

<b>Faculty / Affiliated University College</b>	Health Sciences	
<b>Degrees Offered</b>	Master of Nursing (MN) Master of Science in Nursing (MScN) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	2014-2015	
<b>Approved Fields</b>	Fields within the Master of Nursing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership in Professional Nursing Practice</li> <li>• Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner</li> </ul> No fields in the MScN or PhD	
<b>External Reviewers</b>	Madeleine Buck Associate Professor (Ret'd) Ingram School of Nursing McGill University	Josephine P. Wong Professor, Research Chair in Urban Health, Toronto Metropolitan University
<b>Internal Reviewers</b>	Peter Donahue, Member of SUPR-G, Director, School of Social Work King's University College	Mohammad Azzam PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education
<b>Date of Site Visit</b>	January 19, 20, 2023	
<b>Date Review Report Received</b>	February 13, 2023	
<b>Date Program/Faculty Response Received</b>	Program: April 4, 2023 Faculty: April 4, 2023	
<b>Evaluation</b>	Good Quality	
<b>Approval Dates</b>	SUPR-G: May 15, 2023 ACA: May 31, 2023 Senate: June 9, 2023	
<b>Year of Next Review</b>	2030-2031	
<b>Progress Report</b>	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 Graduate Programs in Nursing delivered by the Faculty of Health Sciences.

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, Faculty of Health Sciences.

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 Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

## **Executive Summary**

The Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing delivers both research and professional graduate programs. Established in 1959, the Master of Science in Nursing (MScN) Program is the longest standing graduate Nursing program in Canada. In 2020-21, total enrolments in the MScN were at 33 students. For the PhD program, total enrolments in 2020-21 were at 57 students. In terms of active professional programs, the School hosts the Master of Nursing – Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (MN-PHCNP) with total enrolments (2020-21) at 53 students, and the recently developed Master of Nursing – Leadership in Professional Nursing Practice (MN-LPNP) with total enrolments (2020-21) at 34 students.

The programs are grounded in the School's strategic priorities with a focus on development of future nursing leaders, knowledge generation and development and use of a wide range of research approaches to use and develop new insights and strengthen services, systems and policies that affect health and well-being and reduce inequities.

The self-study was guided and informed by the work of the Graduate Programs Council (GPC). In addition to dedicated meetings, graduate programs notably undertook of a review of program learning outcomes with support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning and administered surveys to current students and alumni.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Graduate Programs in Nursing. They offer five recommendations for further enhancement.

## **Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program**

- The MN-PHCNP field is a member of the Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner (OPHCNP) Program and receives annual approval from the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).
  - o The program prepares graduates to write licensure examinations with the CNO to become Nurse Practitioners.
- EDID initiatives implemented by the school include:
  - o The formation of the Indigenous Engagement Committee in 2018.
  - o An Ontario Indigenous Cultural Safety (San'yas) program that was initially completed by 95% of faculty and staff and is now an orientation requirement of the School.
  - o The development of two indigenous health courses by an Indigenous Scholar.
  - o The Decolonization, Anti-racism, Anti-oppression (DARAO) Committee, developed in 2020, to unify curriculum actions and faculty development to support anti-racist, anti-oppressive work in the School.

- Opportunities for faculty and graduate students to participate in varied research activities are enabled by:
  - o The annual research conference held by UWO Honour Society of Nursing (Iota Omicron).
  - o The first international online journal focusing on nursing education which was started in 2008 at the School of Nursing, as well as the International Journal on Homelessness which was launched in 2021.
- International affiliations that provide students with opportunities to interact with health organizations and career-building seminars hosted by key leaders in various NGOs, contract research organizations (CROs), government health care agencies and private industry.
- Students in the MN-LPNP field commented that the online program provided flexibility that was beneficial for these students.
- Nursing Library module – with introduction to scholarly resources and research processes specific to nursing.

### **Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program**

- Whether current mental health and wellness services meet student needs.
- A need to review admission criteria for the MN-PHCNP field to ensure strong candidates are offered admission.
- Fostering a sense of community among students in online environments.
- Alumni identified the following areas for improvement:
  - o Need for more mentorship in the area of scholarly presentations and publications;
  - o Lack of exposure to advanced practice nursing roles with a perceived over-emphasis on academic process;
  - o Variability of financial support;
  - o Limited availability of elective courses within the School;
  - o Greater clarity for students in the MN-PHCNP field regarding program expectations and time commitment;
  - o Need for greater student involvement in program decisions; and
  - o Opportunities for specialized clinical practice concurrent with the PhD program.

### **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:

- Vice-Provost (School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies)
- Associate Vice-Provost (School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies)
- Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences
- Associate Dean (Graduate) of the Faculty of Health Sciences
- Director, Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing
- Associate Director Graduate Studies
- Associate University Librarian
- Graduate Program 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 Graduate Programs in Nursing. 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.

### **Summary of the External Reviewers' Report**

External reviewers shared that *“the School of Nursing has been active in ensuring that the curricula of the graduate programs remain relevant to the nursing profession, graduate level education expectations, and societal needs.”*

### **Strengths of the Program**

- Transformative shared leadership and an empowering culture in the School results in high quality graduate education.
  - The governing structure of the School allows sufficient autonomy and creativity while providing the necessary oversight.
- Coherence between the strategic plan and the implementation of the graduate programs as well as the scholarship and research programs of the faculty members.
- Significant action towards ensuring that EDI, decolonization and Indigenization are addressed within the unit and educational programs.
  - The development and implementation of an action plan based on anti-racist, anti-oppressive approaches to engage students, faculty and community partners to build capacity and integrate cultural safety, trauma- and violence-informed approaches and Indigenous health into all programs.

