

Final Assessment Report

Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (reviewed 2020-21)

A. Summary

1. The Self Study for the programs was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on November 25, 2020.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Robert Boushel (University of British Columbia) and Adam Baxter-Jones (University of Saskatchewan), and one internal reviewer, Tim Murphy (Brock University).
3. The virtual review occurred on March 8, 10, 11, 2021.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 30, 2021.
5. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on May 7, 2021.
6. The Program response, from the Associate Dean Research and Graduate Studies, was received on May 31, 2021.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies response was received on June 3, 2021.
8. The Dean of Applied Health Sciences response was received on June 3, 2021.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

Program Outcome Categories:

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Committee gave the programs the following Outcome Categories:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
MA in Applied Health Sciences		X		
MSc in Applied Health Sciences		X		
PhD in Applied Health Sciences		X		

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

The graduate program in AHS [Applied Health Sciences] is founded on a solid vision, a clear mission and strategic plan aligned with the four pillars of the University strategic plan. AHS programs are supported by accomplished faculty, research Chairs, Centres and highly regarded staff and administrative leadership contributing to a very positive and supportive culture across the AHS community. New professional programs represent creative innovations in the respective fields, and newly introduced courses in research-based master’s and doctoral level courses also reflect cutting-edge developments in AHS fields. Extensive work on curriculum maps and standardized course learning outcomes is exemplary and support innovations in experiential learning. The non-credit cross-disciplinary research seminar series is highly valued and fosters multidisciplinary perspectives and community. As articulated in the self- study, and corroborated by the site visit, there are significant challenges and concerns around the organizational structure of AHS programs, their governance, faculty resourcing of the curriculum, course requirements, availability, and enrollments. These factors appear to be influencing the experiences of research-based graduate students and faculty. A re-organization of programs and courses from the umbrella of the FAHS [Faculty of Applied Health Sciences] to the Department level will likely improve the strategic resourcing and management of programs, allow better coordination, integration and administrative support within and from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and improve the quality and future growth of programs. This reorganization should also attend to action on Truth and Reconciliation as part of priorities toward a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation, and decolonization.

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

The graduate program in AHS is founded on a solid vision, a clear mission and strategic plan that are in general aligned with the four pillars of the University strategic plan. The PhD program has three fields of study. The Master's programs offer both MA's (5 fields) and MSc's (2 fields) degrees across diverse fields of study in the health disciplines and include both research and course-based degrees providing a wide range of educational, research and professional training opportunities for students. Substantial and continued growth in student enrollment in the course-based professional degrees and in the three fields of the doctoral program are indicators of success. These programs are supported by accomplished and dedicated faculty who have a solid record of external funding and peer-reviewed publications, and strengthened by a number of research Chairs, new hires and a number of Centres in the Faculty and community. The program has strong faculty and student support for highly regarded staff and administrative leadership across multiple levels of governance. Funding for graduate students is exceptional in comparison to other Canadian programs. Students express a high level of satisfaction with their programs, the faculty, the support staff, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the Library. The very positive and supportive culture across the Faculty of AHS community was notable from the review meetings and higher than reported in the self-study surveys. The very thorough self-study revealed conscientious attention to implementing recommendations from the previous program reviews. A particular strength noted was the rigorous process of mapping and assessment of program learning outcomes for curricular offerings resulting in high degree learning expectations. The positiveness of integration of student across programs both in the usage of space and the research seminars was noted by faculty and students alike. All the above support Brock University's academic mission to nurture and support their students and faculty and complies with FAHS mission. There is a consensus view that while the professional degree programs have enriched the Faculty and student experience, continued support and growth of research-based graduate education is also a priority and strength that should not be taken for granted or overlooked.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

Program requirements should be specific to areas of study suggesting that program governance should be at departmental level rather than through the FAHS [Faculty of Applied Health Sciences] graduate office. Departmental-level program leadership with representation on Graduate Council working in conjunction with the Dean and Associate Deans of Graduate Studies would be a more effective administrative structure.

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

The FAHS Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies has begun to work on this recommendation. The Associate Dean's office has consulted with the FAHS Graduate Committee regarding a number of possible models for the FAHS Master's graduate program shift in governance to the departmental level. This governance shift will be quite significant as it will require the integration of several Graduate Program Directors and related administrative staff support to accommodate seven Master fields that currently exist in FAHS. Therefore, the FAHS Associate Dean's office will also work alongside the Dean and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, as well as the Dean of FAHS, to devise a plan and implementation strategy to insure a smooth transition in governance structure by 2022.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This might be a general topic for discussion by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee during the next academic year.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response in that the development of a revised governance model is a priority. Several possibilities exist and work will proceed within the suggested timelines to realize the most effective model going forward. This may involve the devolution of administration to levels associated with program "streams" or "stream" combinations rather than specific departments per se and the Dean's office will be involved in and supportive of the decision-making process and the implementation of a new agreed upon administrative structure.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I agree with the recommendation and the response of the Program. Indeed, in the self-study, the Program outlined a plan for supporting this transition in governance of the graduate programs. The Faculty of Graduate Studies [FGS] will work with the Program as needed to help support this initiative.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC understands the recommendation to be referring to changes in program governance for the streams within each degree (MA, MSc, PhD) as these programs are not based in Departments. The Committee expects that the FAHS Graduate Committee, in consultation with the Associate Dean, is best-positioned to address how program requirements could become more specific to areas of study and possible changes to program governance. ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for implementation:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021/22.

