

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1 Review Summary

Program(s) Reviewed:	Health Studies – Health Policy (HBA): Major, Major Co-op Health Studies – Population Health (HBSc): Major, Major Co-op Health Humanities Minor (Arts) Health Studies Minor (Arts) (<i>suspended</i>)
Unit Reviewed:	Department of Health and Society
Commissioning Officer:	Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, University of Toronto Scarborough
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tania Bubela, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University • Michelle M. Garrison, Professor, Department of Public Health, Purdue University • Lili Liu, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Health, University of Waterloo
Date of Review Visit:	March 20-21, 2024
Review Report Received by VPAP:	June 21, 2024
Administrative Response(s) Received by VPAP:	March 11, 2025
Date Reported to AP&P:	April 10, 2025

Previous UTQAP Review

Date: May 31 - June 1, 2016

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Significant Program Strengths

- Notable commitment of the faculty, staff, students, and administration to the success of the program and enabling it to realize its full potential
- Program fills a unique and exciting niche in health studies and is at the leading edge in Canada for health humanities
- Immensely popular with students, who appreciate the quality of the educational experience provided by the Health Sciences faculty
- Excellent advising and support staff
- Opportunity to become a leader in training the next generation of workers and scholars in this field

Opportunities for Program Enhancement

- Creating an appropriate academic home for Health Studies, which would provide a base for content knowledge, research activity, and program delivery
- Reconsidering the programs' curricular pathways to facilitate student learning and highlight the programs' interdisciplinary strengths
- Reviewing the faculty complement size and structure to ensure balance and adequate support for the academic programs
- Better distributing and more appropriately supporting administrative duties

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

External Review Material: Terms of reference; Self-study and supporting data and appendices; Review report template; Site visit schedule; Previous review report including the administrative response(s); Access to all course descriptions and syllabi; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty.

Supplemental Material from Site Visit Meetings: Departmental budget/OTO data; Presentation decks from the Department of Health and Society, the UTSC Arts & Science Co-op Office, and the UTSC Office of the Registrar.

Consultation Process

Decanal group, faculty, students, administrative staff and senior program administrators as well as members of relevant cognate units, including the UTSC Library, the Office of the Registrar, the Arts & Science Co-op Office, and the Office of the Vice-Principal Research & Innovation.

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program(s)

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ DHS programs are in high demand, especially Population Health
- Objectives
 - ▶ Students emphasized the strength of DHS educational programming in meeting its objective of foregrounding social determinants of health and health equity across courses
 - ▶ Clear and effective progress towards improving the first-year core course sequence to ensure that students have the opportunity to develop a shared vocabulary together for subsequent coursework; to acquire adequate exposure to different domain areas within health studies to make informed choices about future course selection; and to begin developing the skills to seek, evaluate, and discuss social determinants of health equity locally, nationally, and globally
 - ▶ Wide breadth of knowledge covered in required, selective, and elective courses; students develop a knowledge set to draw on in subsequent depth and/or application focused courses, and to identify areas of interest for further undergraduate or graduate study
 - ▶ Strong opportunities for students to develop depth of knowledge in areas related to health equity and social determinants of health; these areas are well-aligned with faculty expertise, student interests, and workforce needs
 - ▶ Students develop adequate methodological knowledge to consider new information in the context of its methodological origins, and to take this into account in considering the validity and generalizability of conclusions
 - ▶ Students in upper-year courses have multiple engaging ways to apply their knowledge and experience, through both traditionally academic exercises and in the context of experiential learning opportunities
 - ▶ Curriculum structure and the faculty appear to do an excellent job helping students learn to consider the external and internal validity of information
 - ▶ DHS programs help students learn to listen and read critically and with intellectual curiosity; upper-year courses especially provide opportunities for students to develop written and oral skills in communicating for academic audiences
 - ▶ Students “consistently showed themselves to be informed, creative thinkers who had learned to ask brave questions, strategically seek out answers individually and working together, and to already be considering how they will continue this process post-graduation”

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Unique and highly valuable course offerings approach health from biological science, public health, and medical humanities perspectives, providing graduates with a more holistic view of health and society and a broader lens on future career opportunities
 - ▶ Commendable opportunities for experiential learning include service-based learning, internships, undergraduate research experiences, and co-op programs
 - ▶ Programs and courses appear to use effective and appropriate models of learning delivery, including a mix of lecture, discussion, case-based learning, and experiential service-based learning
 - ▶ Department's decision-making process for revising, merging, or discontinuing courses appears to involve thoughtful deliberation by the curriculum committee
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ Adoption of universal design principles and proactive disability-related accommodations noted as a strength in DHS; adoption of these approaches by the co-op programs noted as "especially impressive given that this is an area that often lags behind classroom-based teaching"
 - ▶ Greater flexibility afforded by smaller class sizes in upper-level courses has enabled adoption of universal design approaches and made implementation of accommodations more seamless and effective
 - ▶ "Black Student Excellence Award" given to three undergraduate students each year who identify as Black; recipients are selected via an application process detailing academic excellence as well as leadership and/or community engagement
 - ▶ DHS offers an annual essay award for students' work in Black Health studies
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Assessment of student learning is achieved through appropriate and effective methods, especially in upper-level courses
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Students expressed appreciation for the quality of instruction, the availability and flexibility of most faculty to accommodate student needs, and the creation of safe learning environments in which students bring their diverse lived experience to discussions of complex health and social issues
 - ▶ Students commented that the DHS Health Studies programs are "increasingly preferred by some students as a pathway to the health professions or graduate studies, instead of degree programs that exclusively focus on the biomedical sciences"
 - ▶ Course syllabi, discussions with faculty, and comments by students indicate that faculty care deeply about student learning experience and outcomes
 - ▶ Strong camaraderie among students, particularly within the DHS student organization
 - ▶ Students report that they feel valued by faculty and staff, and safe in integrating their lived experience into classroom learning
 - ▶ Students report a positive learning environment in which genuine intellectual curiosity and intellectual risk-taking is encouraged

- ▶ “Get Finished” initiative, providing funding to students with up to 2.5 credits remaining in their degree, is an innovative benefit for those who may otherwise struggle to complete their program
- ▶ Some students reported enrolling in DHS programs due to the warmth and inclusion they experienced within DHS classes
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
 - ▶ Steadily increasing annual enrolments in Health Studies over the past 7 years

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Objectives
 - ▶ Students and faculty identified subject areas such as epidemiology in which opportunities to develop depth of knowledge could be strengthened
 - ▶ Reviewers note issues including teaching capacity and access to research/experiential learning opportunities that may limit DHS’s ability to promise all students knowledge application opportunities that align with UTSC’s institutional strengths and strategic goals
 - ▶ Developing skills to communicate with non-academic audiences appears to be less intentionally woven across the curriculum and more dependent on individual instructor decisions
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Adding a high school math requirement to address issues with numerical literacy may run counter to other UTSC priorities, such as equitable access to post-secondary education for students from the area
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Usage of library liaison assistance in support of course development, while widely adopted, appears to occur in a largely ad hoc manner with potential for gaps
 - ▶ Teaching capacity barriers appear to inhibit consistent and predictable availability of course-based experiential learning, which is typically more time-intensive for instructors than traditional classroom-based teaching
 - ▶ Inadequate research space for dry labs limits the ability of faculty to meaningfully and sustainably engage all interested undergraduates in their research
 - ▶ As noted in the previous review, the administrative, teaching, and advising burdens of offering separate programs in Population Health and Health Policy appear to outweigh the benefits
 - ▶ Breadth of skills developed in courses does not appear to match the breadth of content areas covered; students noted some repetition in skills taught, as well as insufficient opportunity to develop specific skills or knowledge for success in graduate programs
 - ▶ Health Policy major does not appear to cover the full range of skills and content typically covered in similar programs, due to the limited number of departmental faculty with expertise in this area
 - ▶ Total number of courses offered each year in addition to required core courses appears unsustainable given existing faculty complement, resulting in consistently high reliance on sessional instructors for delivery of core courses

