Honours Specialization in Public Health
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
December 2025

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry	
Degrees Offered	B.Sc.	
Date of Introduction	September 1, 2026	
New Module	Honours Specialization in Public Health	
External Reviewers	Dr. Jeff Johnson, School of Public Health, University of Alberta	Dr. Shannon Majowicz School of Public Health Science, University of Waterloo
Internal Reviewer	Jan Plug Associate Dean, Academic Faculty of Arts and Humanities	Morgan DeCampos Undergraduate Student English Language & Literature
Date of Site Visit	September 29 & 30, 2025	
Date Review Report Received	October 10, 2025	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: November 5, 2025 Faculty: November 26, 2025	
Evaluation	Approved to Commence	
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: January 20, 2026 ACA: February 3, 2026 Senate:	
Year of Next Review	2033-2034	
Progress Report	June 2029	

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 new program proposal, report prepared by external reviewers, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Honours Specialization in Public Health to be delivered by the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program's proposal brief;
- the external reviewers' report;
- the response(s) from the academic unit; and
- the response from the Decanal Office of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the proposed program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers.

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 Subcommittee on Program Review - Undergraduate (SUPR-U), ACA and Senate. Following institutional approval, it is then submitted for approval to the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance.

Executive Summary

The Honours Specialization in Public Health is an interdisciplinary module offered by the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (Schulich) in partnership with the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). Building on the Master of Public Health (MPH) program which came into effect in September 2013, this module will provide an undergraduate pathway into Public Health at Western. The module has been designed to allow students to acquire a wide-ranging background in and understanding of Public Health, balancing the need for essential training in the health and social sciences, with advanced training in the biomedical, environmental, and statistical sciences. As a result, courses for the module range over Social Science, Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Health Policy and Economics, in addition to Environmental Health to provide students with a degree program that is both broad and flexible. Topics in the program offering include questions about the biological foundations of disease, recognizing and taking action on the biological, behavioural, environmental, and social determinants of health, and how to critically evaluate Public Health data.

The proposed program aims to take in 100 students annually. The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Public Health Program Proposal. They offer three overarching recommendations with a suite of considerations as the program evolves.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- As the first Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Public Health in Canada, the proposed program has been strategically designed to balance social science foundations with advanced training in epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy/economics, and environmental health - a combination common in the US and Europe but rarely found in Canada.
    - Positions Western as a destination university for students seeking a rigorous public health education. The integration of advanced biomedical and scientific training with social science theories will prepare the next generation of public health professionals.
- Curriculum integrates advanced scientific foundations designed to ensure that students appreciate the connections between biology and public health, preparing them to apply this knowledge to address communicable and noncommunicable diseases, injuries, and environmental exposures in populations.
- Strong methodological training designed to ensure graduates can confidently and critically evaluate research, transform statistical data into actionable insights, and use data to inform sound health policy and programming.
- The program structure is guided by the World Health Organization's framework of 12 essential functions of public health (EPHFs), which are fundamental actions that the public health workforce must be prepared to deliver in a country to ensure an effective public health system.
- Students will work in groups of four to complete a 1.0 course community-engaged experiential project for their capstone.

- The Program will be led by co-directors from the FHS and Schulich, supported by a steering committee comprising faculty, students, and external public health partners.

Proposal Preparation and Review Process

Tasked with the development of the initial Letter of Intent, a Working Group was assembled in the Spring of 2024 with representation from Dean's Offices, faculty members and staff. Program development was guided by an environmental scan of common program offerings across institutions and an analysis of trends in application data. The Working Group met with proposed program partners and stakeholders, collected course outlines, created program level learning outcomes, and began the process of structuring the curriculum. Those consulted included:

- Dean's Office, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
- Dean's Office, Faculty of Health Science
- Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry Department Chairs
- Faculty of Health Sciences Department Chairs
- BMSc Program Committee
- Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Faculty of Health Sciences Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Biological and Medical Sciences Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Mathematical and Physical Sciences Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Offices of the Provost, Vice-Provost Academic Programs and Institutional Budgeting and Planning
- Medical Officer of Health, London

