

Final Assessment Report

Graduate Programs in Applied Health Sciences

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on January 11, 2013.
2. The Review Committee consisted of: two external reviewers, Wendy Frisby, School of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia and Peter Tiidus, Kinesiology and Physical Education, Wilfrid Laurier University; and an internal reviewer, John McNamara, Child and Youth Studies.
3. The site visit occurred on February 13-15, 2013.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 6, 2013.
5. The Program's response was received on March 28, 2013.
6. The Dean of Applied Health Sciences' response from Neil McCartney was received on April 2, 2013.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies' response from Mike Pyley was received on April 8, 2013.
8. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on April 19, 2013.

The academic programs offered by the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences which were examined as part of the review included:

MA/MSc in Applied Health Sciences
PhD in Applied Health Sciences

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

The reviewers assigned the Applied Health Sciences graduate programs an Outcome Category 2, "Good Quality".

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers stated that the MSc and MA programs, approved by OCGS in 2005, were “of very good quality and have adequate numbers of faculty to support them (ranging from 11-16 core faculty across the programs).” They went on to say that two of the three PhD fields, “approved by OCGS in 2009, were also of very good quality, especially given the relatively short time they have been in existence.”

The reviewers further stated:

Based on survey data in the self-study and our visit with approximately 35 graduate students from the different graduate programs, students appear to be very satisfied with their programs, opportunities for independent research, and the quality of supervision. Graduate students have several opportunities to develop strong research skills and teaching skills by working as teaching assistants for undergraduate labs, seminars, and tutorials. External funding of faculty research is growing significantly, they are highly engaged in graduate student learning, and outcomes measures were favorable (e.g., time to completion; growth in student tri-council funding, conference presentations and publications). The hiring of 3 Tier II CRCs with vibrant research programs is another notable strength.

Overall, the availability of space, equipment and technical support is another graduate program strength, particularly with the opening of the Cairns Family Health and Bioscience Research Complex Centre, a state of the art facility with approximately 14,000 square feet of laboratory space and student study areas. However, it is unfortunate that most kinesiology faculty have office space in other buildings.

Graduate programs in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences are undergoing significant growth that, when coupled with adequate funding, will strengthen its reputation and capacity for conducting high quality health and physical activity-related research. Other strengths include advising, technical computer support, and improvements in the quality of admissions.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided sixteen recommendations:

1. Increase the autonomy of the different graduate programs in AHS, while continuing to operate them on a faculty-wide level.

The reviewers provided examples of autonomy related to curriculum development, having a part-time option, possible professional non-thesis options and the effects of limited duration external funding on doctoral student supervision.

In its response, the Program stated:

this is a single graduate program, not multiple programs, and so the requirements cannot vary within the same program. Some field autonomy is, however, being build [sic] into the program.

The various examples cited by the Reviewers are addressed by the program and also will be discussed by the Graduate Committee and the Faculty as a whole at a Graduate Retreat.

The Dean of Graduate Studies reiterated the Program comments in his response that:

there are NOT six Master's programs and there are NOT three PhD programs as is often portrayed by the reviewers; there is ONLY one Master's program in which an MA degree is provided to students in four fields, and an MSc degree is awarded to students in two fields, and there is ONLY one PhD program with three fields. Fields are NOT programs...

He further stated that:

The design of a graduate program such as this was approved by OCGS, and while as some elements are subject to change, the basic design is not without going to ARC for major program changes.

The Faculty Dean responded that there is currently a significant level of autonomy in regards to curriculum development and that other curriculum matters should be taken up at the Graduate retreat. He stated that he would encourage departments across the Faculty to consider professional, course based masters programs and would work with doctoral supervisors to provide continuing support as required.

