Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Instructions and Report Template

As part of the protocols outlined in Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), to facilitate the continuous improvement of academic programs between review cycles, in connection with the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan, a monitoring process will include an Ongoing Improvement Progress Report. The outcomes of this report will be considered as part of the program's next cyclical review.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the operationalization of the implementation plan following a Cyclical Program Review (or the review of a New Program). This should include a brief summary of actions taken by the Program and the Dean's Office since the completion of the review (usually about three years), as well as an update on the stage of implementation for all applicable items. These include:

- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);
- the timelines of each item and how they are progressing or expected to progress, particularly if they are diverting from original timelines in the FAR and Implementation Plan, and;
- a short description of any other program developments and improvements that have taken place following the review.
- For new programs only, an evaluation of the initial administration and resourcing of the program.

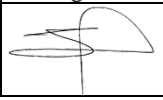
The following report template has been created for the program to report on progress made regarding recommendations presented in the Implementation Plan, and any other relevant program developments and enhancements.

- The program will complete the template and submit it to the faculty Dean's Office for sign-off.
- The program will then submit the completed Ongoing Improvement and Progress Report to the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement (OAQE). Reports are due by June 30.
    - The OAQE will present all Ongoing Improvement and Progress Reports to SUPR-U/G. Any follow-up questions/concerns will be communicated to the program and Dean's Office by the OAQE.

Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Program / Faculty Information

Program	Health & Rehabilitation Sciences, MSc, PhD	**Faculty / Affiliated University College**	Health Sciences
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-G: May 16, 2022 SCAPA: May 25,2022 Senate: June 10, 2022	**Year of the Next Review**	2028-2029
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	*https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/academic_programs/iqap_reports/fac_of_health_science_grad/Annual%20Report%20Final%20Assessment%20Reports%202021-22%20Western%20University%20Graduate1.pdf*		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)	*Dates to be populated by the OAQE (if applicable)*		

	Name	**Signature**	**Date**
Program Chair/Director	Shannon L Sibbald		May 28. 2025
Dean (or delegate)	Shaun Boe		June 2, 2025

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Critically examine the size and naming of the fields and any opportunities to collapse fields, make their labels more inclusive, and support more explicit interdisciplinary work.	1. Initiate a dedicated discussion at upcoming HRS Graduate Committee meetings. Discussion with the Dean and FHS faculty would follow. 2. Investigate how the Common Seminar can be used to break down barriers between fields and serve as a driver for interdisciplinary thinking.	1. HRS Graduate Committee, Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs FHS, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs FHS. 2. HRS Graduate Committee	1. Decision by December 2022 If applicable, submission for major modifications by September 2023 2. By December 2022

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes **X** No

Progress: *What specific actions have been taken?*

1. Examination of Field Size and Naming

Progress:

- As a result of the integration of the Brescia School of Food and Nutritional Sciences into FHS, a new field: Foods, Nutrition and Human Ecology, was added. The HRS Graduate Committee has also been engaged in ongoing discussions regarding potential modifications to field names and the number of fields. A preliminary analysis was conducted to identify redundancies and opportunities for consolidation. In response, an initial working group was convened and met three times (between Aug 2024-Feb 2025) with the goal of developing a plan for potential restructuring. Whereas the working group identified that certain fields were struggling for a variety of reasons (e.g., faculty with

expertise in the field had left Western), the only formal proposal received was for the creation of an additional field (which would be in area tied closely to few FHS faculty).

- At the request of the working group, a student survey was also conducted during this period. Results were mixed: some students advocated maintaining the current field structure and others suggested adding new fields (such as ethics, biomechanics), while a minority supported reducing the number of fields.

2. Role of the Common Seminar in Interdisciplinary Engagement

Progress:

The Common Seminar has the potential to encourage interdisciplinary thinking, though its impact is more nuanced. While it may not directly promote interdisciplinary engagement across all Schools within the Faculty, it does provide an important opportunity for students to engage with content that challenges and expands their existing disciplinary perspectives. In this way, the Common Seminar supports intellectual growth and broader academic inquiry within a student's own area of study. The Common Seminar was transformed into a professional development opportunity since in our self-study students indicated an urgent need for these opportunities. Further, Western hosts numerous professional development opportunities, some of which were not previously well-attended by our students despite multiple marketing campaigns (e.g., Own Your Future). In our self-study, students who attended Western's opportunities (e.g., Own Your Future, Centre for Teaching and Learning) found them extremely helpful whereas the Common Seminar in its old format was not well-received by students. Therefore, converting the Common Seminar to a Professional Development opportunity meant that students could select opportunities relevant to their development, which are interdisciplinary.

