

Final Assessment Report

Health Sciences Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2017/18)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on November 14, 2017.
2. The Review Committee consisted of one* external reviewer: John Spence (University of Alberta) and an internal reviewer, Dolana Mogadime (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 14-16, 2018.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on May 18, 2018.
5. The Department's response was received on July 5, 2018.
6. The Dean of Applied Health Sciences response from Peter Tiidus was received on July 19, 2018.
7. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on September 20, 2018

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

*The Office of the Vice-Provost was informed shortly before the site visit that the second external reviewer Phil Chilibeck (University of Saskatchewan) was unable to attend due to a family emergency. John Spence agreed to act as the sole external reviewer and was given extra time to complete the Reviewers' Report.

The academic programs offered by the Department of Health Sciences which were examined and rated as part of the review were:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA (Honours) Child Health			X	
BPH Bachelor (Honours) of Public Health		X		
BPH Bachelor (Honours) of Public Health Co-op				X
BSc (Honours) Medical Sciences		X		
BA (Pass) Community Health			X	

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

Among other things, the review team was impressed with the quality of the instructors (both tenure- track and sessional), the breadth/range of courses and degree offerings, the respect and empathy demonstrated by faculty members for one another, the commitment to experiential education, and the passion of the students for the program. On more than one occasion we heard from faculty, staff, or students that the “people” in the Department were a major strength. Based on our discussions with the students and staff, along with a 55% increase in course registrations since 2009, it was apparent that much interest exists in what the programs of the HLSC have to offer. But, with this growth and demand comes pressure on budgets and resources. Thus, it will be critical that such challenges are managed in a fair and transparent manner so that these strengths do not wane.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

The Bachelor of Public Health Co-op be restructured so that the co-op is offered in the fall and/or winter terms too.

In its response, the Department stated:

The department has already developed a program plan to restructure the Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) Co-op program as a 3-term academic year. This proposal has been discussed with our Dean and the co-op office. It is now a matter of obtaining at least three new faculty positions, so we can offer the necessary courses during Spring/Summer terms in a sustainable manner.

In the meantime, we have increased the number of both elective and required courses offered in the Spring/Summer terms, including HLSC 4P40 Public Health Capstone course and HLSC 3F20, Program Planning and Evaluation. We are acutely aware that restructuring the BPH co-op will allow students the flexibility to pursue work in the winter and fall terms, which will ultimately enhance the student experience, improve the program as a whole, and allow for the co-op to align with the national guidelines for accreditation.

In addition to at least three new faculty member positions for our Public Health programs, it would be ideal if we were allocated a staff position. This individual would work closely with the co-op office, community partners and students to ensure that co-op opportunities match students' academic preparation and preferences (including geographic distribution), as well as with partners' requirements and expectations.

Further, we suggest that the number of students admitted to the BPH co-op program is closely aligned to the program's capacity as well as availability of placements. In other words, setting a reasonable co-op enrolment target is another element crucial to the success of the program.

Finally, as of the new Academic Year (2019-2020), the online Master of Public Health (MPH) will be managed from our Department with an already elected Graduate Program Director. It is our objective that moving forward, our Public Health programs (both undergraduate and graduate) work in synchrony and strengthen one another. Synergies will be promoted so Public Health competencies are nurtured by these programs.

The Faculty Dean stated that:

I agree that the external reviewers' report appropriately indicated that the BPH co-op program is not viable operating in a two-term academic cycle and that the move to a three-term cycle would significantly enhance the viability of this potentially strong and popular program. We are currently working to provide the department with the faculty and staff resources needed to move this program into a three-term academic cycle in

order to make this program into a fully functional and accredited Co-op program. I agree with the departmental assessment that the viability of this undergraduate program in a three-term cycle is contingent on the provision of two new faculty positions (one in the first year of the operation of the 3 term cycle and one additional faculty no later than the start of the 3rd year of the 3 term cycle). I also agree that an additional staff member is needed within the first year of the operation of this program for the reasons cited above as well as to meet other student advising needs of the department. Synergies with the MPH program as outlined above will also be important going forward. The departmental suggestion of a third faculty addition for the MPH program (while likely important) is not directly related to this review.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) stated:

UPC ... feels that recommendations 1 and 5 will have specific implications for this committee. UPC looks forward to future discussion of these items when received with submissions.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted as an alternative to closing the program, given that the reviewers categorized it as non-viable. The Committee recognizes that a program in the health and well-being disciplines with a strong experiential component fits very well into the priorities of Brock's Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) with the province, both in terms of areas of program strength and expansion and societal need in the Niagara Region. ARC expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for any necessary new faculty resources.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation #2

The HLSC department explore changing the BA Child Health to either a Bachelor of Child Health or a BSc.