ARC understands that there is one doctoral and one masters level program with different fields of study. The Committee would encourage a discussion at the Graduate Retreat which will address the 4 bulleted points in Recommendation 1. The diverse nature of the program design and structure suggests investigation into areas of autonomy but it would also benefit from healthy cooperation between the areas. ARC considers the Recommendation to be accepted and believes that the Program Committee, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and Dean of

Graduate Studies, is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	AHS Graduate Committee, Dean of AHS and FGS
Responsible for resources:	AHS Graduate Committee, Dean of AHS
Responsible for implementation:	AHS Graduate Committee, Deans of AHS and FGS
Timeline:	Deans of AHS and FGS to report by end of 2013-14 academic year

2. Consider deleting and changing some components of the integrative interdisciplinary foundations to allow for greater program autonomy and distinctiveness.

The Program responded that:

The necessity and format of 5P00 will be addressed as suggested in a Faculty wide retreat along with potential options of replacing this required half-credit. The program will also discuss the implementation of the suggestions regarding the 7P00 PhD seminar in combination with the potential 5P00 changes.

The Faculty Dean responded that, "we are constantly reviewing the operations of our graduate program, to ensure faculty-wide interdisciplinary approach remains effective." And that "there does seem to be growing support for this change, and it will be discussed at an upcoming Graduate Retreat.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

The design of a graduate such as this was approved by OCGS, and while as some elements are subject to change, the basic design is not without going to ARC for major program changes.

ARC expects that this recommendation will be addressed at the Graduate Retreat within the discussion around areas of autonomy. It should be noted that any changes to the program would be considered major modifications and would require approval from ARC and Senate. ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and believes that the Program Committee, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and Dean of Graduate Studies, is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	AHS Graduate Committee, Dean of AHS and FGS
Responsible for resources:	AHS Graduate Committee, Dean of AHS
Responsible for implementation:	AHS Graduate Committee, Dean of AHS and FGS
Timeline:	Deans of AHS and FGS to report by end of 2013-14 academic year

3. Brock University's budget allotment has not kept up with growth in AHS and this is severely affecting the faculty's ability to grow, be competitive, and ensure a rich experience for all graduate students. A university activity-based funding model that gives credit back to newer but high performing faculties like AHS could help to alleviate this problem.

The Program responded that:

This is indeed the case and we agree with the reviewers. Support to graduate students in this faculty is lower than [sic] other Faculties that have larger budgets and lower numbers of undergraduate majors and graduate students. The historical, not equitable budget allocation disadvantages the AHS graduate students.

The Faculty Dean noted that:

There is no doubt that budget cuts have reduced our ability to fund and support graduate students, but this is a university-wide issue that needs to be resolved.

The reviewers strongly suggest the hiring of a part-time graduate assistant to support the sole graduate administrator who is in place currently. This is a priority for the FAHS and was a request in the last round of budget submissions, and will be part of the upcoming submission.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that "Faculty budget allocation is not in the FGS (Faculty of Graduate Studies) purview."

ARC acknowledges the challenges faced by the Department in terms of budget resources but recognizes that budget allocation lies outside of ARC's area of responsibility. ARC expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation NOT accepted.

4. Develop a coherent curriculum development plan for those graduate programs emphasizing coursework and provide more opportunities for program specialization.

The Program stated that it:

agrees with this recommendation and will continue to encourage faculty members to teach existing or proposed new graduate courses. The only restriction in offering more elective courses is workload.

Further the Program explained that since this is a research-based program, the approach followed in terms of graduate offerings must be flexible enough to allow students to be adequately trained in their area of specialization.

The Faculty Dean responded that “the need to develop more graduate courses is acknowledged, and there is a plan in place to make this happen.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated, “once again there is only ONE Master’s program.” And further commented:

Having said that, the issue of course offerings for students in any given field is a issue worth discussing. However, the position of the FGS is that at the heart of insufficient opportunity to offer graduate courses is the need for UG program curriculum review, and designing the UG programs to be taught in fewer required courses, providing flexibility for graduate courses to be offered within faculty workloads. However, having said that, workload is not in the purview of the FGS, and is shared responsibility between the Dean of the Faculty and the Departments.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. It is expected that the Graduate Committee will move forward as appropriate for the different fields of specialization.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	AHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	Dean of AHS
Responsible for implementation:	AHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of AHS to report by end of 2013-14 academic year

5. More formal and transparent policies with built-in flexibility are required to accommodate both greater consistency and graduate program autonomy. A strong recommendation for faculty members was that graduate program policies should be tightened and communicated in an easily accessible and transparent way because they are 'too loose' and are therefore open to misinterpretation. This could also help reduce an over-reliance on the Administrative Graduate Coordinator.

