. There have been 2 other Canadian students from marginalized backgrounds, 1 international student from Hong Kong, in addition to 4 other domestic students (3 white women and 1 white male). All of these individuals had been out of school for a number of years navigating this new balance of schoolwork and academics in their first semester of graduate study. Of these students who failed, 4 went on to successfully complete their degree. One student is still in progress after successfully repeating this course, three withdrew noting that graduate school was not manageable alongside personal or family challenges and their careers, and two were required to withdraw following their second failing grade in a different course.

In discussions with stream 2 students who have struggled in this course, including those who failed and others who have passed, they have described it as a challenging course to start with, particularly if they had been out of academia for several years before returning to pursue their MSc. We have considered the option of part-time Stream 2 students enrolling in this research methods course during their second year rather than their first, allowing them time to acclimate to the academic expectations of the program and begin to balance school, work, and life, before taking on course content that is less familiar for those with more clinical foundations and interests. Alumni reflections have however led us to maintain this course as a first term course, as they noted feeling it set the tone and expectations for their academic writing and critical thinking throughout the program. They noted if they delayed this course and faced significant difficulty, it would be preferred to be in that position sooner than later.

While we do not have a formalized process for collecting data about the ethnic, racial, gender or sexual identities of students in the program, statistics based on what our past, and current students have chosen to disclose of their own volition identifies that 26% of our collective student group were from marginalized backgrounds with 90% of those equity deserving students successfully completing this course. It is therefore difficult to interpret with these few numbers (6/209) if there is one primary cause of these academic struggles or if it is multi-pronged. Our program has therefore undertaken the following strategies in an effort to promote success for all students in our program:

- Continued to incorporate academic graduate writing workshops through the Student Success Centre and APA citation workshops by faculty at the outset of the program during residency week courses. These workshops are recorded and maintained for students to continue to access within the CLPPC Program Microsoft Teams space so students can review as needed.
- Continued to build in library database searching/training workshops with the FHS library during residency weeks to build students skills and confidence in gathering evidence to support literature reviews, graduate level writing, etc.
- Continued to encourage all students to access services available to them through the university. Our program's home base/Microsoft Teams for students contains central resources which are also collected in the Research Methods course shell on Avenue to Learn

for their ease of access. It has been noted that having already established a point of contact with the Academic Skills Program Coordinator at SSC through their residency writing workshop has helped their services become better understood and reduced stigma about accessing them. Students are also encouraged to access accessibility and wellness services. - Continued to explicitly encourage students to come forth with all questions, concerns, dilemmas through the discussion boards, to normalize reaching out to the instructor to discuss questions, any challenging course contents, etc. We have anecdotally come to understand that some have felt negatively judged for seeking help in their previous academic programs. - Continued offering weekly drop-in office hours for check-ins. - Continued to proactively reach out to students who show signs of struggling academically or psychosocially, including those that may have received a grade <70% on the first assignment (early October) or those who are less present on discussion boards or whose posts reflect gaps or misunderstandings to discuss challenges and offer support, particularly those in racialized or marginalized groups.
Dean's Comments: The basis for the Reviewers' focus on CLPPC703 with respect to equity and inclusion is not entirely clear. Nevertheless, the program's response highlights the range of supports in place for students who may encounter difficulties, particularly those related to varying levels of preparedness for the course's methodological content. This appears to be the primary challenge for the small number of students who find the course demanding, and the program's approach reflects a thoughtful effort to address these needs.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above

Recommendation: Modify the requirements of the Portfolio in internship applications with feedback from internship preceptors on aspects that would be helpful to them.
Responsibility for Implementation: Clinical Education Coordinator, internship partners and students/alumni
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Study completed in 2025, ongoing quality assurance
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed

☒ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

Strides have been made with a survey-based study completed in 2025. This study sought to investigate student and internship site application reviewers' experiences creating (students) and reviewing (sites) ePortfolios with participants being CLPPC alumni and internship sites across Canada. The HiREB study completion report summarizing the results of this survey-based study was completed in 2025. Themes from student responses and internship site responses identified benefits and challenges from both perspectives.

Student recommendations included 12% recommending the ePortfolio program be removed, 29% said adapted and 59% thought it should continue. Internship site recommendations included 10.7% who chose to not answer the question, 25% recommend removing it, 28.6% suggest it be adapted and 35.7% would like to see it continue.

Since completing this study, the results have informed the decision to keep the ePortfolio program with revisions informed by the feedback from preceptors/internship programs and students who completed the surveys. The implemented changes to date include the following:

1. EPortfolio templates have been created so that students can now choose from one of 10 templates that are formatted with core components and include McMaster branding.
2. A research summary PDF and video is provided to all students in the program so that they can utilize the results of this QI study to inform the creation of their ePortfolios each year.
3. We have retained the ePortfolio assistant role which involves hiring a recent alumni each year to provide peer-to-peer mentorship and review of ePortfolios prior to them being sent out to internship programs as application material. In 2026, we renamed the ePortfolio assistant role to the "Internship Readiness Assistant" role to provide even more mentorship and support to students in preparing ALL internship application materials that may be requested by internship programs (resume, cover letter, common application and ePortfolio)

We continue to request feedback from our internship partners on the newly revised ePortfolio templates to ensure the ePortfolio program adds value to the internship application process in Canada.

Dean's Comments:

The program has clearly responded to the recommendation constructively and modified the portfolio requirement appropriately in response to the findings of their evaluation.

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

See above