

Final Assessment Report

Master of Applied Gerontology

Graduate Program

(reviewed 2024/25)

A. Summary

1. The Program's Self-Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee December 5, 2024.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Lori Weeks (Dalhousie University) and Elaine Wiersma (Lakehead University), and one internal reviewer, Catherine Hands (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred February 6-7, 2025.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received March 11, 2025.
5. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received March 21, 2025
6. The Program's response was received April 17, 2025.
7. The Dean, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, response was received April 24, 2025.
8. The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs response was received May 7, 2025.
9. Annual Implementation Reports will be submitted from 2026-2029.
10. The next Cyclical Academic Review is scheduled to take place in 2032/2033.

The Self-Study was prepared under the conditions of the Codicil with the Review and responses conducted under the terms and conditions of the June 2023 IQAP.

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
Master of Applied Gerontology		X		
<i>If you have chosen 'Good Quality with Concerns', please summarize the specific concern(s) briefly below. If you have chosen 'Non-Viable', please summarize the specific reason(s) below.</i>				

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

The MAG program has a number of strengths that should be noted. We were impressed with the quality of the program and the calibre of the faculty, staff, and students. Brock University as an institution and the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences are clearly committed to the MAG program. The self-study was an excellent document with a tremendous amount of detail. The MAG program has a strong curriculum that progresses logically through learning objectives and scales up learning. There are numerous experiential education opportunities embedded within the curriculum where students are able to engage with community partners, older adults, and other health and community organizations. The engagement and incorporation of community partners into the program through experiential engagement and the practicum were unique features of the program.

While the program is very strong, there were a few recommendations that we noted. First, there are a couple of key areas that could be covered in a more comprehensive way in the curriculum, including health services and systems for older adults, basic physiological processes of aging, and revisiting the configuration of other courses. Additionally, we recommend that the program find a way to enhance its visibility within the university. This can be challenging with an interdisciplinary program, but it may be helpful for faculty who are primarily associated with the program.

B. Program Strengths

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

Based on the program materials reviewed and the practicum partner focus group interview, the practicum is a strength and is also unique, according to some of the partners. The practicum is well-run; the process is structured and well-organized, with community-based partners appreciating the timelines and guidance for their mentoring requirements, reporting excellent communication (both in terms of style and content) with the program coordinator. The process of matching students and their learning needs and interests with community-based organizations works smoothly such that students are matched well with mentors, according to the partners. For example, students do not have to look for their own placement and they are engaged, doing activities in which they are interested. Students are reported to be of high quality with strong writing skills (i.e., graduate-level). Partners with personal and program experience with practica noted the way the practicum is run is unique and innovative, compared with other healthcare practica practices.

The MAG program has a strong curriculum that progresses logically through learning objectives and scales up learning. There are numerous experiential education opportunities embedded within the curriculum where students are able to engage with community partners, older adults, and other health and community organizations.

We were particularly impressed by the ICER [Intergenerational Community-Engaged Residency] award in partnership with the Niagara region, where a student has the opportunity to live in a seniors' residence assisting with a variety of tasks while receiving reduced rent. This is a valuable, innovative component of the program and a great opportunity for students.

We also noted the high calibre of faculty associated with the program. The faculty have strong research programs with high publication output and significant research funding. The faculty are also committed to the students as evidenced by the care and attention to teaching and comments from students.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1: Increase the visibility of Gerontology at Brock University.

<i>Supporting/clarifying text: There are many strengths at Brock related to Gerontology (e.g., experienced and effective Program Director and Coordinator, two faculty hired to support the MAG program, and a minor in Gerontology), there are many ways that Gerontology could become more visible. This could include creating a Gerontology Department, a Gerontology Research Centre, and/or cross- appointing faculty in Gerontology.</i>

The Program responded:

In consultation with the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, we will explore potential strategies to increase the visibility of gerontology at Brock University (e.g., working with Marketing and Communications, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, etc.). The GPD will consult with the Dean and share information at our annual program retreat in August 2025.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

The reviewers' suggestions to raise the visibility of the program are in general welcome and important. However, some specific suggestions such as creating a Gerontology Department or a Gerontology Research Centre are premature and speak to broader issues than visibility. As such, visibility will for now only be addressed as per the programs response which relates primarily to external marketing of the program to optimize applications. I support the programs suggestions to work with MARCOMM, FGSPA and the Dean's office to optimize messaging and internal/external student recruitment efforts. As noted in the reviewers' report, applications to the program have been strong and steady, however more can still be done to raise program visibility through marketing. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be short-term 1-2 years and continuing and do not anticipate a need for additional resources within the limits of the proposed response.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation relates to the current position of MAG as a stand-alone unit, suggesting structures (e.g. department, formal cross-appointment) to increase program visibility within the University. This recommendation is in the purview of the program and the Dean of FAHS for consideration.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA can support increasing the visibility of the MAG program. This opportunity has already been initiated, and we see this is a short-term goal for creating a strategy which will be re-evaluated over time to ensure its effectiveness.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Program, in consultation with the Dean’s office, Marketing & Communications and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to increase the visibility of Gerontology at Brock.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program/Deans
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #2: Consider adding a part-time option.