In its response, the Program stated that it will discuss and tighten the various policies when possible and necessary without compromising the within and between fields flexibility.

The Faculty Dean responded that the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research has or will address the various policies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies disagreed with this recommendation and stated:

University Graduate Policies are in both the Faculty Handbook and the Graduate Calendar. Program-specific policies are to be contained within the various Program Handbooks, which should be updated regularly to keep pace with the various University changes approved by Senate.

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no additional action is required.

Implementation Plan

No further action is required.

6. Due to the growth of the masters programs and introduction of PhD programs, the requirement of an external examiner at the Masters level is no longer necessary.

In its response the Program found this statement surprising:

because this is already in effect for the last 4 years. As stated in the Masters Student Handbook and all on-line guidelines, the external examiner must be outside the field but can be within Brock either from a different AHS field or other programs across campus.

The Faculty Dean noted that this has been in place for 4 years.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

This has been the case, and in place, since the PhD Program was approved in 2008, and in fact, fields with the AHSC Master's Program have used Brock faculty for PhD defences previously. Once again, that this is not common knowledge is incongruous!

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no additional action is required.

Implementation Plan

No further action is required.

7. Workload credit should be given to faculty with research grants who are supervising significant numbers of graduate students.

The Program stated that it is in full agreement with this recommendation and hopes that it is going to be discussed with BUFA during the next round of negotiations.

The Faculty Dean was also in agreement.

The Dean of Graduate Studies reiterated that workload is not in the purview of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

ARC acknowledges the challenges faced by the Unit in terms of workload for those supervising large numbers of graduate students but recognizes that this issue lies outside of ARC's area of responsibility. Under existing conditions, it is not possible to accept the recommendation as articulated.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation is NOT accepted.

8. Marketing needs to be more coherent and coordinated while allowing graduate programs to advertise their distinctive strengths.

The Program stated that:

We fully agree with this recommendation. The Communication Officer can be invited in the Graduate Committee and start planning for a more aggressive, AHS specific recruitment.

The Faculty Dean stated that he was in agreement and the Faculty will develop and put in place a comprehensive marketing plan.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that:

The *Faculty of Graduate Studies* is willing to work with both the Master's and the PhD Programs in recruitment in order to maximize the limited funding available between AHSC and FGS.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. This issue would merit discussion at the Graduate Retreat.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	AHS Graduate Committee
Responsible for resources:	Dean of AHS
Responsible for implementation:	AHS Graduate Committee
Timeline:	Dean of AHS to report by end of 2013-14 academic year

9. Maintain high admissions standards.

The Program responded:

For the 2012-2013 cycle, admission cut-off was 80%. This is actually higher than both the minimum University requirement and the typical cut-off across similar Ontario programs. It is evident that such a high cut-off will be maintained in the current admission cycle.

The Faculty Dean acknowledged that the Faculty is attempting to admit students with an 80% average or higher, a policy he put in place last year.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

The University minimum average for admission to Graduate Studies is 75%; the current Dean of Graduate, since arrival two years ago, has advocated for a minimum of 80%, so it is hard to reconcile this recommendation with reality!

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no additional action is required.

Implementation Plan

No further action is required.

10. Increase support for graduate students.

The Program responded that it will apply for additional operating and part-time budget to support students.

The Faculty Dean acknowledged that these are University-wide budget issues, but the Dean's office does its best to support graduate students.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that where the recommendation is within its purview the FGS is in agreement with and in support of the recommendation.

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no additional action is required.