- ▶ Students shared experiences of disappointment upon finding that many desired courses are offered infrequently or not at all
- ▶ Decision-making around course revision or discontinuation appears to be based on ad hoc proposals when a course has low enrolment no available instructor, rather than a strategic, systematic process based on program-wide goals
- ▶ In some cases, faculty teaching effort has been focused on courses with lower enrolments, resulting in imbalances in teaching workload
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ Limited faculty teaching capacity, particularly in larger introductory courses, appears to afford fewer opportunities to implement universal design approaches and accommodations at more than a superficial level
 - ▶ Students report institutional challenges to effective accommodations, including inconsistent approaches taken by faculty in the interpretation and implementation of accommodations, as well as cultural and documentation barriers to requesting accommodations
 - ▶ Extent to which Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in DHS programs have access to UTSC's Indigenous initiatives is unclear
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Students raised concerns regarding the inability to receive feedback on final papers for courses, noting that without such feedback it is difficult to gauge the extent to which they have achieved course learning objectives
 - ▶ Reliance on quizzes and exams in lower-level courses may not equally evaluate the depth of understanding and skills across all student populations, and can exacerbate pre-existing inequities in education
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ High school students may be less aware of DHS programs when applying to U of T, potentially due to low awareness of the programs among counselors, as well as inconsistent information about DHS programs on University websites
 - ▶ Incorrect or missing information about the two majors on University websites highlights how the separate programs create confusion for institutional administrators and prospective students
 - ▶ Co-op program growth may be limited by student barriers to entry, including cost and the required number of work terms
 - ▶ Goal for co-op students complete their programs within four years may be a barrier in the form of a stigma for students wishing to take longer
 - ▶ "We note that the review team did not meet alone with students"
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
 - ▶ Reviewers note slight decline in Health Policy enrolments in past 5 years
 - ▶ Available data on general student retention and graduation do not necessarily reflect whether program quality is sufficient to meet program objectives and to facilitate student success in achieving program learning outcomes

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Objectives
 - ▶ Subject area breadth can help set the program apart from peers, if it is well communicated
 - ▶ Promising plans to increase knowledge depth through increased laddering of content across the curriculum require focused hiring to expand faculty expertise within focused cluster areas
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Numerical literacy, particularly in the Population Health program, may need to be addressed through enhancing educational supports or the addition of a numeracy-skills-focused course specific to population health
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Combine the Population Health and Health Policy programs into a single program with both HBA and HBA degree options
 - ▶ Proposed Specialist program would enable DHS to take advantage of existing required courses and allow students to choose from clusters of electives representing fundamental health studies domains; a unified Major program could potentially use the same general approach
 - ▶ Reduced student to faculty ratio would allow more flexibility to select most effective course delivery modes based on content rather than class size
 - ▶ Consider developing greater intentionality at the program level regarding scaffolding of skills across courses in foundational disciplinary skill domains
 - ▶ Students voiced support for more work-integrated learning opportunities that could combine classroom experiences with community engagement
 - ▶ Discontinuation of courses could benefit from a more proactive approach, with potential to significantly improve student, faculty, and staff experience with DHS programs
 - ▶ Right-size course offerings based on programmatic strategic goals, to a set of courses which can be consistently taught by core faculty with priority for required courses over under-enrolled and/or elective courses
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ The UTSC hosts several Indigenous initiatives (e.g., Indigenous House, Indigenous Garden, Indigenous Place Making, Global Field School: Indigenous Costa Rica, Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Indigenous Knowledges and Resources), but most of these seem to be associated with the Sociology program.
 - ▶ Consider ways for DHS students to engage in Indigenous initiatives through their academic curricula
 - ▶ Monitor rates of recruitment, retention, and graduation of Indigenous students, and explore whether these students may disproportionately experience barriers to participating in co-op, undergraduate research experience, and/or access to mentorship
 - ▶ As equity data become available, develop metrics to illustrate effectiveness of DHS's approaches to removing barriers and increasing retention rates for Black students

- ▶ Explore ways to effectively gather information on barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion experienced by students, possibly through de-identified administrative data, surveys, or focus groups conducted by experienced facilitators from outside the department
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Seek guidance from Dean's office on providing students with feedback on final papers for courses; consider developing standardized language to use in course syllabi on this issue
 - ▶ Consult with the Centre for Teaching and Learning regarding innovation in learning assessment and pedagogical research, to explore opportunities for employing alternate forms of assessment in courses
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Engage external co-op program stakeholders (e.g., co-op placement site supervisors, employers, graduate programs) to consult on program quality and identify gaps in needed skills and workforce capacity that could be targeted within courses

2. Graduate Program(s) n/a

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Research
 - ▶ DHS focuses its multi-disciplinary research areas on Research in Life Course and the Life Cycle; Social Hierarchies and Marginality; Cultures of Health and Illness; and Environment and Health
 - ▶ Faculty members' funding and scholarly profile, with respect to total funding received and participation in Tri-Agency funding, is consistent with expectations in health domains
 - ▶ Centre for Global Disability Studies has the potential to catalyze strengths in unique research and undergraduate and graduate training strength; DHS is well positioned to contribute with significant interdisciplinary hires in the topic area
- Faculty
 - ▶ Exceptional recent recruitment of tenure and teaching-stream faculty, forming a solid base for expanding to meet demand from students, employers, and research organizations for health-related programming
 - ▶ Indigenous health and wellbeing is a focus of some DHS faculty members
 - ▶ DHS has made meaningful investments and progress in the assessment of teaching, including routine peer teaching evaluations of sessional instructors
 - ▶ Impressive recent faculty hires, with the majority from internationally recognized institutions; recent hires with health/social workforce experience bring sound practical knowledge and community partnership strengths
 - ▶ Several faculty members have received high profile awards for their scholarship, including many internal awards as well as a Canada Research Chair

- ▶ Number (12) and diversity of units in which graduate faculty are cross-appointed indicates their interdisciplinary breadth, and strengthens research relationships for faculty and graduate students
- ▶ Teaching faculty have a high degree of content expertise and are fully engaged with research and enhanced skills development in teaching and learning
- ▶ Well-organized mentorship program for incoming faculty
- ▶ Several faculty mentioned strong appreciation of departmental support to engage in the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity's Faculty Success Program

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Research
 - ▶ Uneven funding success and levels among faculty suggest greater support is required for pre- and post- grant support
- Faculty
 - ▶ Assessment of teaching does not appear to be consistently occurring for core faculty
 - ▶ Significant proportion of Black students appear to be drawn to the mentorship of Black faculty, which may result in disproportionate mentoring workloads; similar patterns may exist for faculty sharing other minoritized identities with students
 - ▶ Reviewers did not identify clear mechanisms in place to increase the sustainability of informal mentorship
 - ▶ Current faculty complement is insufficient to sustain the number of courses across the four undergraduate and two co-op programs for 1200+ undergraduate students
 - ▶ Faculty complement counts appear to overestimate the number who are available to contribute annually to teaching and service in DHS, due to leaves, teaching releases, and undertaking department and faculty administrative positions
 - ▶ Faculty workload policy was created prior to departmentalization and has never been ratified, leading to disparities across faculty in teaching workloads
 - ▶ Small number of active tenure-stream faculty limits access to research opportunities for undergraduate students
 - ▶ Due to the limited number of senior faculty dedicated to DHS, junior faculty are required to perform considerable service duties in addition to teaching, graduate program and external service commitments; reviewers note potential negative impacts on junior faculty workload, career progression, and retention
 - ▶ Diversity of graduate cross-appointments indicates interdisciplinarity but may also indicate a lack of consolidation around core research thematic areas
 - ▶ DHS is too small to address all the sub-topics within its four broadly specified areas
 - ▶ Without an improved student/faculty ratio, DHS cannot contemplate starting its own graduate program or make sustainable progress towards many goals related to undergraduate programs