- Highly competent and dedicated faculty complement with evidence of excellent administrative support.
- Strong mentorship and supportive collegiality has enabled newer faculty members to take on co-supervision of students, contributing to capacity building and sustainability of the programs.
- The MN-LPNP one-year program allows students to continue their clinical roles; and includes a digital health course which is a unique feature of this program that will distinguish graduates from those of other Canadian universities.

### **Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement**

1. An emphasis on creating more nursing seats within the School to meet provincial and national nursing needs will need to also take into account the requisite complement of competent faculty members to support these learners.
2. Lack of funding for non-thesis students and for international students is an ongoing concern.
3. Equitable distribution of research supervision and mentorship among faculty members.
  - o Over reliance on non-primary faculty members.
4. Some MSc students expressed frustration regarding the process of finding a supervisor due to delayed response times and lack of clarity in faculty research domains.
5. Students in the MN-LPNP and MScN Program expressed some concerns about 'not feeling connected' with other students and/or faculty since the introduction of the hybrid learning format.
6. Increasing need for quiet student spaces dedicated where there is sufficient privacy to join online meetings.

## 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><b>Recommendation 1:</b> That the School continues to implement its action plan that promotes high quality graduate programs and builds faculty teaching and research excellence.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The School is committed to an action plan of continuous quality improvement, to excel in teaching, research, and service. This will include continued recruitment of quality applicants, measured growth in key programs, support of newer online delivery modalities, student excellence across awards, completions, and publications, faculty excellence in research, teaching, mentorship, and continued alignment with the strategic plan.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The Dean's Office will continue to work with School leadership to support the School in enacting their action plan pillars of transformation, equity, and leadership. These key areas are threaded through the School's programs in an overt, meaningful, and quality-driven way. The School's transformative action plan, aimed at supporting student success, is enacted through consistent and ongoing involvement in faculty professional development activities. Graduate programs are projected to grow in accordance with the strategic plan. Applicants' continued interest in the graduate programs due to the structure and delivery options, and the outstanding experiential learning opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> That the School continues to conduct annual reviews of the graduate programs as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The annual review process has been a welcome addition to continuous quality improvement activities, and through the IQAP process the School has solidified the template and process for reviews, and looks forward to continuing with this process annually.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The IQAP process has reinforced the importance of continuing with the annual review of each of the graduate programs. The program has established a suite of review tools that can be modified as needed and will ensure student involvement.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 3*:</b> That the projected increase in enrolment into the graduate programs in the School of Nursing be commensurate with sufficient academic and administrative support to ensure ongoing delivery of quality nursing education programs.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The School is willing to explore opportunities for strategic growth, as evident in the expansion of the MN-LPNP program. All decisions regarding growth will involve the Dean's office to ensure the allocation of adequate resources.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The Dean's Office agrees with the School's approach and will continue to work with the School of Nursing to identify areas for strategic growth that is focused on quality nursing education.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4*:</b> That the School works with the Faculty of Health Sciences and University to identify innovative ways and commitment to provide funding and other support for international graduate students, particularly doctoral students.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The School will continue to advocate for funding to support international graduate students. Without access to equivalent funding sources, such as Tri-Council scholarships and Ontario Graduate Scholarships (total of approx. 10 +/- available per year to international students across Western University), international students have far fewer opportunities and therefore spend more time in employment than their peers.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The Dean's Office is committed to an ongoing partnership with all Schools/Programs in FHS to advocate for and co-create funding opportunities for graduate students including scholarships, provincial research funding, and donor-based bursaries. Recently, the University announced a new funding package for graduate students in need. The University is also exploring housing options for graduate students.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> That the University engages the School early and throughout all processes in any strategic hiring of Indigenous scholars and other research leadership positions.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The School is very interested in recruiting an Indigenous Scholar and indicated availability to support, in any way possible, the recruitment and hiring of such a Scholar.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The School of Nursing has been involved with University-based initiatives to recruit Indigenous Scholars, and is committed to engaging with the University if future initiatives are announced for Indigenous Scholars and research leadership positions.</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 of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

The number of recommendations prioritized for implementation has been reduced as some are already being actioned (#1 and #2), or are outside the purview of the program (#5), as described in the program and faculty responses above. As a result, the recommendations appearing in the implementation table are recommendations #3 and #4.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> That the projected increase in enrolment into the graduate programs in the School of Nursing be commensurate with sufficient academic and administrative support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue regular discussions with the Faculty-level about the needs of students, faculty and staff as increasing enrolment takes place.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for potential growth in the MN-PHCNP program in collaboration with the Dean's Office and the Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner.</li> </ul>	School's Leadership Team Dean's Office	Ongoing  June 2024
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> That the School work with the Faculty of Health Sciences and University to identify innovative ways and commitment to provide funding and other support for international graduate students, particularly doctoral students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for and create funding opportunities for graduate students including ample faculty-based funding, scholarships, provincial research funding, and donor-based bursaries.</li> <li>• Explore possibility of housing options for graduate students as managed by the University.</li> </ul>	School's Leadership Team Dean's Office	June 2025