Implementation Plan

No further action is required.

11. Centralize university-wide support for the biosciences to control costs and to make the ordering of supplies more efficient (e.g., science stores, technical support for lab infrastructure).

The Program fully agreed with this recommendation and will encourage the implementation of the proposed changes.

The Faculty Dean stated that changes have been made already and seem to be working.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that:

Never seen this as part of a graduate program review previously, but never-the-less, this is not in the purview of the FGS.

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but recognizes that it is outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Unit will use appropriate strategies as necessary to control costs and make the ordering of supplies more efficient.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation is NOT accepted.

12. The timely hiring and training of support staff for the animal room is essential to allow graduate students and faculty to resume and complete their research.

The Program concurred with this recommendation.

It was the Faculty Dean's understanding that this had taken place.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Never seen this as part of a graduate program review previously, but never-the-less, this is not in the purview of the FGS.

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but recognizes that it is outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Unit will advocate through normal channels for support staff as needed in the animal room.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation NOT accepted.

13. The viability of one PhD program area, Behavioural and Population Health, should be monitored for student intake and faculty commitment.

The Program noted that appropriate monitoring and promotional strategies will be put in place as suggested by the Reviewers.

Given the low enrollments in this area, the Faculty Dean indicated that they will conduct an ongoing review of this area.

The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed with and indicated his support for this recommendation.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of being implemented. The Graduate Program Director is encouraged to meet with this group to strategize how to move forward. ARC is of the view that enrolments levels in the Field should be monitored closely over the next few years to ensure its sustainability.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Graduate Program Director/Associate Dean
Responsible for resources:	Dean of AHS
Responsible for implementation:	Graduate Program Director/Associate Dean
Timeline:	Dean of AHS to report by end of 2014-15 academic year

14. Designate an AHS faculty member as the library liaison to improve communication and increase library book holdings.

The Program stated that this is an excellent recommendation. The Graduate Committee will discuss the terms and procedures for the addition of such a liaison position.

The Faculty Dean stated this recommendation will be adopted.

The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed with and indicated his support for this recommendation.

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

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Graduate Program Director
Responsible for resources:	None required
Responsible for implementation:	Graduate Program Director
Timeline:	Dean of AHS to report by end of 2013-14 academic year

15. Consider additional Canada Research Chairs in the social science area to better balance faculty and graduate program strengths.

The Program concurred with this recommendation.

The Faculty Dean stated that implementing this recommendation would be dependent on Tri-Council funding to the institution, but should such a position become available the Faculty would consider the social science area.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that this decision is not in the purview of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

ARC considers this recommendation to be outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Unit will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for Canada Research Chairs.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation is NOT accepted.

16. Brock University and AHS policy regarding further growth of Masters and Doctoral programs should be reviewed.

The Program stated that appropriate monitoring would be put in place.

The Faculty Dean agreed and suggested that monitoring would take place at the Faculty level.

The Dean of Graduate Studies was in agreement with and indicated support for this recommendation.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. It was decided that two Implementation plans were needed for this recommendation.

1. Brock University, through the Dean of Graduate Studies, to review policy with regards to further growth of Masters and Doctoral programs.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Dean of Graduate Studies
Responsible for resources:	Dean of Graduate Studies
Responsible for implementation:	Dean of Graduate Studies
Timeline:	Dean of Graduate Studies to report on ongoing basis

2. Faculty of Applied Health Sciences to review policy with regards to further growth of Masters and Doctoral programs.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Graduate Program Director, Dean of Faculty
Responsible for resources:	Graduate Program Director, Dean of Faculty
Responsible for implementation:	Graduate Program Director, Dean of Faculty
Timeline:	Graduate Program Director to report on ongoing basis

D. Recommendations to be Implemented

The IQAP requires that ARC “set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation.” Using the specific ARC proposals enunciated above, the following priorities are proposed:

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,4,8,14,16.

Second Priority

Recommendation 13.

E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented

Recommendations 3,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,15.