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Research
 - ▶ Additional pre- and post-grant supports will be needed if the unit is to reach its full research potential
 - ▶ Consider additional hires in disability studies to strengthen capacity in this area and to make the unit more distinctive and competitive
 - ▶ Align research priorities with a strategic plan, mission, and values statement to strengthen interdisciplinary priority clusters and to develop areas of uniqueness
- Faculty
 - ▶ Internal awards are an appropriate mechanism to build the profile of early-career researchers and educators towards nationally significant awards
 - ▶ Strategically identify departmental and program goals in teaching growth; utilize peer evaluation processes to help advance these goals
 - ▶ Having core courses taught by core faculty is in the best interests of the students and leads to best outcomes in programs with well-thought-out curricular priorities
 - ▶ Faculty hiring, including of senior faculty who can assume larger workloads including mentorship responsibilities, can mitigate impacts of high service requirements for junior faculty and help ensure they are successfully promoted
 - ▶ Conduct future hiring in accordance with a well-thought out strategic research plan that builds strengths around core health and social challenges
 - ▶ Focus faculty hires in areas of obvious emergent strength and regional significance, such as health equity, disability studies, Indigenous health and environmental health
 - ▶ “Commit to at least doubling the current faculty complement in the coming five years, balanced across rank and tenure-track/teaching streams, with additional faculty hires as needed to compensate for faculty in administrative leadership roles”
 - ▶ Develop and ratify a teaching equity policy that considers an equitable balance of core and elective courses, class size, and reasons for teaching release

4. Administration

Note: Issues that are addressed through specific University processes and therefore considered out of scope for UTQAP reviews (e.g., individual Human Resources issues, specific health and safety concerns) are routed to proper University offices to be addressed, and are therefore not included in the Review Summary component of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Students and faculty feel able to share lived experience, engage in challenging conversations, and centre health equity in the DHS learning environment
 - ▶ Faculty feel well supported by colleagues and staff in navigating teaching and research expectations
 - ▶ DHS operates with a small and committed staff complement

- ▶ Creation of the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health (SAMIH), and the inclusion of DHS, has potential to enhance the profile and impact of DHS research through increased linkages with health care practitioners and community partners
- ▶ Morale among faculty, students and staff appears reasonable, albeit with caveats for the unit size relative to teaching, service, and research expectations
- ▶ Strong support for the current Chair, and a sense that DHS was moving in the right direction with respect to work culture and relationships
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Current leadership brings increased and welcomed stability to DHS, which will be essential to meet future ambitions of the unit and UTSC
 - ▶ University's library infrastructure, especially online resources, are world-leading;
 - ▶ Students and faculty have access to a research librarian with expertise in health
 - ▶ Library staff contribute to training in strategies, evidence synthesis, and scoping reviews
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Commendable progress by UTSC leadership and DHS faculty and staff in advancing recommendations from the previous UTQAP review, including significant and meaningful improvements in curricular quality, alignment, and teaching capacity
 - ▶ UTSC and DHS attract a highly diverse student body and faculty complement, reflective of the needs of underserved populations in the Scarborough region
 - ▶ DHS has great potential to be a national leader in interdisciplinary health sciences education and to contribute its expertise across science, social science, and humanities domains to SAMIH
 - ▶ DHS has the potential to meet student demand for health-relevant undergraduate programming
 - ▶ DHS research priorities align with local and global challenges
 - ▶ DHS is poised to make significant contributions to Canadian challenges of an aging population, health equity, including ableism, Indigenous health, and structural and institutional racism in the health and social sectors
 - ▶ DHS faculty and students are well-positioned to meet the complex challenges of the diverse populations of the Scarborough region, including instantiating the principles of the Scarborough Charter to address anti-Black racism and promote Black inclusion in Canadian higher education through its faculty, research and teaching

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Students, faculty, and staff commented on the need for additional opportunities for community building and support; staff expressed a desire to provide such opportunities and resources but reported that current workload capacity prevents them from taking on these additional tasks
 - ▶ Morale is threatened by uncertainty over the move to SAMIH, combined with high service burden for junior faculty and the general under-resourcing of staff

- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Considerable concern that DHS has not had faculty and staff capacity to develop and implement strategic plans to ensure that their degree programs are the best fit for student and departmental needs
 - ▶ Ability of staff to strategically advance DHS interests is limited by shared staffing arrangements across multiple UTSC units; all staff agreed that they would need to be dedicated to one unit to perform at their full capacity
 - ▶ Staff support is insufficient for planned expansions in student programming, such as diplomas and certificates
 - ▶ Plans for move to SAMIH building have not been adequately communicated to DHS staff and faculty, resulting in some anxiety in the unit
 - ▶ Shared staffing model raises concerns with the planned move to a new building when DHS relocates to SAMIH
 - ▶ Concerns whether access to the dedicated health librarian will continue after moving to SAMIH
 - ▶ DHS has outgrown its current space allocation; unit houses current faculty and staff complement and has access to wet-laboratory space for environmental health research, but virtually no dry- laboratory research space
 - ▶ Office space allocated for postdoctoral fellows does is not aligned with research team operations
 - ▶ Tri-campus graduate program structure tends to focus graduate student activities on the St. George campus
 - ▶ Lack of access to research space limits undergraduate students' research opportunities
 - ▶ DHS governance structure for committee work conducive to strategic thinking across research and teaching priorities seems underdeveloped
 - ▶ Students are not formally included in DHS committees, a missed opportunity to engage students who are future alumni and leaders
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Without a clear strategic plan for DHS is challenging to understand how the unit aligns with the UTSC's strategic plan
 - ▶ Without a Vision, Mission, Values and signature or key strategic initiatives, DHS lacks a road map to direct its path and growth into the future
 - ▶ Resources available to DHS are insufficient to meet current operations and limit capacity for future growth and expansion
 - ▶ Leadership in DHS do not have training in advancement or direct access to advancement professionals

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Explore ways to provide additional resources at the department or program level to cultivate a culture of caring and a sense of belonging, especially among minoritized and first-generation university students

- ▶ Develop and maintain stronger relationships with community partners and alumni, to enhance experiential learning opportunities and access to program outcome data
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Communicate clearly regarding the Chair's authority to assign teaching to address high-enrolment and core priorities
 - ▶ Faculty and staff complement will need to be strengthened to leverage the opportunities generated by SAMIH
 - ▶ Increase dedicated DHS staff positions to allow adequate capacity for strategic planning, student support, research and financial management, and community engagement
 - ▶ Include library resources in SAMIH planning, to facilitate interactions with faculty and students in DHS
 - ▶ Provide equitable access to research space for "dry lab" researchers and their teams to foster collaboration and research-related experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students
 - ▶ Consult with DHS faculty regarding space requirements for planned move to SAMIH
 - ▶ Conduct inclusive discussions with stakeholders regarding research and office space planning
 - ▶ Consider how departmental governance structures can be optimized to distribute the burden between strategy development and operational decision making
 - ▶ Develop clear terms of reference, membership criteria, and a more equitable distribution of service burdens, for departmental governance committees
 - ▶ Build consistent discretionary funding into the department budget to use for evolving departmental priorities, including undergraduate research assistantships
 - ▶ Provide DHS leadership with regular meetings with UTSC leadership to transparently discuss budget and enrolment planning
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Opportunities for DHS arise from the creation of SAMIH and associated infrastructure, including a new building
 - ▶ DHS has an opportunity prior to the opening of SAMIH to clearly articulate its role as a leader in the field of integrated health
 - ▶ Provide training for DHS leadership in advancement, and access to University advancement professionals, to develop and implement an integrated alumni relations and advancement strategy for DHS
 - ▶ Explore ways to support DHS programming through philanthropy
 - ▶ Work with University Development and Alumni Relations offices to obtain information on former students' satisfaction with the program and the impact of the co-op experience on future career successes; data "would need to be aligned and collected with respect to objectives and learning outcomes, all of which would be contained in a strategic plan specific to the DHS"
 - ▶ Prospectively collect equity-related data and provide to all departments in a de-identified manner to allow monitoring and intervention for barriers to access and success within departmental programs