Supporting/clarifying text: Adding a part-time option could help to increase enrollment in the degree while also catering to mature/non-traditional students.

The Program responded:

We appreciate the reviewers’ comments about considering adding a part-time option. We will consult with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) to determine feasibility and discuss this recommendation further at our August retreat.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support in principle, the option of a part-time stream for the program, provided, pedagogical, logistical and resource issues as well as student completion pathways can be made congruent with this objective. Hence, I support the programs’ response to explore the feasibility of this recommendation and if it proves to be a viable pathway to move toward its realization. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be short-to medium term, 1-3 years. Additional resource implications are not yet known.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider. SGSC encourages all graduate programs to consider demand and flexibility in program offerings consistent with strategic and academic plans.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

FSGPA will work with the program to support a part-time option. This is likely a short-term goal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee understands that that the Program will undertake discussions with the Dean’s offices to explore the feasibility of adding a part-time option.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program/Deans
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #3: Collaboratively review the courses' content, continuity, and assessment schedules.

Supporting/clarifying text: It is a strength that program committee members collaboratively review the courses associated with the program. It would be advantageous if all faculty regularly teaching Gerontology courses participate in this process (e.g. annual curriculum retreat).

The Program responded:

This initiative is already underway with our program committee. Beginning in early Winter 2025, we started engaging in discussions about individual courses during our program meetings, focusing on areas such as content and assessment strategies. As part of our annual retreat, we plan to involve the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) to further these conversations. Going forward, we will also extend invitations to all faculty who teach in the MAG program to join our retreat.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the recommendation and the Program's response as it plans to proceed in the direction of the recommendation. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be short-term, 1 year and continuing without the need for additional resources.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider relating to their course content within and across courses, and timing of assessments across courses. SGSC encourages programs to make use of existing resources (e.g. CPI) to assist faculty and instructors with the mapping of course content and objectives.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

We support this recommendation and the program's response. This is a short-term goal; however, the implementation should be ongoing.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Program will move forward as appropriate, working with CPI, to review the courses' content, continuity, and assessment schedules.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #4: Include a course that focuses on health services for older adults and make it a required course to complement GERO 5P14 Community Services for Older Adults. Both courses should be required.

Supporting/clarifying text: All students in the program would benefit from a strong understanding of the array of services available to support older adults from community-based services to residential care, acute and palliative care. This would also help to provide an overview of potential practicum settings for students and identify potential future settings for employment.

The Program responded:

We appreciate the invitation to consider a course on health services for older adults. While we are unable to create a new course currently, our program committee has discussed the possibility of revising our existing 'Community Services for Older Adults' (GERO 5P14) to include content specific to health services (and revise the course title). This recommendation will be discussed further at our program retreat in August 2025.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the Program's response which addresses the Reviewers' recommendation in alternative ways. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be short-term, 1 year without additional resource implications.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider relating to their curriculum. SGSC encourages programs to consider the depth and breadth of their curriculum as it relates to their program learning outcomes.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

FGSPA supports the reviewers' recommendation and would appreciate a more elaborated response from the program regarding why a new course cannot be considered at this time. However, in the short-term, including content specific to health services is a reasonable solution.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee understands that that the Program will undertake discussions with the Dean's offices to explore ways to offer a course on health services for older adults.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #5: Combine GERO 5P15 and GERO 5P13 into one course Professional Practice in Aging.

Supporting/clarifying text: While preparing students for professional practice is important in this applied masters program, we identified that the following courses could be combined into one: GERO 5P15: Introduction to Interprofessional Practice, GERO 5P13: Advanced Communications and Aging. Professional requirements and content could be incorporated into this course (e.g. Gentle Persuasive Approaches for working people with dementia).