As part of the syllabus revision we have incorporated stronger language encouraging students to use the Common Seminar as a platform to explore topics beyond their specific research focus as well as their professional development. This will align with our broader goal of developing interdisciplinary awareness and critical thinking. While there are no formal mechanisms in place to measure whether or to what extent interdisciplinary thinking is occurring because of participation in the Common Seminar, we have adjusted our exit survey to ask students about their experience in professional development and interdisciplinary thinking.

Further, beyond the Common Seminar, there are interdisciplinary opportunities within the HRS Program and FHS including, but not limited to, shared methods courses where students have opportunity to hear about the research projects of other students in the program, HRS Research Day, collaborative specialization programs (inter-university), and the FHS Child Health Symposium. In parallel, the program has made deliberate efforts to foster interdisciplinary thinking within field-based seminars.

Next Steps (if applicable): *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?*

1. Examination of Field Size and Naming

Next Steps:

With the recent appointment of a new Dean, preliminary discussions have supported the formation of a smaller, focused working group to guide the next phase of this initiative. Beginning in Summer 2025, this group will operate with a clear mandate to develop a set of options and recommendations for moving forward. It will work in close coordination with the Faculty-level committee currently reviewing the structure of FHS research sections and pillars, ensuring that any proposed changes to the HRS graduate program align with broader Faculty directions and priorities.

The working group will build upon insights gathered through prior consultations and student surveys and will aim to recommend a path forward that thoughtfully balances inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, and coherence with evolving Faculty structures.

To ensure transparency and ongoing engagement, the group will report regularly to the HRS Graduate Committee and provide updates to key stakeholders. A formal proposal or program modification is anticipated no later than **December 2025**, subject to the outcomes of both internal and Faculty-wide discussions.

2. Role of the Common Seminar in Interdisciplinary Engagement

Next Steps:

- We will continue to update the list of available opportunities and promote them through the weekly HRS bulletin to ensure broad student awareness and access.
- In parallel, field leads are actively engaged in discussions aimed at enhancing seminar content to better reflect diverse perspectives and cross-cutting themes within health and rehabilitation sciences. These ongoing efforts underscore a broader commitment to fostering interdisciplinary capacity and intellectual breadth across the HRS curriculum.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #2	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Review and critically examine the HRS program from an EDI lens, in particular the HRS curriculum and admission processes.	1. With the support of the new Assistant Dean EDIIA and the Faculty's EDI-D coordinator, initiate a dedicated discussion at upcoming HRS Graduate Committee meetings and outline an actionable EDI strategy. • Consider adding this topic as a standing item at each HRS Graduate Committee meeting. 2. Share and co-develop EDI best practices with other graduate programs. 3. Promote and strongly encourage faculty/staff completion of EDI workshops. In particular, target prospective supervisors who commonly serve as first contacts for students being admitted into the program. Workshops would support greater consideration of possible biases related to admission.	Assistant Dean EDIIA HRS EDI-D coordinator The HRS Program Committee Assistant Dean Graduate Programs FHS	By April 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes **X** No

Progress: *What specific actions have been taken?*

1. Examination of HRS Curriculum and Admissions Through an EDI Lens

Progress:

- Initial discussions have been held with the Assistant Dean, EDIIA, and the Faculty's EDI-D Coordinator to begin identifying strategic EDIIA priorities specific to the HRS graduate program. These conversations mark the start of a coordinated effort to embed EDIIA principles more fully into program planning and delivery.

- In parallel, we are actively reviewing Western University's institutional EDI plan to ensure alignment between the HRS program's strategic direction and the broader goals of both the Faculty of Health Sciences and the University.

- We have also begun working collaboratively with the HRS Graduate Student Society (HRSGSS) to co-develop EDIIA priorities, ensuring that student voices and lived experiences are meaningfully integrated into this process.

- To support ongoing dialogue and accountability, EDIIA has been established as a standing item on the HRS Graduate Committee agenda, providing a consistent forum for discussion and action.