- ▶ Develop a strategic plan, mission, and values statement to use in making decisions regarding program and course offerings, faculty hiring, research cluster strengthening, departmental policies, etc.; students and external partners, especially community partners in the region, should be consulted in developing the plan
- ▶ Refresh strategic plan at least every 5 years with consideration of institutional strategic plans
- ▶ Carefully consider the development of new programs considering current workload and capacity to deliver; “We recommend consolidation at this point in time, rather than expansion”



Office of the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean

March 11, 2025

Professor Nicholas Rule
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
Division of the Vice-President & Provost
University of Toronto

Dean’s Administrative Response: External Review of the Department of Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough

Dear Professor Rule,

Thank you for your letter of November 25, 2024, requesting my administrative response to the March 2024 external review of the Department of Health and Society. I want to extend my gratitude to the review team—Tania Bubela, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University; Michelle M. Garrison, Professor, Department of Public Health, Purdue University; and Lili Liu, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Health, University of Waterloo—for their consultation with the Department during the site visit from March 20-21, 2024, and for their report, which was finalized on June 18, 2024, and shared with the Department.

We deeply appreciate the reviewers’ assessment of the Department’s course offerings that examine health from multiple perspectives, as well as their commendation of the Department’s commitment to inclusive pedagogies, with the goal of enabling students to share their lived experiences in safe and holistic learning environments. In addition to praising the Department’s programs and the opportunities for experiential learning offered to students, the reviewers also commended the teaching faculty’s content expertise and engagement with research and skills development in teaching and learning.

The report from the review team identifies a number of areas for enhancement and development, including strategically considering the future directions of the Population Health and Health Policy programs; systematizing and streamlining processes for revising or discontinuing courses; taking a more intentional approach to the scaffolding of skills across courses; prioritizing an expansion of the faculty complement when opportunities permit; offering additional opportunities for community building and support for students, staff, and faculty; and creating a strategic research and academic plan aligned with institutional strategy and goals. With this letter, I have included a table summarizing the responses to the specific recommendations of the reviewers and anticipated timelines for implementation, where appropriate.

Once again, I thank the review team for their insightful and valuable review of the Department and its programs. I look forward to supporting the Department in implementing the recommendations of this report. The Dean’s Office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair of the Department of Health and Society. An interim report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs will be prepared in **Fall 2028**. The next external review of the Department will take place **no later than the 2031-32 academic year**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karin Ruhlandt".

Professor Karin Ruhlandt
Vice-Principal Academic & Dean

2023-24 UTQAP Review of UTSC Department of Health & Society- Review Recommendations

Please do the following for each recommendation in the table:

- If you **intend** to act on a recommendation, please provide an **Implementation Plan** identifying actions to be taken, the time frame (short, medium, long term) for each, and who will take the lead in each area. If appropriate, please identify any necessary changes in organization, policy or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them.
- If you **do not** intend to act on a recommendation, please briefly explain why the actions recommended have not been prioritized.
- In accordance with the UTQAP and Ontario's Quality Assurance Framework, “it is important to note that, while the external reviewers’ report may include **commentary** on issues such as faculty complement and/or space requirements when related to the quality of the program under review, **recommendations** on these or any other elements that are within the purview of the university’s internal budgetary decision-making processes must be tied directly to issues of program quality or sustainability” (emphasis added)
- You may wish to refer to the [sample table](#) provided by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Rec. #	Recommendations from Review Report <i>verbatim from the review report</i>	Unit Response	Dean’s Response
The reviewers made recommendations related to the configuration and consolidation of the Department’s program offerings, commenting in general that DHS should carefully consider whether new program development is appropriate in light of current workload and capacity to deliver; they recommended strategic consideration of future directions for the Population Health and Health Policy programs, including potential integration.	1	“Carefully consider the development of new programs considering current workload and capacity to deliver. We recommend consolidation at this point in time, rather than expansion.”	<p>There is a strong desire to maintain two programs given that the two fields (Health Policy BA and Population Health BSc) best reflect the interdisciplinary nature of our unit, the diversity of student interests, and our future strategic plans. The Department of Health and Society also remains committed to offering these two programs instead of consolidating because each program plays a pivotal role in preparing graduates to meet the different challenges of healthcare in today’s landscape. The BA program provides foundation in health policy and social determinants of health while the BSc program offers training in body systems and scientific inquiry. As we look towards SAMIH (Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health), these programs as they currently stand will attract diverse and engaged students with, the goal of continuing to grow interdisciplinary health education and training.</p> <p>Short term and ongoing:</p>	My office appreciates the department’s desire to maintain its two existing programs in Population Health and Health Policy as-is. At UTSC, we are keen on pursuing interdisciplinarity, recognizing our strengths in both arts and sciences in existing programs. My team and I will continue to work with the department to address issues around current workload in relation to student enrolment. We will also partner with the department to plan future program offerings in ways that strengthen DHS while also situating the department as a vital part of cross-disciplinary conversations related to the health sciences at UTSC as SAMIH is established.

			<p>We appreciate the reviewers' concerns regarding our current workload and capacity to deliver, these concerns are valid given our faculty complement and student numbers. We aim to work with the Dean's Office in the short term to address those concerns while delivering high quality programs.</p> <p>In terms of program quality enhancement, we have started the process of continually reviewing the curriculum of each program with an eye to market trends, demands, and student needs. Under leadership of our chair and curriculum committee, we are carefully working to find ways to honor the academic integrity of each program while enhancing enrolments.</p>	
	2	<p>"The Specialist program proposed by the department is one way the department could take advantage of existing required courses and allow students to choose from clusters of electives that represent the fundamental domains of health studies. A unified Major program could potentially use the same general approach, with strong consideration given to limiting to those cluster domains from which the department has multiple faculty able to teach."</p>	<p>Medium to long term:</p> <p>With the support of the Dean's Office, we are considering offering a Specialist Program in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences – an idea that has been under development within DHS for over two years and is supported by the HESA report. Given that we have a substantial proposal already written that leverages the department's existing strengths and courses, we believe there is real potential to foster collaboration with other units and program areas on campus, including Biological Sciences, Psychology, Neuroscience, Anthropology, Sociology, and Linguistics/Psycholinguistics, through relevant upper-level courses. The program features a foundational first- and second-year core curriculum, after which students can focus on specific clusters in their third year to develop a specialized area of expertise.</p>	<p>I appreciate the department's efforts and creativity in envisioning and proposing a new Health Sciences Specialist that will promote interdisciplinary collaboration with our other academic units in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences.</p> <p>With the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health (SAMIH) expected to serve as a hub for education in the health sciences, new program development is something that my office and I will pursue strategically and collaboratively with DHS and other stakeholders both within and beyond UTSC. The HESA working group has been reactivated in 2024-25 under the leadership of Associate Dean Suzanne Sicchia, and this table will offer crucial support for the development of this, and related, programs in collaboration with DHS and other units.</p>

