

# Final Assessment Report

## Applied Disability Studies

### Graduate Programs

(reviewed 2016/17)

#### A. Summary

1. The Centre's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on November 8, 2016.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Lisa Serbin (Concordia University) and Raymond Miltenberger (South Florida University) and an internal reviewer, Colleen Hood (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 12-14, 2017.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 19, 2017.
5. The Centre's response was received on May 18, 2017.
6. The Dean of Graduate Studies response from Jens Coorssen was received on May 27, 2016.
7. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on June 16, 2017.
8. The Interim Dean of Social Sciences response from Ingrid Makus was received on July 7, 2017.

The academic programs offered by the Centre for Applied Disability Studies\* which were examined as part of the review were:

Master of Arts in Applied Disability Studies  
Master of Applied Disability Studies  
Graduate Diploma in Applied Disability Studies

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

\*On July 1, 2017 the Centre for Applied Disability Studies became the Department of Applied Disability Studies.

The reviewers assigned the programs varying outcome categories:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
Master of Arts in Applied Disability Studies Stream 1: MA/ABA Stream 2: MA without ABA	X		X (With concerns related to program breadth)	
Master of Applied Disability Studies Stream 1: MADS/ABA Stream 2: MADS without ABA	X		X (With concerns related to cohort issues, mentor/advising; quality of PT instructors; program breadth)	
Graduate Diploma in Applied Disability Studies	X			

## B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

1. Quality of faculty
2. Flexibility of program delivery
3. Responsive to needs of Niagara community and families/services across Ontario, as well as practitioners wishing to upgrade their professional credentials
4. Well structured and delivered ABA program
5. Unique combination of ABA and disability studies
6. Scientist-practitioner model
7. Only M.A. program including research thesis and ABA training currently available in Canada

In the Executive Summary the reviewers stated:

The Centre for Applied Disability Studies (CADS) is a strong program that presents a valuable mix of training in applied behavior analysis (ABA) and disabilities studies. The faculty members are well-qualified and accomplished teachers and researchers and the students admitted to the program have strong credentials. The curriculum is well designed and covers important topics in disabilities studies and ABA; noteworthy is the fact that the ABA course sequence is approved by the Behavior Analyst Accreditation Board. The program provides a unique delivery model that serves Ontario residents well, with classes on campus and off campus. The program addresses an important need in Ontario and across Canada for well-trained master's level practitioners. Students graduate in a timely fashion and secure professional positions in Ontario and beyond. The program is well-supported by the Faculty of Social Sciences and the university administration. The program has grown over the years and, as a result, has experienced some challenges. We believe these challenges can be addressed to keep the program strong and vibrant.

## C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

### Recommendation 1

Review degree and department title to more closely address the focus of the program (ABA) (particularly diploma).

In its response, the Centre stated:

We agree that the focus of our graduate program is ABA, with the vast majority of students choosing the ABA specialization. However, as the reviewers recognized, the combination of ABA and disability studies is unique. That said, with the plan to develop a PhD program that will include clinical psychology, we have thought of a more all-encompassing name, and some names have been suggested. We will further pursue this recommendation at the CADS retreat in June 2017.

The Faculty Dean stated that she:

Agree[d] with the reviewers recommendation and the unit's response that the title of the program should be reviewed in conjunction with consideration of a Ph.D program that includes Clinical Psychology. Also recommends that consideration be given to the title of the Diploma Program.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS (although happy to discuss if the Program feels input would be helpful).

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and under consideration by the Department (please note that the Centre became the Department of Applied Disability Studies as of July 1, 2017).

### Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2017/2018

## **Recommendation 2**

Review the no-ABA programs to determine breadth of program.

