



Food and Nutritional Sciences
Final Assessment Report &
Implementation Plan
March 2023

Faculty / Affiliated University College	School of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Brescia University College	
Degrees Offered	Master of Science in Foods and Nutrition (MScFN)	
Date of Last Review	2014-2015	
Approved Fields	N/A	
External Reviewers	Dr. Rhonda Bell, Department of Agricultural Food and Nutritional Science, University of Alberta	Dr. Richard Bazinet, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Elizabeth Webb, Associate Dean (Graduate) Faculty of Science	Mohammad Azzam, Ph.D. Candidate, Education
Date of Site Visit	December 1 & 2, 2022	
Date Review Report Received	January 27, 2023	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: February 17, 2023 Faculty: February 17, 2023	
Evaluation	Good Quality	
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: April 24, 2023 ACA: May 10, 2023 Senate (for information): May 19, 2023	
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2030-2031	
Progress Report	June 2026	

Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Food and Nutritional Sciences Program delivered by the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences at Brescia University College.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program’s self-study brief;
- the external reviewers’ report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Dean.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Graduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-G) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western’s IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the graduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

Initiated in September 2007, the MScFN at Brescia University College is a full-time graduate program with two curriculum options: 1) The MScFN project-based (practicum) option prepares students for registration as an entry-level Registered Dietitian (RD) with the College of Dietitians of Ontario and is accredited by Dietitians of Canada as a professional program, and 2) The MScFN thesis-based curriculum option is suitable for applicants who would like to pursue a master’s level education and are passionate about research. The project-based option is completed in five terms, whereas the thesis-based option is completed in six terms.

With a total enrolment of 36 students (in 2020-21), the program provides for the development of knowledge and skills across a full range of foods and nutrition practice areas, including work in clinical nutrition, community nutrition, food service administration, food science, nutritional epidemiology, and program planning and evaluation.

To inform the self-study, the School conducted a retreat using the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) framework to guide conversations about the MScFN program. A survey administered to students asked questions on university services and support at UWO/Brescia, the graduate program in Food and Nutritional Sciences at Brescia, overall graduate experience, and preparedness for the next academic/professional/career stage. Survey responses were received from six current students and 21 recent graduates.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Food and Nutritional Sciences Graduate Program. They offer four recommendations for further enhancement and several suggestions for consideration.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Applicant interviews were replaced with an online open-response situational judgement test called CASPER to reduce conscious and unconscious bias in the applicant selection process.
- Enhanced integration of Indigenous issues in the curriculum to address the ongoing impact of colonization, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism on Indigenous peoples of Canada.
- The practicum is recognized by the Partnership for Dietetic Education and Practice (PDEP), and the practicum placements ensure that students develop advanced competencies which will meet all areas of learning required for professional registration.
- The School's collaboration with Western Engineering resulted in the offering of a Master of Engineering (MEng) in Food Processing which aims to enable students with the theoretical and practical skills to meet the demands of the food industry.
- Brescia's active affiliation agreements with over 250 institutions and working relationships with over 300 active preceptors results in strong community partnerships within and outside of Ontario, and in other countries (Ireland, United States, Jamaica).
- Faculty involvement in professional organizations (e.g., PDEP, Canadian Association of Professional Programs in Human Nutrition (CAPPHN), Dietitians of Canada (DC).
- Employment success rate for graduates is very high.
- Low rate of failure with Canadian Dietetic Registration Exam (CDRE), with a 95-100% success rate in recent years.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- The School recognizes that additional faculty members are required to expand student research needs.
- In comparison to other program funding packages, the funding for students enrolled in the thesis-based option needs to be increased.
 - o Funding remains a challenge when recruiting students.
- Address increased demand for intersectional skills in food systems and nutrition, by developing new graduate course and/or practicum placement opportunities.
- Lack of independent learning spaces for students to work without distractions.
- Opportunity for a community garden, greenhouse or crop box/containers, and involvement with the food bank.
- The School has identified equity, diversity, and inclusion within the MScFN program as an area of focus for improvement.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a graduate student reviewer, were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met virtually (due to pandemic restrictions) over two days with the:

- President, Brescia University College
- Provost, Brescia University College
- Associate Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Academic Director (Acting), School of Food and Nutritional Sciences
- Graduate Program Chair
- Director of Library Services, Brescia University College
- Graduate Program and Department Staff
- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students

Following the virtual site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the Food and Nutritional Sciences Graduate Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to the SGPS and to SUPR-G by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

External reviewers highlighted a particular satisfaction by students for “*the personalized service that professors and all support staff provide in the program*”.