			While clustering is possible within the credit constraints of a major program (7–9 credits), it is more effectively implemented in a Specialist program (12-16 credits). This approach also aligns with ongoing discussions around expanding health science-based programming across campus.	
	3	“Combine the Population Health and Health Policy programs into a single program with both HBA and HBS Sc degree options.”	<p>The Department has carefully considered this suggestion and has decided to retain the two existing major programs in order to provide students with two Major options. In particular, we believe it is important to maintain the existing integrity of our BSc in light of provincial mandates. And in 2023-24, we made changes to strengthen the curriculum of each program to enhance their distinctiveness. We enhanced the science offerings in our BSc major giving it greater focus in population health and differentiated the focus of our BA with greater focus on health policy.</p> <p>The recommendation to consolidate or combine the majors likely stemmed from a naming convention where both are listed under the "Health Studies" umbrella (e.g., Health Studies – Health Policy and Health Studies – Population Health). However, "Health Studies" is not a formal parent program with defined streams, which has led to confusion and misrepresentation of our programs' structure. This naming convention is a remnant from the time when Health Studies was part of Anthropology and was unfortunately presented in an outdated way in online materials at the time of the review. After our review, we received permission and have been able to make some of our requests to remove the “Health Studies” on online materials.</p>	I am proud of the different pathways and program pairings students can pursue with the various Major programs offered by the different UTSC departments, including DHS. I support DHS’s decision to maintain the two existing programs in Population Health and Health Policy, at least in the short term. This structure also reflects the ways in which many of our students combine programs at UTSC through the combination of two Majors. In addition, I support DHS’ efforts in working with my team to improve clarity on the information presented to students and advisors.

<p>The reviewers observed that the overall number of DHS courses “appears larger than is reasonably sustainable with the existing faculty complement” and highlighted student concerns that some desirable courses are not offered most years; they recommended systematizing and streamlining processes for revising or discontinuing courses, and aligning the Department’s course offerings with strategic goals and teaching capacity.</p>	4	<p>“The decision-making process used by the department regarding if and when to discontinue courses — or to consider merging or otherwise substantially revising courses —... does appear to be based on ad hoc proposals by faculty rather than a strategic, systematic process to identify degree program wide goals and prioritize teaching capacity to meet those goals. Further, the discontinuation of courses could benefit from a more proactive approach... it seems that currently the question of whether or not to discontinue a course only comes up for discussion when a course repeatedly has low subscription and/or no available instructor for a number of terms or even years... Change in this area has the potential to significantly improve student, faculty, and staff experience with the programs.”</p>	<p>Short term and ongoing:</p> <p>The Department has recently had several faculty move into pre-tenure course releases or administrative positions which understandably has meant that some desirable courses had to be paused or taught by sessional instructors. While the Department has not retired many courses, we appreciate the idea of a systematic process to determine this and also want to be cautious as we welcome faculty back or find high quality alternative ways to offer desirable courses. Since the review, we put in place a system within our curriculum committee to engage in regular reviews of the curriculum with consideration for enrollment and student feedback and to review the learning outcomes of potentially low enrolled courses to ensure that each of these courses is relevant and in alignment with our mission. We are also working with the Dean’s Office to find ways to continue to deliver desirable courses that help meet student degree requirements.</p>	<p>The Dean’s Office applauds the department’s initiative in reviewing its course offerings more intentionally, taking into consideration factors such as changes in student enrolment, faculty complement, and healthcare trends. We will support them in this work as a part of the annual curriculum cycle, and in relation to program development, budget considerations, and student enrolment trends.</p>
	5	<p>“Right-size course offerings, based on programmatic strategic goals, to those which can be consistently taught by core faculty, inclusive of need for leaves and prioritize required courses over under-enrolled and/or elective courses in faculty teaching loads.”</p>	<p>Ongoing:</p> <p>Currently with the leadership of the Program Director and Chair, our curriculum committee works to structure course offerings and enrollment caps in courses in line with program growth figures while considering recruitment and strategic planning initiatives and mandates. For example, we have limited the number of D-level courses we offer and recognize that we need additional faculty hires in order to better attend to recent upsurges in student growth and the need for more stability in course offerings with 3 of our faculty in significant leadership positions and 12 of our faculty in pre-tenure related course releases.</p>	<p>My office and I will continue to work with the department to discuss issues pertaining to faculty complement and workload, as well as overall strategic enrolment management.</p>

<p>The reviewers noted that, although health studies course offerings cover a broad range of content areas, it is less clear that they also cover a broad array of skill areas. They suggested that DHS take a more intentional approach to the scaffolding of skills across courses, including quantitative and qualitative research skills as well as other foundational skill domains in the field.</p>	6	<p>“Current courses represent a very broad range of content areas within the field of health studies, but it is less clear that a broad range of skill areas are also represented... there may be room for greater intentionality at the program level regarding scaffolding of skills across courses – not only quantitative and qualitative research skills, but also other foundational skill domains in the field such as information literacy, health communication for different audiences, community and stakeholder engagement, quality improvement and evaluation.”</p>	<p>Short and medium term:</p> <p>Currently we are scaffolding courses that enhance research skills: numerical literacy has been a key area of discussion among our curriculum committee and at our faculty meetings for over two years. Both qualitative feedback and quantitative data have informed our approach to integrating and scaffolding numerical literacy across the program. For example, a new Applied Statistics for Public Health course was introduced at the B-level to address knowledge gaps identified in C-level Community Health and Epidemiology. This initiative also allowed us to scaffold skills backward, bridging gaps as far back as high school, to better prepare students for success. We have also introduced a new course which focuses on Black community engagement by developing student skills in health communication, promotion and health literacy, and we have courses in Policy Evaluation (HLTD11H3), Community Health and Wellness (offered as an advanced topic in partnership with TAIBU Community Health Centre, HLTD47H3), Critical Health Education (HLTD80H3), and quality improvement (offered as an advanced topic, HLTD29H3). We also have several new initiatives to provide our students with more applied skills. For example, a new partnership with CanPath will provide students and faculty with access to synthetic data that will allow them to apply their research methods skills in real-world settings.</p>	<p>My office and I commend the department for leveraging Advanced Topics courses to test out and introduce students to emerging health studies-related topics, as well as research and skill development areas. This important testing ground helps the department and the Dean’s Office identify which areas and skills would be strong candidates for the development of new permanent courses. The Dean’s Office looks forward to the results of the department’s partnership with CanPath to provide program students with the opportunity to work with synthetic data as part of their coursework.</p>
	7	<p>“...connecting with stakeholders – such as co-op placement site supervisors, those who hire department graduates, and graduate / professional programs attended by graduates – regarding gaps in needed skills and workforce capacity may provide a valuable source of</p>	<p>Short term and ongoing:</p> <p>We have initiated an alumni survey initiative with our Office of Development and Alumni Relations, which will gather data on alumni’s careers after graduating and their feedback on our programs’ curriculum and structure in the context of current</p>	<p>My office and I applaud the department’s initiatives to reach out and connect with program alumni to get their input on curriculum in relation to students’ future readiness. Bringing program alumni back on campus to connect with our students not only maintains students’ sense of</p>

