

**Final Assessment Report**  
Submitted by SUPR-G to SCAPA

<b>Program:</b>	<b>Pathologists' Assistant</b>	
Degrees Offered:	Masters of Clinical Science	
Approved Fields:		
External Consultants:	Dr. Brinda Balachandra MD FRCPC Site Chief Lab Medicine and Pathology Royal Alexandra Hospital Associate Clinical Professor University of Alberta	Jessica Oginski BSc MLT PA Technical Coordinator Pathology Windsor Regional Hospital
Internal Reviewers:	Professor Jamie Baxter Associate Dean Grad/PostDoc Faculty of Social Science	Vinusha Kalatharan, PhD Candidate Epidemiology & Biostatistics
Date of Site Visit:	November 14 & 15, 2017	
Evaluation:	<i>Good quality</i>	
Approved by:	<i>SUPR-G on February 12, 2018</i> <i>SCAPA on March 7, 2018</i>	

**Executive Summary**

The external reviewers were quite impressed with the program, and recognized it as a leader in Canada. They liked that the program has adapted to the changing needs of stakeholders, particularly students, and have adjusted the curriculum accordingly. This is the first full review as a separate program since its inception. The focus of the last review was mainly on separating this program from the department's two-year Masters program, so there was not much else required in the way of a response to the previous review. That said, the two Directors have been very responsive to the changing responsibilities of Pathologist's Assistants (PA), their work, and professional accreditation environments. Overall it is a well-designed and organized program producing highly skilled professionals, and the Directors should be encouraged to continue to adapt the program as necessary to meet the needs of students, patients, and the hospital(s).

**Significant Strengths of Program:**

- Very responsive and adaptive to suggestions from students and other stakeholders
- Rigorous and highly competitive admission process – e.g., interviews
- High completion rate
- High employment rate as should be expected of a professional program (no longer merely a stepping stone to medical school)
- Highly respected among employers
- Exposes students to a wide array of stakeholders and circumstances (e.g. grossing lab, hospital placement in year 2) to prepare students for their future working environment?
- Creative use of teaching resources to ensure working PAs (advisors, supervisors) and pathologists can focus much of their energy doing on-the-job pathology work (with training) for a very busy regional hospital.

**Suggestions for improvement & Enhancement:**

1. **Feedback from pathologists:** Though students can theoretically ask pathologists questions "at any time", they may not always feel empowered to do so. Building such interaction formally into the curriculum will help ensure students are getting timely feedback about their grossing.

2. **Succession planning (NAACLS):** The leadership succession plan involves transitioning to an American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP) certified PA as clinical coordinator – i.e. to satisfy new (pending) National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS) requirements one of the directors needs to be a certified PA. The current directors and particularly the faculty-level leadership need to plan accordingly.
  
3. **Quality assurance etc.:** Lab safety and management as well as leadership and human resources training are curriculum issues. These recommendations acknowledge the expectations of PAs in the work world, often as the senior manager in a lab. These elements can be offered in various ways, perhaps most appropriately as seminars, workshops, and orientation materials but also in a more focused way as research projects (see next).
  
4. **Research project** – Though the research project is a distinctive feature of the program, many of the research projects past students have completed do not relate well to the PA profession. Many ideas for more relevant projects were offered by stakeholders throughout the review visit e.g., see suggestion 3.

	<b>Recommendations required for Program sustainability:</b>	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline
1	More frequent feedback from pathologists to students - grossing a case	Directors	Unlikely any new required	6 months
2	Succession plan for the Director(s) re: NAACLS rules, next review 2022	Dept/Faculty	Faculty	3 years
3.1	Better incorporate quality assurance, lab management,	Directors	Department	1 year
3.2	Better incorporate leadership, human resources training	Directors	Department	1 year
4	More research projects that directly related to pathology and laboratory work	Directors	Unlikely any new required	1 year