

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1 Review Summary

Program Reviewed:	Hons. BA, Health Studies: Specialist, Major
Division in which program is housed:	Faculty of Arts & Science offered in association with University College
Commissioning Officer:	Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
Reviewers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Barbara Curbow, Professor, School of Public Health, University of Maryland2. Rebecca Fuhrer, Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational Health, McGill University
Date of Review Visit:	January 17, 2019
Date reported to AP&P	October 30, 2019

Previous Review

Date: March 2005 (as part of University College review)

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

“Health Studies is an interdisciplinary program drawing on the teaching and research depth of three Faculties: Arts and Science, Medicine and Physical Education and Health. Within UC, Health Studies connects with Aboriginal Studies, Canadian Studies and Sexual Diversity Studies. There are obstacles around admission standards to graduate courses in Public Health Sciences. If good working partnerships with Arts and Science and Medicine involving research, teaching, and other program-related activity cannot be established within the next two years, the College intends to re-examine the nature and viability of Health Studies with a program review.”

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

The reviewers were provided with:

- Terms of reference
- Self-study and Appendices
- Previous review report including the administrative response
- Standardized data set
- Library report
- Calendar entry
- Access to all course descriptions
- Faculty CVs

Consultation Process

The reviewers met with:

- Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
- Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives
- Program Director

- Principal, University College
- Vice-Principal, University College
- Administrative staff
- Students
- Program faculty
- Representatives from cognate units: Dalla Lana School of Public Health; Human Biology; Statistical Sciences.

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program

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

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - Intellectually rich program is seen as an asset to the University
 - Timely content and educational approach have the potential to contribute to the quality of health programs across the campus
- Objectives
 - Key program strengths are its interdisciplinary design and critical perspective on health issues
 - Program is unique in Canada for its focus on social theory, social justice, and social determinants of health
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - Excellent depth and breadth of curriculum
 - Strong commitment to experiential learning via internship placements
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - Passionate, enthusiastic students
 - Well-taught courses encourage development of critical thinking skills
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
 - Program enrolments and number of completions have grown in the last five years, despite limited advertising/promotion
 - Completion rates have remained relatively stable
- Quality indicators – faculty
 - Strong commitment to the program among faculty members
 - Wide range of teaching activities and contributions

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

- Objectives
 - Instructors do not seem to collaborate in developing program objectives
- Curriculum and program delivery

- Uncertainty that students in the program have access to research opportunities, particularly as faculty might be inclined to focus primarily on providing these opportunities for students in their home department
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - Absence of long-term planning and funding, and overall sense of instability are stressful for students and faculty
- Quality indicators – faculty
 - No research faculty with a primary appointment within the program

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - Investigate opportunities to form partnerships or otherwise collaborate with other U of T health-related programs and departments (e.g., Public Health, Human Biology) to strengthen the program and integrate more fully within the University
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - Encourage greater collaboration efforts among faculty members to enhance the program and student experience
 - Identify and build relationships with nearby health organizations for placement opportunities and positive local impact
 - Develop an informal academic environment to enrich students' educational experience
 - Consider hiring a dedicated staff member to find research and internship opportunities

2. Graduate Program (n/a)

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Faculty
 - Faculty are highly accomplished across a range of core program topics
 - Faculty are highly respected for their contributions to scholarship

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

- Faculty
 - Other than the part-time director there are no faculty appointments to the program
 - Program instructors are primarily sessional lecturers, hired using short-term funds

- Lack of clarity around instructor appointments and whether they receive teaching release, recognition, or other support from their home departments for their contribution to the program
- Faculty who engage in research are likely to associate that work primarily with their home departments
- Faculty rarely interact with each other

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
 - Investigate faculty cross-appointments with other units to encourage more substantial contributions to the program and its integrated development

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - Strong sense of community and high morale among the students, faculty, and staff
- Organizational and financial structure
 - Efficient use and management of available resources, particularly regarding administrative staff efforts
 - Faculty and staff are dedicated to the program
- International comparators
 - Program is unique in its breadth of courses and focus on issues of social justice via critical thinking