		feedback for skills that could be explicitly targeted within existing courses.”	research and employment environments. Since this review, we have a renewed focus on work and professional program readiness through several ongoing initiatives. For example, we have developed a successful Allied Health Speaker Series that brings in current health professionals (often graduates of our programs) to speak about career pathways. We also conducted a gap analysis while researching comparable programs during the development of the Specialist. These efforts have directly influenced the creation of the Applied Statistics course and collaborations with coursework in departments such as Physiology, Development, and Anatomy into our curriculum.	belonging but further builds students’ professional networks. This is also an area where future divisional and tri-campus work is needed to better track graduates and better enable program-specific communication and outreach opportunities with alumni.
The reviewers raised several concerns regarding the size of the DHS faculty complement as it relates to program sustainability and departmental goals. They recommended prioritizing an expansion of the faculty complement when opportunities permit, balanced across rank and tenure/teaching streams, “to address the high student to core faculty ratio, to refine programming and the expansion of experiential opportunities, and to strengthen clusters of faculty in areas of core research strength.”	8	“We agree with the assessment in the DHS Self-Study report that there is a need to increase the faculty complement to address the high student to core faculty ratio... to refine programming and the expansion of experiential opportunities, and to strengthen clusters of faculty in areas of core research strength.”	<p>Ongoing: Currently we are hiring in the area of Health Informatics and Health Professions & Practice. These two hires will help increase our faculty complement and directly address some of the skill areas identified in the comments above (e.g., numerical and information literacy, health communications).</p> <p>Medium and longer term: We are hoping to continue to hire in fields relevant to Allied Health Professions and that help us build strength in for our Health Humanities Minor, our Minor in Aging & Society, and in support of the HESA report and SAMIH initiative.</p>	My office and I will continue to have regular dialogue with the chair of the department on matters pertaining to faculty complement and hiring, recognizing the significant role the department plays in supporting UTSC’s health sciences initiative and the establishment of SAMIH.
	9	“Commit to at least doubling the current faculty complement in the coming five years, balanced across rank and tenure-track/teaching streams, with additional faculty hires as needed to compensate for faculty in administrative leadership roles.”	<p>Short to medium term: We view this recommendation as essential to fulfilling our commitment to the SAMIH initiative, the HESA report, and to creating the next generation of allied health professionals in the Scarborough region. Implementing item 8, with</p>	Please see response to recommendation #8.

			the leadership of the Dean, will support this in the short to medium term, as we are hoping to increase our faculty complement, particularly because of past deficits that have been coupled with steady growth in student enrolment.	
	10	“Strengthening research relationships for faculty and graduate students, and indicating the interdisciplinary breadth of faculty, is the diversity of graduate appointment of DHS faculty, totaling 12 graduate unit cross appointments... While this diversity indicates interdisciplinarity, it may also be indicative of a lack of consolidation around core research thematic areas. There is a danger in appointing ‘n’s of 1’ and future hiring should be in accordance with a well-thought out strategic research plan that builds strengths around core health and social challenges.”	<p>Our interdisciplinarity is unique and makes our program stand out across the Tri-Campus. The diversity of graduate appointment of DHS faculty, totaling 12 graduate unit cross appointments adds to its complexity and is also a strength.</p> <p>Short to medium term: We hope to consolidate any needed hires and to build clusters around core research areas, such as Allied Health and Health Education, Health Humanities, Aging, Community Health, Paramedicine, Research Methods and Methodologies, and Statistics and Data Sciences (including Health Informatics).</p>	I appreciate the department’s identification of core research areas that would benefit from future hires. The clusters identified align closely with campus strategic priorities. In the current budget environment, my office and I are also working actively to align future hiring to these priority areas. We will continue to engage in regular dialogue with the chair of the department as well as with the Office of the Vice-Principal Research and Innovation at UTSC in considering how best to enhance research supports and cluster opportunities.
	11	“Due to high service duties, the career progression of junior faculty members is jeopardized if their scholarship is not protected. Future hires across the ranks, including senior ranks who can assume larger workloads including mentorship responsibilities, can mitigate this situation and help ensure junior faculty are successfully promoted.”	<p>Ongoing: Since the review, this item is something that has been discussed with the Vice-Dean, Faculty Affairs, Equity, & Success and will require the leadership of the Dean to gain clarity regarding whether their might be near-term future hires at senior ranks and regarding more specific or innovative forms of motivation for faculty in senior ranks who can assume larger workloads within the department, such as mentorship responsibilities.</p>	Please see response to recommendation #8. We recognize the pressures that the department has been experiencing. In addition to complement and administrative considerations, we also see mentorship, workload, and faculty progression as key components of this work.
The reviewers observed that faculty leaves and teaching releases can have an impact on the Department’s teaching capacity; they recommended the development of mechanisms to ensure that core and elective courses,	12	“Develop and ratify a teaching equity policy that considers an equitable balance of core and elective courses, class size, and reasons for teaching release.”	<p>Longer term: With the support of the Vice-Dean, Faculty Affairs, Equity, & Success, and the Dean, the Department plans to focus on establishing a teaching equity policy that considers an equitable balance of core and elective courses, class size,</p>	My office and I look forward to working with the department, guiding them toward the development of a departmental teaching equity policy that considers the different factors as identified by the reviewers.

class sizes, and teaching releases are equitably balanced for faculty.			and reasons for teaching release in the short to medium term.	
The reviewers raised concerns regarding UTSC's shared staffing model, commenting that it limits capacity to support planned expansions in student programs and to leverage opportunities arising from DHS involvement in SAMIH. They recommended exploring ways to "allow adequate departmental capacity for strategic planning, student support, research and financial management, and community engagement."	13	"The DHS operates with a small and committed staff complement, but their ability to advance DHS interests, especially strategically, is limited by the fact that most of the staff serve 3 units at UTSC simultaneously, and one staff serves 6 units...We recommend that by the time of the move [to SAMIH], core staff, especially an Assistant Chair/Director Administration, Operations and Strategic Planning, be allocated to the unit."	Short term and ongoing: This is an immediate concern that will require the short-term leadership of the Dean and Chair as we face the move into the new SAMIH/Garron building. We are in conversations about proposals we have developed for a revised staff structure. Increased staff support and infrastructure is crucial for our ability as a department to grow our research interests and academic output.	We are working with the department to address these concerns. The planned move to the new SAMIH / Garron building offers an important moment to address staffing needs in relation to new space configurations for the department.
	14	"Increase staff positions dedicated to DHS by at least 2.5 FTE, to allow adequate departmental capacity for strategic planning, student support, research and financial management, and community engagement."	Short term and ongoing: We are in conversations about proposals we have developed for a revised staff structure as we move into the new SAMIH/Garron building and in light of major growth within our department. There is an immediate need for this that will require the support of the Dean.	See response to recommendation #13.
The reviewers recommended that equitable access to research space be provided for dry lab researchers and their teams to foster collaboration and research-related experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students. They further recommended additional consultation with faculty and the allocation of temporary space to meet current needs in advance of the planned move to SAMIH.	15	"Provide equitable access to research space for "dry lab" researchers and their substantial research teams to foster collaboration and research-related experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students. These space requirements may be met in the planned SAMIH, however, more consultation should be undertaken with DHS faculty and temporary space should be provided to address current needs."	Ongoing: Since this review, we are forming a departmental committee for 2025-26 to address space allocations for the move into the SAMIH/Garron building which will take place in 2026-27.	My office and I look forward to advocating spacing allocation needs on behalf of the department when engaging in discussions with the Office of the Vice-President & Principal and the Office of the Vice-Principal Research and Innovation as the construction of the Myron and Berna Garron Health Sciences Complex (SAMIH) continues and nears completion.
The reviewers noted student, staff, and faculty desire for additional opportunities for community building and support; suggestions included a departmental orientation, social activities for DHS faculty and staff, and	16	"...a clear theme emerged from both student comments and discussions with staff and more junior faculty about the need for additional opportunities for community building and support... Given that peer institutions are providing such opportunities and resources at the	Ongoing: We also recognize the need for additional opportunities for community building and support and intend to work with the Department of Community Partnerships and Engagement at UTSC, to work with HSSA (our affiliated student	My office and I commend the department's efforts to work with other UTSC offices and colleagues to build students' sense of belonging and increase students' opportunities to interact with and learn from peers, faculty members, and alumni, and professionals working in various