Recommendation #2

Review course credit unit requirements in programs to reflect availability of electives and reduce burden of Directed Study courses. If course credit units remain then offerings for research-masters courses need to be more equally distributed across departments.

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

With the shift in governance structure as suggested in recommendation #1, course credit requirements will in fact shift and become field specific. Due to the different needs of each of the existing Master fields, course offering distribution will change, more suitably reflecting the needs of a specific field. This in turn will address the availability of electives and reduce the burden of Directed Study courses.

Discussions with the Graduate Program Directors, programs and departments will be initiated once the governance structure is implemented with a goal of a review completed by Spring 2022.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response to this recommendation. The Dean's office will support the implementation of any recommended changes that result from decisions related to the implementation of the recommendation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I support the Program's response to this recommendation, although program requirements fall outside of FGS' purview.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for implementation:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021/22.

Recommendation #3

Review program course offerings including Directed Study courses to ensure course requirements are balanced with faculty workload.

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

The FAHS Associate Dean's office will work with research-based Graduate Program Directors to track workload/Directed Study courses with the goal of working towards a balanced faculty workload.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response to this recommendation. The Dean's office in consultation with the Associate Dean, Department Chairs will continue to oversee faculty workloads as guided by the BUFA collective agreement. Program changes related to recommendation 2 will also influence the outcome of this recommendation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Workload is outside the scope of FGS.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to review program course offerings to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee recognizes that ensuring that course requirements are balanced with faculty workload lies outside of its jurisdiction and has implications with respect to the Brock University/Faculty Association Collective Agreement.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for implementation:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021/22.

Recommendation #4

Consider making courses in professional programs available to research-based masters students.

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

This recommendation is already in effect however, the Associate Dean will continue to stress the importance of access to professional-based course offerings and will encourage that research-based Graduate Program Directors (under the new governance structure as per recommendation #1) to work with the Graduate Program Directors of the profession programs to [e]nsure ample course availability.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response to this recommendation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Course offerings are determined by the Program however, I support the response of the Program.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee recognizes that a mechanism already exists for students in research-based programs to take elective courses in the professional programs on an ad hoc basis. ARC expects that the Graduate Program Directors, in consultation with the Associate Dean, are best-positioned to determine how to enhance further co-operation between the programs in this respect.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for implementation:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021/22.

Recommendation #5

Review enrollment numbers in courses currently offered, consider minimum enrollment limits and identify sustainability with present faculty complement (e.g., condensed / combined courses with team-teaching).

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

The FAHS Associate Dean’s office will work with research-based Graduate Program Directors to track and review course enrollment numbers. In consultation with the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation, we will determine and set minimum enrollment limits that are appropriate for the research-based courses. As well, we will examine unique ways to offer courses (i.e. team teaching, offering courses every other year) that is effective, efficient and pedagogically robust.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response to this recommendation. Program changes related to recommendation 2 will also influence the outcome of this recommendation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

This is a pedagogical issue that is best addressed by the Program and falls outside of FGS’ purview.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for implementation:	FAHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021/22.

Recommendation #6

Implement action on Truth and Reconciliation as part of priorities toward a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation, and decolonization.

The program response from the Associate Dean stated:

This recommendation is an existing and important element of both Brock University's and FAHS Strategic Plan. The FAHS Associate Dean's office (including research-based Graduate Program Directors) will continue to prioritize this recommendation by working with a number of units across campus (i.e. Robyn Bourgeois Acting Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement, Aboriginal Student Services, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Centre for Pedagogical Innovation) to prioritize and implement strategies that promote a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization. The Associate Dean of FAHS has been in discussion with the Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies regarding several initiatives that are currently in progress and include collaborations with the Associate Vice Provost of Indigenous Engagement and Centre for Pedagogical Innovation. The FAHS team will continue to work and use the expertise that exist on campus to ensure this recommendation is satisfied.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I am in agreement with, and supportive of, the Program response to this recommendation. As noted in the program response this recommendation is already an important element of the FAHS Strategic Plan and the initiatives noted in the Program response along with others will continue to be a priority for the program going forward.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

FGS will actively support initiatives that will help to implement actions related to Truth and Reconciliation and EDI [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion] activities. We support the Program's response to this recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be consistent with current initiatives across the University to move towards a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization. The Committee understands that a directive to the programs on this issue is not within its jurisdiction while recognizing that support is clearly indicated by all parties.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,3,4,5

Not Accepted:

Recommendation 6