Strengths of the Program

- Faculty have remarkable research productivity given the high teaching loads.
- Faculty members work in diverse areas of Food and Nutrition, with expertise in food science, food engineering, and varying sub-specialties within clinical nutrition, community nutrition, epidemiology, research design, statistics.
- Faculty members are highly skilled at developing and completing research projects with students making important contributions to the literature.
- The combination of courses and research projects are very well thought out, thorough, and students develop excellent skills and a strong introduction to research.
- Students described that graduating with a MSc AND the chance to become a Registered Dietitian was a one of the main reasons for choosing this path.
- To enhance EDID in the curriculum, the Program has partnerships for learning and research with four (4) Indigenous communities.
 - o The program is finding more placements for students in Indigenous centers (for their second placements).
- Students in both programs finish within the desired 2-year window.
- Both MScFN program options have high rates of completion.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

1. The research component of the practicum-based option often extends past the expected timeline with inconsistencies that are not always clearly mapped out.
2. There are opportunities to clarify roles and agree to responsibilities within the current model and timeframe for practicum-based students.
3. Increasing student numbers will put some strain on library resources and specifically on student interactions with staff as well as access to certain publications.
4. Access to supports and services vary from what is available to programs on main campus and those in Brescia – something that should be monitored.
5. MSc and BSc teaching loads do not recognize the time required to complete unique elements of both of these activities within a person’s faculty workload.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers’ recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers. Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Reviewers’ Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
<p>Recommendation #1:* The Food and Nutrition academics and staff are urged to come together to clearly define goals and objectives, expectations, and recommended timelines for both MSc programs. They may also wish to identify points where the two MSc programs differ and reasons for these differences.</p>	<p>Program: The Program will meet to consider how to better differentiate the programs and will specifically consider the research component of the project stream and whether it can be streamlined or customized to student goals. The Program will develop an expected timeline for each of the two streams that minimizes the quantity of research work for students on their placements in the project-based stream.</p> <p>Faculty: The Provost’s Office agrees with this recommendation and supports the program’s plan to better differentiate the two MScFN streams and to streamline research projects for practicum students. The Provost’s Office will encourage efforts to gain a robust sample of student perspectives on the two programs to inform discussions.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2:* The Foods and Nutrition Academics and Staff are urged to explore ways to prioritize MScFN – thesis-based students and their research programs with respect to student funding, student research experience and allocation of teaching and research resources. OGS, NSERC and CIHR funding could be targeted for MSc-thesis-based students to help with student funding. Additional staff resources are essential to support the vigorous research programs that exist.</p>	<p>Program: The Program recognizes that student funding has been a challenge for MScFN thesis-based students. Although these students represent a very small percentage of MScFN students (the vast majority pursue the project-based stream), the program will continue to encourage students to apply for OGS, which is guaranteed for a maximum of three students in the program each year. Some students have been successful in receiving the CGS award, however this is not guaranteed.</p> <p>The Program plans to make use of Brescia’s new full-time Research Officer, who has previous experience in small, liberal arts colleges, and thus has a keen understanding of the challenges and opportunities for research at small institutions like Brescia. The Research Officer has already met with faculty members individually and will provide support for faculty research programs and MScFN thesis-based students. The Program will investigate hiring additional research staff to aid in the supervision of research students.</p> <p>Faculty: While there are currently few students in the thesis stream of the MScFN, enhanced funding opportunities may help attract more students. The Provost’s Office supports ongoing efforts by the Program to secure OGS and other funding for thesis students. The mandate of the new Research Officer is broad and will include supporting the thesis program.</p>