support activities and resources during stressful times.		department or program level to cultivate a culture of caring and a sense of belonging, especially among minoritized and first-generation university students, additional resources to support this work for such a vibrantly growing set of degree programs is merited.”	association), and to work more closely with our Co-op Office and other campus units to build strength here. In addition, we will continue to run our Allied Health Speaker Series. Following this review, we are launching our first DHS Research Day, where awards to increase recognition, belonging and inclusion will be presented and where students and faculty can present and discuss their research. The department remains open to developing relationships with the Office of Student Experience and Wellbeing to help further the culture of caring and sense of belonging students feel in our program and more broadly, on campus. We welcome support from the Dean's Office & select HESA Chairs to maximize impact and strengthen partnerships and collaboration.	health studies fields. The Dean's Office is actively supporting this work, in particular in relation to the Pathways for Health Professions Certificate and related co-curricular initiatives.
The reviewers recommended that DHS create a strategic research and academic plan, aligned with institutional strategy and goals; they noted that the plan should include a clear vision and mission to define the Department's academic priorities and commitments, guiding future hiring decisions and the establishment of research clusters.	17	“The DHS would benefit from a strategic research and academic plan with a clear vision and mission that then motivates its educational programs, research clusters and associated faculty hiring. The strategic plan should be refreshed at least every 5 years and consider institutional strategic plans. Students and external partners, especially community partners in the region, should be consulted in the development of the strategic plan.”	Short to medium term: Recognizing that we would benefit from a strategic research and academic plan with a clear vision and mission, we held a set of retreats and consultations in preparation for our review in September 2023, December 2023, January 2024, and following our review in September 2024 and December 2024 with a wide range of stakeholders relevant to DHS under the leadership of the chair. Subsequently at our retreat in December 2024 and February 2025, we brought in an external consultant who helped us formulate a clear mission, vision, and provided guidance on our strategic research and academic plan, which we are currently in the process of sharing on our website and in our public facing documents. We welcome support from the Dean's Office to ensure that our strategic plans are in alignment with the SAMIH initiative and consistent with budgetary realities.	I am delighted to hear that the department has convened the last couple of months to formulate its latest mission and vision, which will help set the tone of the department and its goals and objectives moving forward. My office and I look forward to reviewing, and offering our input to, the department's newly developed strategic research and academic plans. We see strong alignment with the work that the department is doing and campus strategic priorities, and see the department as playing a pivotal role in cross-disciplinary conversations related to the health sciences at UTSC as SAMIH is established.

	18	“Align research priorities with a strategic plan, mission, and values statement to strengthen interdisciplinary priority clusters and to develop areas of uniqueness, for which DHS will become known. Consolidate first around areas of strength with recruitment and then build out new research clusters.”	Medium to longer term: In response to the reviewer’s recommendations and as mentioned in item #17, we are working to align our research priorities with the strategic plan, mission, and values statement we have developed with the support of an external consultation. To this effect, we are consolidating and strengthening our interdisciplinary priority clusters and intend to continue to revisit this over the next several years as our faculty complement strengthens.	Please see response to recommendation #17.
The reviewers observed that UTSC has a number of programs and initiatives to support Indigenous students, but noted that it was not clear how much DHS students can access them; they recommended close attention to the recruitment, retention, and success rates of Indigenous students, and exploring whether Indigenous students may disproportionately experience barriers to participating in co-op, undergraduate research experience, and/or access to mentorship.	19	“The UTSC hosts several Indigenous initiatives... but most of these seem to be associated with the Sociology program. It is not clear to what extent, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the DHS can access these initiatives. Again, with a clear strategic plan, the DHS could specify how its students can engage in these initiatives through their academic curricula. In particular, it would be important to identify Indigenous students and monitor their recruitment, retention and success rates, as well as to explore whether Indigenous students may disproportionately experience barriers to participating in co-op, undergraduate research experience, and/or access to mentorship.”	Medium term: The Department is committed to Indigenous initiatives as evidenced by the research concentrations of four core faculty. Currently, we participate in the UTSC Working Circle with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives. As well, we are developing a section within our departmental website to feature core research and coursework directly relevant to Indigenous Initiatives. The page will include information about relevant DHS courses; research projects from our faculty and research assistants as well as graduate students’ openings for these projects. In addition, to achieve this medium-term goal, we are working with UTSC’s Registrar’s Office, Admissions and Student Recruitment Office, Development and Alumni Relations Office, and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives with respect to data and alumni tracking.	The Dean’s Office applauds the department’s efforts to work with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and other offices to collect data and track the progress of students. The Dean’s Office supports the department’s initiative to highlight research and coursework that intersect with Indigenous initiatives. This is work that also connects to the UTSC campus curriculum review, which has been led by the Dean’s Office. With the establishment of Indigenous House in June 2025, we anticipate further opportunities to strengthen Indigenous research and curriculum at UTSC. We appreciate the reviewers’ comments about the importance of assessing potential barriers for Indigenous students in co-op, research, mentorship, and other areas, and we will continue to partner with the department, with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and other units at UTSC and across the University of Toronto to address these concerns.
	20	“Prospectively collect equity-related data and provide to all departments (including DHS) in a de-identified manner that allows monitoring and intervention for barriers to access and success within departmental programs.”	Short term and ongoing: This is an area of priority for us as a department and we will work with the Dean’s Office to implement the UTSC commitments to this effort as stated in the Scarborough Charter, the U of T	The Dean’s Office is committed to the goals of inclusive excellence outlined in the campus strategic plan, and will continue to collaborate with the department and with offices such as the Office of the Registrar, the Office of Admissions and Student Recruitment, and the Department of

			Anti-Black Racism Task Force Report, and other relevant resources.	Community Partnerships on examining and removing barriers to access for students enrolled in DHS's programs. The university as a whole is also moving towards collecting more comprehensive equity-related data which is crucial to support this work.
Other recommendations not prioritized in the Request for Administrative Response	21	"Numerical literacy at the level required, especially in the Population Health program may need to be addressed through enhancing educational supports or addition of a numeracy-skills-focused course specific to population health."	<p>Short term and ongoing: Plans to enhance numerical literacy have become a priority for the Department. For further clarification, please refer to the response in point 6 above. As well, please note that we are working with the Registrar's Office and the Office of Admissions and Student Recruitment to add Grade 12 math as recommended (but not required) in recruitment publications for prospective students (e.g., Viewbook) as of next year. To address preparation gaps, we have also revised our program requirements, mandating students take a specific general statistics course in their first year (STAB23H3). This ensures they avoid the more commonly selected statistics course, which explicitly minimizes mathematical calculations in its description.</p> <p>The previous scaffolding was as follows:</p> <p>STAB22H3 (Statistics I) or STAB23H3 (Introduction to Statistics for the Social Sciences) in Year 1 or 2 HLTB15H3 (Health Research Methodologies) and HLTB16H3 (Public Health) in Year 2 HLTC27H3 (Community Health and Epidemiology) in Year 3</p> <p>The current scaffolding is now (for Population Health):</p> <p>Grade 12 Math recommended (any)</p>	The Dean's Office supports the department's efforts to better scaffold skills across its course offerings and clarify expectations for students. The Centre for Teaching and Learning is a crucial resource for the department in this area. The programs and curriculum team in the Dean's Office is also available to advise on strategies for strengthening scaffolding structures in the department's curricular offerings without compromising the department's commitment to equity and access.