In its response, the Department stated:

A name change from BA Child Health to Bachelor of Child Health has already been discussed at the department level as it is a viable option only requiring internal approval. The conversion of the program to a BSc is not possible without a major restructuring to include a majority of science-based courses in the curriculum.

Since the program is a collaborative effort between the Department of Child and Youth Studies (CHYS) and HLSC, a joint working group will be formed immediately to make the appropriate consultations with students, alumni, community partners, as well as with current and potential employers. A recommendation will be required before the next UPC/ARC submission in October 2019. If approved the name change will be effective for the academic year 2019-2020.

In terms of the program as a whole, the department has been making changes to the program that have proved beneficial to the students. As we now have one faculty member dedicated to the program, we are ensuring students have access to practical experience and research opportunities. We have also increased opportunities for students to be linked to community partners and potential employers.

The Faculty Dean stated:

I support the HLSC department's initiative to form a joint working group with CHYS to discuss possible degree designation changes to the program and other related curricular issues going forward as noted in the departmental response. I would also encourage the HLSC department to explore other possible curricular contributions to the Child Health program from FAHS departments such as Kinesiology which also offers courses and has faculty expertise related to children and child health.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and under consideration.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation #3

The FAHS should establish a new strategic plan as soon as possible.

In its response, the Department stated:

Brock is under new leadership and a university-wide consultation for an institutional strategic plan has been already held. Next in the process, all Faculties will formulate their specific strategic plan. The FAHS Dean, Dr. Peter Tiidus has identified that our plan will be developed throughout the current academic year (2018-2019). As a department, at our retreat in May 2018, we identified focal areas for consolidation as well as specific areas in which we could aim for carefully planned growth. This discussion will serve as foundation to the plan we will create, either in parallel or after the FAHS strategic plan has been approved. We anticipate having a fully-developed departmental strategic plan in year 2 post-review.

The Faculty Dean stated:

While I am unsure if it is within the mandate of the HLSC departmental review to recommend that the Faculty establish a strategic plan, I do wish to indicate that this is indeed the Faculty's plan. Once the Brock University Strategic Plan is finalized (tentatively by the end of 2018), the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences along with its departments will embark on the development of a faculty specific strategic plan (in alignment with the University Strategic Plan) which is expected to be completed and approved by the end of 2019.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be outside the scope of the review and the mandate of the reviewers and therefore it is not accepted.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #4

The HLSC should revisit the terminology used by instructors for the course level learning outcomes and ensure they are consistent with and/or map on to the program level outcomes.

In its response, the Department stated:

We agree with this recommendation as this is an issue that we have been working to address. We have already identified the following strategies to address the required changes. As part of this review, in May 2017, we had a targeted meeting to refine and create our program learning outcomes through a facilitated session with the Center for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI). These were new outcomes and would not have aligned specifically to course learning outcomes stated in course outlines created in 2017. Now that these program-level outcomes are created, HLSC faculty members will be asked to review their course-learning outcomes to ensure that they are in fact aligned to the program learning outcomes. We will then dedicate another half day at the spring 2019 department retreat to review the program outcomes and ensure that they are being met and that they are aligned to course learning objectives. We will engage with CPI throughout this process. Also, faculty interested in individual supports will be provided the opportunity to meet one on one with CPI staff. It is important to mention that the process will be inclusive of sessional instructors so they too are aligned with departmental principles.

This will allow HLSC to be reflective in course delivery on an ongoing basis (not just at program review intervals), and ensure that course delivery is aligned with the program learning outcomes.

The Faculty Dean stated:

I agree with and support the HLSC department's initiatives as noted above, in addressing this recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Department is encouraged to undertake an ongoing process of curriculum review and revision, utilizing the curriculum map which was prepared for the cyclical review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #5

The HLSC should explore options for increasing elective course offerings (e.g., changes to curriculum, online courses or modules).

In its response, the Department stated:

HLSC has a very active curriculum committee and through their ongoing analysis, we have identified knowledge and skill areas that are relevant to societal needs. As a result. Several elective courses have been created or adjusted, including: Scientific Writing, Global Health, Pandemics, Environmental Health, Proteomics, and Laboratory Techniques. Moving forward, this committee will be asked to review our programs and make recommendations to the HLSC department, focusing on how we could reconfigure them to ensure that students have more space for electives.

At the spring retreat in 2018, the department identified emerging knowledge areas that are currently not addressed in any of our courses such as big data, health economics, geo-spatial analysis, indigenous health, and mindfulness, among others.