- Additionally, students have been informed that participation in EDIIA-focused workshops and sessions—such as those offered through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)—may be counted toward fulfilling Common Seminar requirements. This approach highlights the program's commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments while expanding the range of approved seminar options.

2. Co-Developing EDI Best Practices with Other Graduate Programs

Progress:

- A joint EDI session was held in Spring 2025 in collaboration with the HRS Graduate Student Society (HRSGSS). The session was designed to foster open dialogue, share best practices, and strengthen collective engagement in advancing EDI within the HRS graduate program.

- Moving forward, this session is intended to become an annual event, serving both as a forum for continued engagement and as a mechanism for tracking progress on EDIIA-related initiatives.

3. Encouraging EDI Training for Faculty and Supervisors

Progress:

- Initial discussions have taken place on promoting EDI workshops, particularly for faculty members and prospective supervisors.

- There is a growing focus and foundation of EDI-related engagement across the Faculty of Health Sciences that are being leveraged to support this recommendation. Annually, multiple events, retreats, and workshops have taken place within and across the Schools within the Faculty (see below). Many faculty members involved in teaching and supervision within the HRS program have participated in these activities, including the Kairos Blanket Exercise, which focuses on understanding the historical and contemporary impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples in Canada.

1. September 30, 2024 | 12:00-1:30 PM
2. National Day of Truth and Reconciliation Facilitation Session
3. November 7, 2024 | 11:30 AM-12:30 PM (Zoom)
   EDIDA Workshop: Inclusive Teaching and Addressing Implicit Bias
4. Multiple Dates: EDIDA Conversations & Priorities Sessions
5. Thursday, March 27th from 11:30 am-12:30 pm via Zoom. "Identity and Intersectionality"
6. Decolonizing Framework Sessions- each school 5/7 completed by May 31

Next Steps (if applicable): *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?*

Western University recently released its EDI Strategic Plan (available at EDI Strategic Plan), which has influenced the direction of our EDI efforts within the HRS program. As a result, our focus has shifted toward collaborating more closely with the Faculty to align with broader institutional priorities.

One key outcome of this shift is the centralization of efforts to share EDI best practices across graduate programs. Rather than developing independent initiatives, we are now working within a faculty-wide approach, leveraging shared resources and strategies to create more consistent and impactful EDI efforts across all programs. This has also strengthened Faculty-level support for our initiatives, enhancing our ability to implement meaningful and sustainable changes.

1. Examination of HRS Curriculum and Admissions Through an EDI Lens

Next Steps:

- Continue refining EDI priorities in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- We also intend to consult with instructors to track field-specific or research methods courses being updated or delivered through an EDI lens. These insights will help inform both curriculum review and the identification of good practices already underway within the program.

2. Co-Developing EDI Best Practices with Other Graduate Programs

Next Steps:

Efforts are underway to formalize the structure and clarify the objectives of the joint EDIIA sessions, with the goal of maximizing their impact and ensuring meaningful engagement from both students and faculty.

Looking ahead, we will explore opportunities to collaborate with other FHS graduate programs. Potential avenues for collaboration include joint sessions, shared professional development opportunities, and the formation of interdisciplinary working groups focused on advancing inclusive and equitable graduate education. These initiatives aim to foster a more integrated and supportive learning environment across programs while reinforcing shared EDIIA goals.

3. Encouraging EDI Training for Faculty and Supervisors

Next Steps:

A strategy is being developed to encourage greater faculty participation in EDI-related workshops and training opportunities, with a particular focus on those who serve as key points of contact in the admissions and supervisory processes. Building on current levels of engagement, the goal is to promote EDI training more systematically among faculty members involved in student recruitment, supervision, and mentoring. Proposed strategies include:

- Integrating EDIIA training into onboarding processes for new supervisors and committee members;
- Disseminating information on upcoming EDI workshops more widely and regularly;
- Encouraging faculty to include EDI participation in their annual professional development plans.

To support this work, a record of past EDI-related events attended by faculty and students will be compiled. This will help to recognize prior engagement, identify areas for growth, and inform the planning of future initiatives.

Faculty and student access to EDI resources will also be enhanced through more active promotion of existing platforms. For example, the FHS EDIIA website (https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/equity/index.html) is regularly updated with resources and event listings. HRS-specific events will also be posted on this platform, and we will continue to communicate proactively with instructors, supervisors, and students to ensure awareness of both Faculty- and University-wide EDI opportunities.