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

- Relationships
 - Academic or social interaction among program stakeholders is difficult due to the absence of a home academic unit
- Organizational and financial structure
 - Ambiguous institutional status of the free-standing program hampers its operation, growth, and access to resources
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - Lack of permanent faculty members impedes program development and long-term planning
 - Sense among students and faculty that program status is precarious; uncertainty whether program will be developed or retired
 - Lack of endowment, small alumni base, and absence of a graduate program limit opportunities for new revenues

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - Undertake comprehensive, transparent decision-making process regarding the future of the Health Studies program
 - Seek alternative ways of stabilizing program resources and strengthening its identity
 - Consider creation of a graduate program, or fields/concentrations within other programs, to enable access to graduate revenues
 - Consider combining or affiliating with one or more other small programs (e.g., Human Biology)
 - Develop a minor in Health Studies to appeal to a variety of students majoring in related fields



2 Administrative Response & Implementation Plan

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

September 26, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

Re: UTQAP cyclical review of Health Studies

Dear Professor McCahan,

Along with the faculty, staff and students of the Health Studies program at University College, I am pleased with the external reviewers' assessment of Health Studies and its programs: Health Studies, B.A., Hons. (Specialist, Major). The reviewers complimented this undergraduate program on being "*an asset to the University of Toronto*" with the "*intellectual richness of the courses*" as its greatest strength.

The quality of this program notwithstanding, as per your letter dated July 31, 2019, the review report raises a number of issues and challenges. I am writing to address the areas of the review report that you identify as key. The response to these items and implementation plan are separated into immediate (six months), medium (one to two years), and longer (three to five years) terms, where appropriate, along with who will take the lead in each area. The Dean's office has discussed the reviewers' comments through consultation with the Program Director and the Vice-Principal of University College to develop the following implementation plan incorporating the reviewers' recommendations:

The reviewers stated that "it is time to make a decision about the role of the program and commit to that decision" and recommended employing a transparent decision-making process. They noted that many of the concerns listed in 2006 appear to be unaddressed in 2019, including core funding, appointment of permanent faculty, and increasing awareness of the program.

Immediate to longer term response: The Dean's office is committed to the long-term success of the Health Studies program. We are working with the program leadership to ensure that better supports are in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program. Specific directions are outlined below.

The reviewers noted that the program's current structure and resources do not engender a sense of ongoing stability, continuity or long-term planning. They suggested ways to address this, including ensuring that the participation of faculty from cognate units is undertaken with the active support of their home departments.

Immediate term response: The Dean's office has facilitated a series of meetings between the program leadership, including the College Principal, Vice-Principal, and Program Director, and the leadership of cognate units, including Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, and Human Biology. While specific decisions regarding program curriculum are best situated within the units, the Dean's office can play an important role in identifying potential opportunities for collaborations, and mechanisms through which these collaborations can be supported.

Medium term response: More generally, the Dean's office recognizes the challenges faced by many multidisciplinary programs, in which teaching and access to courses is provided by a variety of units, with varying degrees of commitment from those units. As part of the current Academic Planning exercise within A&S, the Dean is working toward a better system for recognizing the work that Departments do in providing service teaching outside their units. By recognizing this work through financial support and consideration of faculty lines, the Dean is promoting better engagement of Departments and EDUs-A in multi-disciplinary programs.

In the case of Health Studies, the meetings facilitated by the Dean's office have already been successful in engaging support from key cognate units in the form of access to courses. The Dean's office will continue to work with the Health Studies leadership to facilitate relationships with cognate units.

The reviewers identified barriers to providing Health Studies students with practical research opportunities.

Immediate term response: The Health Studies program already provides students with practical research opportunities, and indeed includes a required course that prepares students for these opportunities. Students have indicated, however, that they can find it daunting to take the steps necessary to find placements in faculty research. Accordingly, the Program Director will work with students to ensure that they can secure appropriate placements in a timely manner, including the establishment of "meet-and-greet" events to give students the opportunity to find matches with faculty supervisors earlier in their studies.

Medium term response: In addition, the Director will develop connections with cognate units in A&S, as well as with possible faculty supervisors at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, to increase the research options available to students in Health Studies.

The reviewers stated that, if the Health Studies program is to be maintained, it needs to strengthen its identity and improve its resources. They identified opportunities for doing so.