In its response, the Unit stated:

We will review the MA and MADS-no ABA program and look for ways to attract more students. However, we already offer eight courses (plus a thesis in MA). These courses cover a brea[d]th of disabilities and theories with most sections taught by highly qualified part-time instructors. The breadth and depth of courses are consistent with comparable critical disability studies and cultural studies programs. There is very little duplication of material in General courses. There is significant theoretical scaffolding which often necessitates an overview and integration of previously studied material in the early stages of subsequent follow up courses. Our MA-no ABA students have the opportunity to be supervised by any core, cross-appointed and affiliated faculty (including ABA faculty). These students have conducted theses on a wide variety of topics. The MADS-no ABA also have to complete major research papers (MRPs). General students' MRPs are consistent with graduate school practices common in social sciences and humanities programs. There has been considerable diversity in topics chosen. To expand beyond these offerings now would require additional resources and more regular faculty or cross-listing courses with other departments (see Recommendation #3).

The Unit further explained that the ABA and no-ABA programs are quite differentiated in terms of courses and focus, but acknowledged that a more descriptive and accurate name than "General Program" for the no-ABA program might be useful in terms of differentiation and attractiveness for recruitment. The Unit also stated that, "We will look for new ways to promote this program" in order to increase enrollment.

The Faculty Dean stated that she:

Agree[d] with the reviewers recommendation and the unit's response that the unit will review the no-ABA program to determine whether (a)increasing course offerings, (b)differentiation from the ABA program, and (c)increased enrolments in the program are viable given present resources and student demand.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS. Nonetheless, the DGS concurs with the Program, particularly in light of the faculty complement of the CADS Program/Department relative to the existing course offerings and the demonstrated strong focus and ongoing success of CADS. The DGS thus finds this recommendation somewhat at odds with other comments from the reviewers.

- b) Are there ways to more clearly differentiate the no-ABA program from the ABA
- c) Consider increasing enrollment in this part of the program?

## **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to review the no-ABA programs to be accepted and under consideration by the Department.

### **Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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### **Recommendation 3**

Increase offerings in the no-ABA programs.

The Centre stated that it would consider possible ways of increasing offerings in the no-ABA program including: cross-listing grad courses from other departments, creating and advertising a disability studies working/interest group and creating a speaker series on campus.

In response to the suggestion to recruit more cross-appointed faculty, the Unit stated that it had given consideration to offering a cross-appointment to a researcher in Child and Youth Studies who is their most active affiliated faculty, but that it was "reticent to offer additional cross-appointments because none other of our affiliate faculty have made a substantial contribution to CADS."

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed with the reviewers' recommendation and the Unit's response.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS. Nonetheless, the DGS encourages more transdisciplinary approaches, particularly those linking across departments and faculties; thus, anything that encourages such communication or interactions is also seen as positive for Graduate Studies/Students, and research and the institution more broadly.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and under consideration by the Department.

#### **Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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#### **Recommendation 4**

Examine strategies related to increasing sense of community in off-campus cohorts.

In its response, the Centre stated that it considers the suggestion to “Encourage student meetings/gatherings on one of the off weekends per month” to be worthy of further consideration and would poll the weekend students to assess interest. It also stated that the Centre already holds a full-day of lectures once a year for all graduating ABA students, but that it would consider adding another day mid-year and expanding activities to offer workshops and webinars at other times of the year to all students.

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed with the reviewers’ recommendation and the Unit’s response.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated, “Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS, although seen as positive recommendation[s].”

#### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and under consideration by the Department.

#### **Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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## **Recommendation 5**

Examine strategies related to supporting sessional instructors.

In its response, the Centre stated that the reviewers' suggestion to assign one faculty member per year to act as liaison to sessional instructors and provide a course release associated with this workload presented a "chicken-and-egg dilemma. If we give another course release, we need to replace that faculty with another part-time instructor".

In response to the reviewers' suggestion to "Review course outlines developed/modified by sessional instructors to avoid duplication of readings and/or content", the Unit clarified that sessional instructors for both the ABA and no-ABA courses do not develop or modify course syllabi. However, the Unit stated, "We go over course outlines with the part-time instructors, as needed, to make sure their courses are consistent with what regular faculty are teaching".