Additional Comments

Recommendation #4	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Review combined programs for consistency across disciplines and explore opportunities to enhance student interaction and collaboration across these programs.	1. Investigate the possibility for students in the MClSc/PhD combined degree to complete their final placement in Year 4. 2. Invite combined students to participate in a regularly occurring meeting of combined degree students.	Field leaders for Hearing Science and Speech & Language Sciences Assistant Dean Graduate Programs FHS	By December 2022

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes **X** No

Progress: *What specific actions have been taken?*

1. Investigating Final Placement Timing for MClSc/PhD Students

Progress:

- Preliminary discussions have been initiated to examine the feasibility of permitting MClSc/PhD combined degree students to complete their final clinical placement in Year 4 of the program.
- Feedback has been solicited from field leaders in Hearing Science and Speech & Language Science to assess potential implications for curriculum design and accreditation requirements.
- In parallel, we are reviewing logistical and administrative considerations to evaluate whether such adjustments can be implemented while upholding the academic standards and overall integrity of the program.

2. Enhancing Student Interaction and Collaboration Across Combined Programs

Progress:

- Opportunities to strengthen engagement among students enrolled in combined degree programs have been actively explored. In response, preliminary discussions have been initiated to establish a regularly scheduled meeting series designed specifically for combined MClSc/PhD students.

- These meetings aim to foster a sense of community, support peer networking and collaboration, and provide a platform for shared learning and mentorship. The first meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2025, marking the launch of this new initiative.

Next Steps (if applicable): *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?*

1. Investigating Final Placement Timing for MClSc/PhD Students

Next Steps:

- Continue discussions with field leaders and program administrators to finalize feasibility.
- If viable, draft a proposal outlining necessary modifications for approval (target May 2026)

2. Enhancing Student Interaction and Collaboration Across Combined Programs

Next Steps:

To support the ongoing success of this initiative, the following next steps have been identified:

- Formalize a plan for the combined degree student meetings, including the frequency, format, and potential roles for faculty mentors or facilitators.

- Identify and confirm future meeting dates, building on the structure, and feedback from the inaugural session on June 11, 2025.

- Develop a framework for meeting content, which may include peer-led discussions, research updates, academic and professional development topics, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

- Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback and evaluation to ensure the meetings remain relevant and responsive to student needs.

These steps aim to ensure the meetings are sustainable, meaningful, and well-integrated into the broader student experience.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Note: The total number of expandable text boxes will be dependent on the number of prioritized recommendations appearing in the program's most recent Final Assessment Report (FAR).

Continuous Program Enhancement

What additional initiatives or changes has the program been working on in relation to continuous program improvement?

The HRS graduate program is committed to continuous improvement through a range of strategic initiatives that enhance transparency, student support, faculty engagement, and program consistency. Recent and ongoing efforts include:

- **Annual Faculty Town Hall** to provide program-wide updates and foster open dialogue.
- **Regular faculty information sessions**, including sessions focused on funding processes and student orientation (two held this year).
- **Inaugural combined program faculty meeting** to facilitate cross-program collaboration and shared supervision strategies.
- **Graduate Chair drop-in sessions**—one open to all students and one specifically for combined degree students—to improve accessibility and informal support.

- **Joint faculty-student sessions** on key academic tools and resources, including sessions focused on the use of Pathfinder.
- **International student information sessions** (four held to date), as well as **recruitment webinars** (two hosted this year), both of which are now planned as recurring events.

In addition to these engagement efforts, the program is also undertaking a series of structural improvements:

- **Standardizing HRS course syllabi** to ensure consistency in expectations and transparency across fields.
- **Harmonizing policies for field-based seminars**, including common attendance tracking and make-up processes across all fields.
- **Enhanced student progression tracking**, including scheduled quarterly check-ins and ad hoc meetings as needed to proactively address student needs.
- **Collaborating with the Centre for Teaching and Learning** to develop HRS-specific teaching assistant (TA) training and resources.
- **Updating and streamlining the Student Handbook** to improve clarity and accessibility.
- **Reviewing and updating all program forms**, including the development of accompanying procedural documents for both the **Candidacy Exam** and **Prospectus** processes, to guide students and faculty more effectively.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect a strong and ongoing commitment to program quality, student success, and operational excellence.