Immediate term response: The Faculty is providing new resources to the program that are aimed at improving program stability while simultaneously promoting connections with cognate units. In the summer of 2019, the Faculty approved a 3-year teaching-stream CLTA, to teach Indigenous Health courses in the Centre for Indigenous Studies, the Human Biology program, and Health Studies. The position will thus bring together students to learn about a key area across three programs. In addition, the Faculty has now approved a search for a second CLTA, in Global Health, to be held 51% in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (to support the Human

Biology programs) and 49% in University College (to support Health Studies). This faculty position will provide stability to core teaching in Health Studies.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the reviewers observe that greater effort for collaboration between faculty members with regards to the objectives of the Health Studies program would enhance the program and the student experience. They also noted the possible benefits of a closer affiliation with the Human Biology program.

Immediate to longer term response: As noted above, the Dean's office is working with the Program leadership to build collaborations among faculty within cognate units. The Program is setting up an Advisory Board, to facilitate this engagement and ensure ongoing communication with faculty in relevant areas of study. The Dean agrees that there is considerable benefit to be derived from a closer affiliation with HMB, and the two CLTA positions described above are aimed at supporting and promoting such an affiliation. Greater connections with the HMB program will not only provide new opportunities and enhanced stability for Health Studies students, but will also provide HMB students with the opportunity to add social science breadth to their studies.

The Dean's office will monitor the implementation of recommendations, with, at minimum, a brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the year of the review and the year of the next site visit.

The year of the next review will be **2026-2027**.

To conclude, we appreciate that the external reviewers identified the strengths in the Health Studies program and noted a few areas for development. Health Studies has already begun to move forward with plans to address the recommendations as presented by the reviewers.

Sincerely,



Melanie Woodin
Dean and Professor of Cell and Systems Biology

cc.

John Marshall, Vice-Principal, University College

Sarah Wakefield, Program Director, Health Studies program

Poppy Lockwood, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Faculty of Arts & Science

Asher Cutter, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Issues and Academic Planning

Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

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

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the summary covered the full review but did not reflect the urgent tone of the review regarding the sustainability of the program. Similarly, the administrative response was rather generic and did not specifically address, for example, the status of relationships with cognate units.

Regarding the summary, Professor McCahan noted that both the full review report and the summary made several comments regarding the lack of tenure-stream or permanent faculty connected to the program, the impact that had on the ability to develop and plan for the program, and the overall sense of instability and uncertainty regarding the program that was stressful for students and faculty. For the record, she read out the reviewers' overall recommendation that "A decision about the future of Health Studies should be made: deletion, maintenance at the same level, or growth."

Professor Lockwood noted that the program was meant to be a hub for faculty and students from cognate disciplines, and that building relationships with cognate units was a priority. The two planned Contractually-Limited Term Appointment (CLTA) teaching staff, represented key investments in these relationships, particularly in the areas of indigenous health and global health, and would provide needed assistance to the program. Given the program's modest size, two CLTAs represented a sizeable commitment.

A follow-up report was requested to address the status of relationships with cognate units and the efficacy of the CLTAs in creating a more sustainable offering.

4 Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers described the Health Studies program as an asset to U of T, and identified the programs' strengths as the intellectual richness of its courses; the timeliness of its content and educational approach; its potential to contribute to the quality of health programs across the University; its quality and uniqueness; its bright and engaged students; the strong sense of community and collaborative teaching with a focus on social theory and social justice; and the full-time faculty members associated with the program who are highly accomplished and respected across a range of core topics. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: making a decision about the role of the program and employing a transparent process in doing so; addressing long-standing concerns related to core funding, appointment of permanent faculty, and increasing awareness of the program; improving stability, continuity and long-term planning in the program by, for example, ensuring that the participation of faculty from cognate units is undertaken with the active support of their home departments; addressing barriers to providing Health Studies students with practical research opportunities; strengthening Health Studies' identity and improving its resources (if the program is to be

maintained); enhancing the program and the student experience through increased collaboration between faculty members with regards to program objectives; and considering a closer affiliation with the Human Biology program. The Dean's Administrative Response describes the Faculty, College and programs' 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 College Vice-Principal and Program Director, as well as the A&S unit-level planning process.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs midway between the January 17, 2019 site visit and the year of the next site visit on the status of the implementation plans.

The year of the next review will be 2026-2027.

6 Distribution

On October 26, 2020, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Secretaries to AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to the Vice-Principal of University College and the Program Director.