Following approval to proceed with an external review, a review committee was struck comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and one student reviewer. Reviewers were provided with the program proposal brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Dean, Schulich School Medicine & Dentistry
- Dean of Health Sciences
- Vice Dean, Basic Medical Sciences
- Associate Dean (Academic), Basic Medical Sciences Undergraduate Education
- Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Health Sciences
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Program Directors of Public Health
- Undergraduate Students
- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Faculty for Public Health Course list
- University Librarian

Following the site visit, the external reviews produced a comprehensive review report that was sent to the leaders of the proposed program and the Decanal Offices of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and the Faculty of Health Sciences. These documents, including the program proposal brief, the external reviewer report, and the Program and Faculty responses, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of the proposed Honours Specialization in Public Health.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

The external reviewers shared that *"Western University, with its strong reputation in natural, biomedical, and social sciences, is well positioned to establish this very comprehensive BSc Public Health program, offering students a robust scientific foundation for a broad range of careers in public health practice and research. The program therefore provides a strong balance of determinants of health, across the range of biologic, social and structural determinants."*

Strengths and/or Unique Aspects of the Program

- Collectively, the faculty are a diverse, collaborative group with strong disciplinary expertise and experience needed to deliver and sustain the program, with some having prior experience working in traditional public health organizations.
- The program will provide students in-depth understanding of health inequities and the wider social forces that create these inequities, and an opportunity to embed equity practices into course activities.
- The program complements the existing inter-faculty Master of Public Health degree offered through Schulich and the Faculty of Health Sciences without competing with it.
    - The program will sequence well with future planned degrees (MSc and PhD in Public Health.

Opportunities for Program Improvement Mentioned by Reviewers

- Stronger focus on public health practice and not allowing for capstone experiences that are based solely on traditional academic research experience (e.g., administrative data analysis or lab-based research).
    - The proposed new capstone course will more than double the workload of the administrative staff currently supporting the capstone course for the medical sciences program – consider mapping out the strategies to ensure this component of the program is adequately supported.
- Should also map the curriculum to the recently released Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Core Competencies of Public Health in Canada 2.0.
- Enhance student learning on Indigenous health issues as of the first cohort.

- Consider integrating more qualitative and mixed methods examples, including other disciplinary and methodologic contributions, such as health policy, political sciences, health economics, and including more examples of public health practice.
- Track career paths including alternate careers for program graduates could also help communicate career prospects to prospective students, including how many are employed without needing an additional degree and in what careers.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers' Recommendations	Program/Faculty Response
Recommendation #1 Ensure public health practice (i.e., public health outside of academia) is core to the program and experiential learning. i. Have all students work with a community public health partner for their capstone project. ii. Map the proposed curriculum to the domains of the recently released PHAC Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada, Release 2.0. iii. Scaffold professional competencies and skills starting in year one and frame as what students will need to develop to successfully work with community partners in year four. iv. Establish the Program Steering Committee prior to the program start. v. To support sustainability, as the program develops, ensure new faculty hires and replacements maintain the current level of faculty with traditional public health experience.	**Program:** i. Updated the capstone syllabus to require that all students work with a community health partner for their capstone, or a Western faculty member who is working actively with a community partner, so the student interacts and learns directly from this partner. ii. Mapped the proposed curriculum to the domains in the recently released Core Competencies of Public Health in Canada. iii. Scaffolded the professional competencies throughout the program beginning in year 1 to ensure students are well-prepared for a community-engaged capstone. iv. Initiated establishment of the BSc PH Steering Committee and Terms of reference. v. Ideally, new faculty hires will increase the number of faculty with relevant public health practice experience. **Faculty:** The Faculty agree with the recommendation of the reviewers and support the program's responses. With respect to faculty hires, we note that while Public Health is a priority for both Medicine and Health Sciences, future hires will need to be evaluated against budget constraints.