			<p>STAB23H3 (Introduction to Statistics for the Social Sciences) in Year 1 HLTB15H3 (Health Research Methodologies), HLTB16H3 (Public Health), and HLTB27H3 (Applied Statistics for Public Health) in Year 2 HLTC27H3 (Community Health and Epidemiology) in Year 3.</p> <p>This work has been completed since the review under the leadership of the chair, working closely with the Program Coordinator.</p>	
	22	<p>“...in the absence of broader alumni-specific data from the institution, engagement with community partners who commonly hire and/or admit program graduates for their feedback on current degree program quality and the performance of its graduates may be worth considering.”</p>	<p>Medium term: We have sought support from the Development and Alumni Relations Office and are actively working with students and alumni and community organizations (including but not limited to the Scarborough Health Network) to build sustainable relationships that will help increase hiring opportunities for our students. This is a medium-term goal that requires support of the Dean’s Office and the Research Office.</p>	<p>The Dean’s Office supports the department’s collaborations with the Development and Alumni Relations Office and other community organizations to monitor trends and emerging areas of skill development for students and graduates in health studies-related programs.</p>
	23	<p>“Develop and maintain stronger relationships with community partners and alumni, to enhance experiential learning opportunities and access to program outcome data.”</p>	<p>Longer term: Through their research projects, our faculty have developed numerous partnerships with local, national, and international community partners. We will be exploring how those relationships can be leveraged for the department to carry out its new mission, vision, and values more effectively. In 2023, we initiated the Allied Health Speaker Series and are keen to work with others across the campus and in relation to SAMIH continue to develop and maintain stronger relationships with community partners and alumni, to enhance experiential learning opportunities and access to program outcome data. This is a longer-term goal that we will work with the Experiential Learning</p>	<p>The Dean’s Office supports the department’s efforts to work with the various offices within UTSC and with community partners to further develop and continually refine experiential learning opportunities to meet the needs of students, alumni, and employers. We are also prioritizing clearer data-gathering related to experiential learning to better support the department and the campus as a whole in meeting the SMA goal of 100% engagement with experiential learning. Experiential learning is a historic strength of UTSC and a significant priority for the future.</p>

			team to brainstorm ideas and implement opportunities.	
	24	“At present, students are not formally included in DHS committees, and the reviewers believe this is a missed opportunity to engage students who are future alumni and leaders. As the department matures, thought should be given to the appropriate governance mechanisms that distribute the burden between strategy development and operational decision making.”	Short term and ongoing: We have strong engagement with students through HSSA and other student associations which ensure student feedback and input while we develop formal engagement opportunities through committee membership for the future. We have begun to implement this in curriculum and our current faculty search committees based on the feedback from this review.	The Dean’s Office commends the department’s efforts to get more of their program students involved in the department’s decision making.
	25	“Build consistent discretionary funding into the department budget for the chair to use for evolving departmental priorities, such as undergraduate research assistantships, etc.”	The department is open to exploring this further and will defer to the Dean’s Office for guidance.	The Dean’s Office is currently in dialogue with departments to assess budget needs as the campus prepares to move to a new budgetary model. We recognize the importance of some degree of flexibility and autonomy for departments within budgetary frameworks.
	26	“Provide training for DHS leadership in advancement and access to advancement professionals at UofT to develop and implement an integrated alumni relations and advancement strategy for DHS.”	Short term and ongoing: Following the March 2024 cyclical review of the department, we worked with the UTSC Development and Alumni Relations Office to introduce a new scholarship for our students. This initiative has raised over \$50,000 for two endowed scholarships to be awarded annually to students studying Aging & Society. Through our continued collaboration with this office, an additional scholarship will be introduced in the next year. The current chair is very open to engaging in additional training.	The Dean’s Office appreciates the department’s collaboration with the Development and Alumni Relations Office to discuss and implement advancement and alumni engagement strategies.

3 Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the review summary accurately described the full review and that overall, they had found the review to be positive. The Dean's administrative response had mostly addressed issues identified by the review, noting that steps were already in progress to address concerns. The Reading Group asked the Department to further address the concerns regarding progress toward program enhancement, specifically the proposed increase of dedicated staff positions and faculty complement, building consistent discretionary funding into the department's budget for the Chair to support evolving departmental priorities, and "appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods for assessing student achievement."

Michelle Silver, Chair, Department of Health and Society ("DHS") responded that the department comprises faculty from health, humanities, sciences and social sciences. They had embarked on a collaborative effort to evaluate how assessments took place. She noted that a large group of students had engaged with the assessors during the site visit, and their feedback was related to exam policy and the fact that exams were returned without comments at the end of the term. They had explored ways to provide feedback to honor the exam policy, noting that the types of assessments in the humanities courses were different than the lab-based courses. She remarked that they would continue to discuss and collaborate to ensure that the assessments were substantially different and reflected appropriate student learning.

Katie Larson, Vice-Dean, Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs, reported that regarding faculty complement planning, DHS played an important role in the broader campus-wide strategy connected to preparations for The Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health ("SAMIH") Garron building. UTSC undertook limited strategic hires related to SAMIH and the Health Sciences, which was a priority. DHS was actively involved from a curricular perspective, regarding program demand and program expansion as Health Sciences were further established at UTSC. This was an ongoing priority and as the move was planned to SAMIH, DHS was part of the shared staffing considerations to ensure that they had the staffing resources that they needed.

Regarding the budget considerations, there were ongoing budget discussions with all departments in the current fiscal context, to ensure that the Department Chairs had the resources that they needed. She noted that they were shifting towards a new budget model, which provided departments with more autonomy over their finances.

No follow-up report was requested.

4 Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers praised the department's "unique and highly valuable blend of courses" that approach health from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and noted that "students graduate

with a more holistic view of health and society.” They commended the opportunities for experiential learning in the Department’s programs, and observed that students praised the quality of instruction and the creation of safe learning environments in which they can bring their diverse lived experience to discussions of complex health and social issues. They highlighted the department’s strengths in adopting universal design principles and proactive disability-related accommodations, particularly in upper-year courses. They applauded the department’s exceptional new faculty hiring decisions, and noted the content expertise and full engagement with research and skills development in teaching and learning among teaching faculty. Finally, the reviewers highlighted the potential for inclusion in the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health to enhance the Department’s research profile and impact.

The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: considering future strategic directions for the Population Health and Health Policy programs, including potential integration, light of current workload and capacity to deliver; systematizing and streamlining processes for revising or discontinuing courses and aligning the Department’s course offerings with strategic goals and teaching capacity; taking a more intentional approach to the scaffolding of skills across courses, including quantitative and qualitative research skills as well as other foundational skill domains in the field; prioritizing expansion of the faculty complement when opportunities permit, balanced across rank and tenure/teaching streams, “to address the high student to core faculty ratio, to refine programming and the expansion of experiential opportunities, and to strengthen clusters of faculty in areas of core research strength”; developing mechanisms to ensure that core and elective courses, class sizes, and teaching releases are equitably balanced for faculty; exploring ways to “allow adequate departmental capacity for strategic planning, student support, research and financial management, and community engagement”; providing equitable access to research space for dry lab researchers and their teams to foster collaboration and research-related experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students; consulting with faculty and allocating temporary space to meet current needs in advance of the planned move to SAMIH; creating additional opportunities for community building and support such as a departmental orientation, social activities for DHS faculty and staff, and support activities and resources during stressful times; creating a strategic research and academic plan that includes a clear vision and mission to define the Department’s academic priorities and commitments, guiding future hiring decisions and the establishment of research clusters; paying close attention to recruitment, retention, and success rates of Indigenous students, and exploring whether Indigenous students may disproportionately experience barriers to participating in co-op, undergraduate research experience, and/or access to mentorship.

The Dean’s Administrative Response describes the unit’s responses to the reviewers’ recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

5 Monitoring and Date of Next Review

The Dean's Office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair of the Department of Health and Society.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs in 2028 on the status of the implementation plans.

The next review will take place no later than the 2031-32 academic year.

6 Distribution

On August 15th, 2025, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean of UTSC, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to unit/program leadership.