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed:

with the reviewers general recommendation and agrees with the unit's response that the specific strategy of (a) assigning faculty members to act as a liaison is less functional than using the 'champion model', given faculty resources. The Interim Dean of FOSS also agrees that the unit's response to the specific strategy of (b) reviewing course outlines is being done by the Unit in a way that ensure[s] compliance with BACB [Behavior Analyst Certification Board] certification.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to examine strategies to support sessional instructors to be accepted while acknowledging that the provision of resources for additional faculty or staff lies outside the purview of the Committee.

#### **Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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## **Recommendation 6**

Advocate for continuing increases in resources to support the program.

In its response, the Centre stated that its “advocacy for increased resources has been reasonably successful”. It further stated that it would continue to advocate for faculty, space and staff as well as support for student training, community service and research for the clinic. It suggested that the CADS offices, labs, the future PhD program and an expanded clinic might be part of a proposed new building on campus that would house health-related programs.

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed:

with the Reviewers Recommendation and the unit's response that it has been successful at advocating for adequate resources to support the program through the Faculty of Social Sciences. The development of (a) an on-campus clinic is underway (b) the possibility of a new health building which would provide expanded space is at the initial idea stage. The development of a Ph.D is in the early planning stages, which requires that increased space needs are identified. Although it is not the purview of ARC to address requests for increase in resources, the Interim Dean agrees with the unit's overall strategy of continuing to advocate for more resources, through the budgetary processes that are part of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Provost's Office, the University wide Capital Infrastructure and Space Planning Committees and the Board

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

While supporting the intent of this recommendation, it must be acknowledged that these matters are not in the purview of the Dean, FGS.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to advocate for resources to be accepted while acknowledging that the provision of resources lies outside the purview of the Committee.

#### **Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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## **Recommendation 7**

Examine carefully the future plans for the Centre in terms of a balance of senior and junior faculty.

In its response, the Centre stated:

We certainly recognize the need and will continue to advocate for at least one new mid-career faculty member to have a better balance of senior and junior faculty. Several new faculty senior, mid and junior faculty positions (and admin assistants) would be required if we expand to include a PhD program and increasing our undergraduate course offerings.

The Faculty Dean noted that:

although requests for faculty resources are not the purview of ARC, the unit is able to advocate for faculty positions that take into account future plans for expansion, including balancing senior and junior faculty complements, following the budgetary processes in the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Provost's office.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS. Nonetheless, the DGS would advocate for an additional faculty member to support this very strong and successful Program and new Department; the rationale for a strong mid-career scholar has definite merits.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to plan for future faculty renewal to be accepted while acknowledging that the provision of faculty resources lies outside the purview of the Committee.

#### **Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/2019

## **Recommendation 8**

**Support junior faculty as they move towards tenure.**

In its response to the suggestion to reduce overload assignments, the Centre stated:

We do not assign overload nor put any pressure for faculty to teach on overload. A faculty member's decision to teach on overload is strictly their choice.

In response to the suggestion of reducing the administrative burden, the Unit stated:

We do our best to minimize the administrative workload of junior faculty. However, four of the six CADS faculty are junior faculty. Therefore, it is unavoidable for the junior faculty to take on some admin tasks. The two tenured faculty already carry substantial administrative responsibilities and take on substantial special projects.

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed:

with the unit's response that (a) faculty are not required to teach on overload and (b) that some administrative activity is required of all faculty members (it constitutes 20 % of their workload). The Interim Dean notes that there are Faculty-wide processes in place that follow the Brock Collective Agreement which regulates requirements for tenure and promotion. For example, the Dean of FOSS meets annually with non-tenured faculty to provide oral and written feedback on faculty members' progress towards tenure.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to reflect current practice within the Department. The Committee acknowledges that workload issues which might impact tenure and promotion are regulated under the Collective Agreement.

### **Implementation Plan**

No further action required.

## **Recommendation 9**

Solicit community/practitioner input on the program.

In its response to the suggestion to create a community advisory board, the Unit stated that it would consider the idea as “It would make sense to have a standing community agency advisory committee for the clinic, and perhaps for CADS itself”.

