

Final Assessment Report
Submitted by SUPR-G to SCAPA

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| Program: | Occupational Therapy |
| Degrees Offered: | MSc (OT), MSc (OT)/PhD |
| Approved Fields: | |
| Date of Site Visit: | 19-20 March 2013 |
| Evaluation: | <i>Good Quality</i> |

Summary:

The review team met with representatives of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the Faculty of Health Science, and Western Libraries as well as numerous members of the OT program: research and clinical faculty, support staff, and first- and second-year students. The visits were collegial and invigorating.

The reviewers found that, overall, MSc(OT) program demonstrates success in meeting its mandate to prepare students to be competent entry-level occupational therapists upon graduation. The consultants have no concerns about the quality of the program, its faculty, staff, or students. Their suggestions focused on continuous quality improvement for consideration by the School, Faculty, and University, none of which detract from the satisfactory delivery of the MSc(OT) program.

The reviewers noted several strengths, including the strength of full-time clinical and research faculty. They commended the growth in the production and calibre of research with the recent appointment of several doctoral-prepared faculty and with the expansion of the Health and Rehabilitation Sciences PhD program. The Dean is committed to supporting the research success and anticipates replacing one of the upcoming clinical teaching faculty retirements with a research-focused (40/40/20) position. The quality of incoming students is consistently high and the small class size is a draw for many students. Retention rates and completion times are very good. Library and instructional technology resources are strong, and students have access to practitioner mentors throughout their degree as well as to faculty, staff, and numerous learning support resources. The curriculum is well-laid out, with expectations of students balanced throughout the two years of full time study. The program contains several innovative features, including the opportunity to make international connections, the mentorship program, second-year intensives, and opportunities for blended and distance learning. Evaluation methods are varied and appropriate. Ongoing curriculum review is well-managed by the faculty and the Curriculum Committee. In 2010, the program received a full seven-year accreditation from the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Graduates of the program do well on the CAOT certification examination and are well prepared for entry to practice.

In his response to the external reviewers' report, the Dean announced the appointment, effective August 1 2013, of a new director. The committee identified some challenges that will

face the incoming Director, including the succession planning, as several senior clinical faculty are expected to retire in the next few years, and striking the right balance between full-time faculty with clinically active part-time faculty. Members also commented on the mixed blessing of the secondment of several senior full-time faculty to administrative positions. The number and size of existing classrooms, and the finite number of field placements limit the program's ability to expand. The committee expressed concerns about ongoing student progress review, and Graduate Chair's response provided clarification on the process. The reviewers noted that program data are being collected on an ongoing basis but there is little staff support for ongoing program review. They advocated a more systematic approach to managing and responding to the data as part of ongoing program evaluation. The Graduate Chair's response noted that a part-time staff person has been hired to assist with curriculum planning and review. Finally, the reviewers noted that the program has undergone an inordinate number of reviews from academic and professional bodies, and the Graduate Chair echoed their concern about the substantial resources devoted to program review and expressed a wish common to professional programs for some possibility of integration of IQAP and other required review processes.

The committee did make several recommendations, but many have already been responded to by the Graduate Chair and Dean, and all are related to the enhancement of a strong program, and are not necessary for the program to achieve or maintain good quality.

| Recommendation: | Responsibility |
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| Develop succession plan regarding anticipated retirement of senior clinical faculty members | Director, OT Dean, FHS |
| Develop process for ongoing program review | Director, OT Graduate Program Chair |