The Program responded:

When the MAG program launched in 2020, there was some overlap in course content between GERO 5P13 and 5P15; however, both course instructors have since collaborated to ensure that the learning outcomes for each course are distinct. While we will revisit this recommendation during our program retreat in August 2025, there was limited interest in pursuing it further during our program meeting in March.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the Program’s response which suggests that Reviewers’ concerns regarding these courses has already been addressed and no further action is required.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider relating to their curriculum. SGSC encourages programs to consider the depth and breadth of their curriculum as it relates to their program learning outcomes.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

FGSPA supports this recommendation and would like to better understand why there is limited interest in pursuing this by the program. We support that this be discussed at the retreat along with other curricular recommendations so a full review of program offerings can be considered. This decision should be made in the short-term; however, implementation may be a medium-term goal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the Program will investigate combining courses as part of a larger curriculum review. Noting that this recommendation is linked to #4.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #6: Increase course content on 1) legal issues, policy, and advocacy for older adults 2) basic physiological processes of aging, 3) elder abuse and violence in later life, 4) palliative care and physiological processes of dying.

Supporting/clarifying text: These topics are covered to some extent in existing courses, (e.g., Current Issues in Gerontology, The Process of Aging, Death and Dying in Later Life), these important topics could be expanded in current courses or possibly a new course could be created (e.g., Legal, policy and advocacy).

The Program responded:

At present, we offer one course that addresses the basic physiological processes of aging and dying (GERO 5P88) and another on death, dying and palliative care (GERO 5P87). Topics such as legal issues and elder abuse are woven into several distinct courses throughout the program (e.g., Current Issues in Aging; Mental Health and Aging; Advanced Communication and Aging). At our program retreat in August 2025, we will explore ways to integrate the above content across multiple required courses.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the Program’s response which will seek to incorporate these topics across multiple courses to ensure that they are included in the students’ educational outcomes. I anticipate the implementation timeline will be short-term, 1-2 years and not involve additional resources.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider relating to their curriculum. SGSC encourages programs to consider the depth and breadth of their curriculum as it relates to their program learning outcomes.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

FGSPA supports this recommendation and the program’s response. Increasing the content across multiple courses is likely to take some time and so this may be a medium-term goal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Program, in consultation with the Deans, is best positioned to explore ways to integrate the four noted areas across multiple required courses.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #7: Review the ICER [Intergenerational Community-Engaged Residency] Award conditions or requirements.
<i>Supporting/clarifying text: This is an innovative opportunity we feel is beneficial for students, residents and staff. It requires many hours in exchange for subsidized housing for the student. Consider reducing the amount of hours required or allow this experience to be counted as an elective in the program.</i>

The Program responded:

At our upcoming retreat, we will discuss the possibility of the ICER applicant enrolling in AHSC 5P60 (Directed Readings) as an approved MAG elective, counted toward their degree requirements.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the Program’s response to develop a pathway for this important experience to count for academic credit for the student(s) involved as recommended by the Reviewers. I anticipate the implementation timeline to be short-term, 1 year, and not involve additional resources.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation relates to an innovative award offered by MAG in collaboration with Niagara Regional Housing and is outside of the purview of SGSC.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

This is a unique and exciting opportunity for students. We support the recommendation of the reviewers and the program’s response. This is short-term goal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee expects that the Program will review the ICER Award conditions/requirements and is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

Recommendation #8: The program committee may wish to reconsider the need for a background in research methods as a prerequisite to program admission.

Supporting/clarifying text: There was a gap in admission requirements to ensure that students have some background in research and research methods (particularly statistics/quantitative research). While we understand that this is an applied professional type program, it is critical for students to learn how to assess and judge research.

The Program responded:

One of the strengths of our program is its interdisciplinary approach, attracting students from a variety of undergraduate degrees. Our research courses - *Research Literacy in Applied Gerontological Practice*, and *Theory and Practice of Health Program Planning and Evaluation* – are designed to ‘introduce’ and ‘reinforce’ key graduate degree level expectations. We agree that the ability to critically assess and judge research is essential and have adapted our courses to ensure students develop these skills and competencies within the program itself. Currently, students are required to take EITHER one of the above research courses; however, as a result of our cyclical review, there is a proposal to discuss whether *Research Literacy in Gerontological Practice* should be mandatory for all students.

The Dean of Applied Health Sciences responded:

I support the Program’s response which ensures that graduates do indeed have understanding of research methods and statistics to appropriately appreciate research by including these areas in the curriculum, while keeping a more open admissions requirement policy to ensure a more interdisciplinary applicant pool. Additional curriculum changes to further address Reviewers’ points in this regard will also be considered. I anticipate the implementation timeline (if any) to be short-term, 1 year and not involve additional resources.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider relating to their admission requirements. SGSC encourages programs to consider their options for admission requirements, pre- or post- registration requirements to ensure necessary and sufficient preparation for incoming students to succeed in their programs.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs responded:

We support the program’s response to this recommendation and agree that it should be considered at their retreat whether to make the Research Literacy in Applied Gerontological Practice a mandatory course. This is a short-term goal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee understands that the recommendation is presently under review by the Program and additional curriculum changes may be implemented as a result.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program /Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2025-26.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations: 1-8