<p>Recommendation #3:* Brescia leadership, academics and staff are recommended to identify staffing shortfalls and strategically fund additional supports required to fill those shortfalls. Program coordination, Research Coordinators or Associates, and additional dedicated research supports are needed within Brescia to ensure smooth continuation of all programs.</p>	<p>Program: Staffing issues are a concern and will continue to be addressed by the Program. A new part-time administrative support staff member will be assisting with various administrative processes and procedures including retrieving information and updating databases, preparing documents, reports, and spreadsheets, assisting staff with admission cycle processes for the MScFN program, and developing promotional and communication materials for the School.</p> <p>Brescia’s new Research Officer will assist faculty with searching for, and assisting with, grant funding opportunities and proposals to enhance the School’s research potential, especially for the MScFN Program. The Program will identify additional research supports that may be available at Western.</p> <p>Faculty: The Provost’s Office supports the Program in identifying critical staffing needs and ensuring that existing staff are deployed effectively.</p>
<p>Recommendation #4:* With respect to staffing and resource availability, such as the Indigenous Coordinator at Brescia, ongoing information exchange and discussion is recommended. It appears that parallel positions (and processes) may to be available at Western. Coordinators could seek out ways to confer and complement activities in both places.</p>	<p>Program: The Program has identified equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) within the MScFN program as an area for continued improvement. As such, faculty will continue to invite Indigenous scholars to share their knowledge and expertise during class lectures, and the Program will continue to follow Western University’s guidelines for working with Indigenous community members. The Program will continue to be represented on Brescia’s EDID Advisory Committee. This committee meets regularly and the information and resources obtained are shared with faculty and staff. Much of this EDID material is delivered to Brescia faculty and staff at Brescia Faculty Institute (BFI) professional development workshops, which Program faculty will continue to participate in.</p> <p>The Brescia Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator works closely with the Indigenous Initiatives Team at Western University (main campus). Our Research Officer will also reach out to other Research Officers in relevant faculties on main campus (e.g., Health Sciences) to investigate additional research and funding opportunities for the Program’s graduate students.</p> <p>Faculty: The Provost’s Office endorses the Program’s ongoing efforts to bring a diversity of voices to students and to expand faculty EDID knowledge. The use of CASPER in admissions will continue and the diversity of incoming classes to the MScFN Program will be monitored. Brescia will continue to communicate with and be involved in EDID initiatives at Western.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Graduate Program Chair, in consultation with the SGPS and the Dean is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>Recommendation #1: Clearly define goals and objectives, expectations and recommended timelines for each program option – noting how the options differ and reasons for these differences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided by input from the students, work towards better differentiating the two MScFN streams in terms of goals, expectations and timelines. 	<p>Graduate Program Chair</p>	<p>By September 2023</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: Explore ways to prioritize thesis-based students and their research programs with respect to student funding, student research experience and allocation of teaching and research resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine effective ways in which the Research Officer’s mandate will support faculty and students in the thesis-based program. In addition to actively encouraging thesis stream students to apply for OGS, determine other funding sources and identify supports for students applying for funds. 	<p>Graduate Chair Research Officer</p>	<p>By June 2023</p>
<p>Recommendation #3: Identify staffing shortfalls and strategically fund additional supports required to fill those shortfalls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify critical staffing needs and ensure that existing staff are deployed effectively. Identify additional research supports that may be available at Western. Brescia’s new Research Officer to assist faculty with searching for grant funding opportunities and proposals to enhance the 	<p>Graduate Chair Research Officer</p>	<p>By December 2023</p>

	School's research potential, especially for the MScFN Program.		
<p>Recommendation #4:</p> <p>Ongoing information exchange and discussion is recommended for areas related to the work of Brescia's Indigenous Coordinator. Seek out ways to confer and complement activities across parallel roles at Western and the other affiliate institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out opportunities for coordination and collaboration between parallel roles at Western and other affiliate programs to alleviate some of the workload of current program staff. 	<p>Graduate Chair Research Officer Indigenous Coordinator</p>	<p>By December 2023</p>

Other Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

- It was not clear if faculty at Brescia could hold NSERC grants. This should be further examined as it appeared that several faculty members would apply for it if possible.
- Additional discussions are warranted about how to support academics to supervise PhD students through Western.
- Encourage interaction/mentoring between the 1st and second year practicum students.