In response to the suggestion to “Consider inviting agency representatives, clients, policy makers, and/or practitioners to Centre meetings” the Unit stated:

We occasionally invite guests to our meetings. We could organize special meetings for CADS community stakeholders in addition to advisory committee meetings. We always value input and feedback which have the potential to improve the programs we offer.

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed with the reviewers’ recommendation and the Unit’s response.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS (although this does sound like a reasonable suggestion).

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

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

#### **Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
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## **Recommendation 10**

Review external communication for prospective students.

The Unit responded to suggestions from the reviewers on how to implement this recommendation. The Unit stated that it frequently revises content and presentation of information based on student feedback and enquiries, including that which is made available on the website. Student email enquiries are being tracked already, but the Unit acknowledged that "We need to initiate a more formal review of each year's inquiries for trends and identify areas in need of improvement". The Unit preferred that communication with prospective students remain part of the Chair's overall responsibility with duties designated to various groups and individuals instead of one administrative person. The Unit clarified that admissions offers may indicate the amount of support to which a student is entitled as a T.A or R.A.-ship but cannot guarantee placements or grant priority to CADS students.

The Faculty Dean stated that she agreed with the reviewers' general recommendation and the Unit's overall response and further clarified that:

reviewing the web site is being done by the unit in conjunction with a Communications Officer in the Faculty of Social Sciences who has been hired to assist with the development of the new website, according to a University-wide Marketing plan. The expected date of completion is Fall 2017.

and that:

Incoming Graduate students are guaranteed a certain amount of support through TA/RA ships which are included in the letters sent out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The process of finding appropriate TA'ships for students in MA programs that do not have their own related undergraduate component is done through consultation with Graduate Program Directors and Department Chairs across the Faculty and the University (in the case of MA programs that cross Faculties). As CADS grows its on-line undergraduate courses, it will be able to offer TA's ships in those courses to CADS MA students.

Recommendation - is already carried out through processes across the University which include the requirement to follow CUPE labour relations rules.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that a "New Brock website design and platform should prove more user friendly" and that "a move to the use of a Virtual Open House recruitment tool may help". He stated that the GPD would be, by definition the designated person for communication with prospective students. With regards to TA and RA-ships he stated:

Support packages are clearly delineated in the letter of offer each student receives from the FGS. The Provost has also recently made it clear to all other Deans that TA & RA positions must be made available to CADS and transdisciplinary programs when appropriate candidates are available. The FGS may be in a position to help with one or two 'emergency' situations should they arise.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated:

There may need to be better coordination with the Graduate Studies office to facilitate these opportunities [for TA positions in other departments].

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

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

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
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### **Recommendation 11**

In response to changing demographic of incoming students (i.e., more full-time students and more students coming directly from undergrad studies), expand full-time program offerings and structure.

In its response, the Unit stated:

We can only expand full-time offerings with more faculty resources. We currently are relying on a considerable number of part-time faculty and if we offered more courses, we would need to rely on them even more in the absence of increased faculty complement. In addition, the number of courses offered to our ABA students is mainly determined by meeting BACB criteria for an approved course sequence so that [our] ABA graduates can complete the course work requirement for BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst). Finally, as MADS students pay tuition for each course separately, they would be unlikely to take and pay for extra courses that are not needed for their degree. MA students (both ABA and non-ABA), who pay one tuition fee for an unlimited number of courses, sometimes take our extra practicum courses or more than one elective course as well as related courses in other departments.

The Faculty Dean stated that she accepted:

the unit's response to the reviewers' recommendation which notes that this recommendation is not viable given present resources.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

Not in the purview of the Dean, FGS. The DGS again finds this recommendation somewhat at odds with other comments from the reviewers [see also Recommendation #2].

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to consider how the full-time program might expand in the future to be accepted, while acknowledging that the provision of the necessary resources for this to be implemented lies outside the purview of the Committee.

### **Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/2019

## **D. Summary of Recommendations:**

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,3,4,5,6, 10

Second Priority:

Recommendations 7,9,11

Not requiring further action:

Recommendation 8