Recommendation #2 Accelerate Indigenization of curriculum. i. Require all students to learn of the history and legacy of Indigenous peoples, teaching and practices specific to Public Health. ii. Complete an existing learning opportunity on Indigenous peoples as a milestone. iii. Require all students to take an Indigenous Health course. iv. Provide resources and support faculty and staff to build relationships with Indigenous communities and leaders.	**Program:** i. Working with colleagues in Indigenous Studies at Western to negotiate the offering of Indigenous Health course Indigenous Studies 2412F/G: *Indigenous Health and Healthcare Environments* within the BSc Public Health. In exchange for opening the course to BSc Public Health students by increasing the course enrollment cap and offering it in an additional term, Schulich will provide one TA to support the instructor. ii. As this Indigenous health course is not yet ready for offer to students in the BSc Public Health, a milestone has been created that all students are required to complete consisting of three e-modules (4 hours total) offered at no cost by Western University and Ontario Health. The training in these e-modules is consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action by teaching students about colonization, residential school, Indigenous rights, anti-racism, and Indigenous health and healing practices. iii. Indigenous Studies 2412F/G will be offered as an elective on a picklist for the first year or two that it is available to BSc Public Health students. The Indigenous faculty member who is teaching this course within Indigenous Studies will then decide if it can be made a required course for students in our program. iv. The Co-Directors will meet with the experiential learning coordinator and our Indigenous colleagues on campus and locally to discuss ways to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and leaders for capstone projects, and more generally within the program. **Faculty:** The co-directors had taken steps to accelerate Indigenization of the curriculum even before the review. There is a clear plan in place and this plan has been established in consultation with colleagues from Indigenous Studies. Health Sciences has launched a search for a tenure-track position related to Indigenous health and well-being that is restricted to Indigenous scholars. While only a single position, the appointment adds to a growing body of expertise and experience in the area of Indigenous health across the university.

Recommendation #3 Aim to enhance the student experience by ensuring the proposed program is adequately supported in the administrative staff of the two faculties. i. Increase the current administrative staff by 1.0 FTE to support the increased workload for advising and experiential learning. ii. Ensure administrative staff from both faculties are well versed in program requirements and are cross trained in the offerings of both faculties.	**Program:** i. Timely access to BMSUE Office advising staff is critically important to the program's success. As Schulich offered to house the program in its partnership with FHS, it will be essential for Schulich to adequately support prospective and enrolled students, particularly during the initial years of implementation. ii. The Co-Directors have organized a meeting between Schulich and FHS administrative staff to ensure both teams are well-versed in program requirements and cross-trained in each faculty's offerings. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed leading up to program launch. **Faculty:** The Faculty agrees with the recommendation. In Schulich, one of the BMSUE program coordinators recently retired. Schulich is committed to replacing this integral position which is crucial for the Public Health program and its other undergraduate programs, subject to University budget approval. Schulich also commits to implement another full-time administrative position to coordinate community placements, once the first cohort approaches year 4. This position will also support community placement of other programs, specifically of an expanded graduate MPH program. This model will work well as the MPH program has placements in the summer, whereas the undergraduate program has placements in Fall/Winter.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Program Leader(s) and Decanal Office are responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

Recommendations	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1: Ensure public health practice is core to the program and experiential learning. • Establish the Program Steering Committee prior to the program start. • Faculty hires and replacements maintain the current level of faculty with traditional public health experience.	• Establish the BSc Public Health Steering Committee and Terms of Reference • Assess need for any faculty hires and replacements in relation to budget priorities.	Co-Directors Decanal Office	By May 2026 By Progress report in June 2029
Recommendation #2: Accelerate Indigenization of curriculum. • Require all students to take an Indigenous Health course. • Build relationships with Indigenous communities and leaders.	• Update the BSc Public Health curriculum in early 2026 to include Indigenous Studies 2412F/G as an elective after the BSc Public Health is approved. • Work toward Indigenous Studies 2412F/G becoming a required course vs. an elective for all students in the program. • Meet with the experiential learning coordinator and our Indigenous colleagues on campus and locally to initiate building of meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and leaders for capstone projects.	Co-Directors	By May 2026 By September 2028 By December 2026
Recommendation #3: Aim to enhance student experience by ensuring the proposed program is adequately supported in the administrative staff of the two faculties.	• Ensure ongoing meetings among advising teams, as needed, ahead of program launch (as well as once launched). • Add a full-time administrative position to coordinate community placements, once the first cohort approaches year four.	Co-Directors and Decanal Office Decanal Office	Update in Progress report for June 2029 By September 2028