It's relevant to mention that in February 2018, the University asked all department to identify their courses in the following categories: Major Discipline Credits, Extra-departmental Credits, Core & Context Credit Requirement, Free Elective Credits, and Co-Op Credits. The number of elective credits for each our programs is as follows:

Four our 4-year degrees:	Child Health:	5 elective credits
	Medical Sciences:	3.5 elective credits
	Public Health:	6.5 elective credits
	Public Health Co-op:	6.5 elective credits
For our 3-year degree:	Community Health:	3.5 elective credits

With this in mind, HLSC sought to increase the number of electives, particularly for the Medical Sciences degree. We will continue to work with the Provost's Office to reach university guidelines.

The Faculty Dean stated:

I agree with and support the HLSC department's initiatives as noted above, in addressing this recommendation. It is hoped that anticipated further increases in resources and faculty complement for these growing programs will also facilitate the development of greater elective options for HLSC students.

UPC stated:

UPC ... feels that recommendations 1 and 5 will have specific implications for this committee. UPC looks forward to future discussion of these items when received with submissions.

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:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #6

The HLSC, and perhaps the Faculty, should develop a strategy to better track and evaluate student success both within the program (e.g., scholarly output, awards) and after graduation (e.g., employment, postgraduate study).

In its response, the Department stated:

We agree with the need to track this information as it will allow our department to further ascertain the success of our current students and alumni. However, we feel limited in our ability to respond to this recommendation with the personnel currently available. We will connect with the Alumni and Student Success Offices to explore available data and identify how HLSC can contribute to a better tracking system. Ideally, we would like to be granted resources to creating a database and associated annual report. Our aim would be to capture our most important data in a public- friendly format (e.g., one-page infographic), that would be easily updated each year and demonstrate our achievements over time.

In addition, the department is interested in organizing an “alumni day” at the end of this calendar year (2018). We already have ideas in place to get this started.

The Faculty Dean stated:

This information would certainly be of value to the department. However, as pointed out by the department, this type of data collection is beyond the means of departmental resources and would best be developed as a University wide initiative. I am fully supportive of the HLSC plans for organizing an “alumni day” and hope that this could become an annual event.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to track student success within the program to be consistent with current practice. The Committee considers the recommendation to track and evaluate student success after graduation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. It is understood that existing efforts by the Department may be further enhanced and supported by resources such as the Office of Institutional Analysis and Office of Alumni Relations.

Implementation Plan (3rd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #7

An examination should be made of the first-year retention rate and the six-year graduation rate of students in HLSC.

In its response, the Department stated:

We agree that retention rates in first year can be improved and have been working to address this concern.

First of all, in the period when universities were eliminating 3-year pass programs, the department chose to keep its 3-year BA in Community Health. The fundamental reasons were (i) to facilitate college transfers, and (ii) retention. In terms of the latter, keeping this program allow students who are removed from other programs to continue registered under our department, as opposed to being “undeclared”. As a result, students can continue shadowing their original program and accessing courses —provided that they have the requirements.

We have added a new 1st-year math course to all our programs, which is designed specifically for Health Science students (MATH 1P99). The new course was created with the intention of helping students better understand and apply math concepts within the context of health. It is thus expected that they would achieve the required grade (60%) to remain in our programs.

We have also made changes in HLSC 1F90 to provide more content consistency and streamline the course evaluation. We now have two instructors and fewer guest speakers, to provide better continuity in the class, which we expect will enhance retention rates. Very importantly, we regularly offer HLSC 1F90 in the Spring term. Students who, during the regular term did not achieve the minimum grade requirement to remain in our programs, can repeat the course right away, often with success. Transfer students also benefit from the spring offering.

As well, at the departmental retreat in May 2018, faculty and staff suggested ways to enhance student experience, with the goal of improving academic outcomes. Several ideas were discussed, such as mentorship opportunities, increased tutoring support, helping to engage students in learning communities, and addressing challenges in the first-year courses.

One interesting opportunity is to partner with HLSC student council so peer-to-peer mentorship opportunities can be fostered

The Faculty Dean stated:

I agree with and support the HLSC department’s initiatives as noted above, in addressing this recommendation. I expect that the changes to the first-year mathematics and the introductory Health Sciences course noted above, as well as its additional scheduling during the spring/summer term will be of significant help in improving HLSC student

retention rates. I also encourage the development of student peer to peer mentoring as noted above, which has already resulted in positive retention effects in at least one other FAHS department.

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:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Applied Health Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #8 - Confidential

As per the IQAP Section 2.10 regarding "confidential recommendations and/or comments relating to personnel issues or other matters specifically involving individuals. These will be treated as confidential to the Dean(s), the academic unit and ARC."

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations #4,5

Second Priority:

Recommendations #1,2

Third Priority:

Recommendation #6

Not accepted:

Recommendation #3