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- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);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	Epidemiology and Biostatistics, BMSc	**Faculty / Affiliated University College**	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-U: June 29, 2022 ACA: September 7, 2022 Senate: September 16, 2022	**Year of the Next Review**	2029-2030
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	*https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/academic_programs/iqap_reports/schulichundergrad/EpidemiologyBiostatistics-FAR-Senate-2021-22.pdf*		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)	*Dates to be populated by the OAQE (if applicable)*		

	Name	**Signature**	**Date**
Program Chair/Director	Igor Karp		January 18, 2026
Dean (or delegate)	Brad Urquhart Associate Dean, BMSUE		June 10, 2025

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Create a formal advisory and governance process for the undergraduate program within the academic unit.	Establish an undergraduate program committee led by the Undergraduate Chair. o Consider inclusion of staff and student members. Outline the committee mandate, meeting calendar and a standing agenda. Consider the following items for the mandate: o coordinate curriculum planning across undergraduate courses o ensure appropriate alignment of learning expectations at undergraduate and graduate levels o develop and review policies on cross-listing and advanced standing o promote the program in years 1 and 2 o increase general student engagement	Undergraduate Chair	By December 2022
Recommendation Implemented ☐ **V** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			

Progress *What specific actions have been taken?*

The undergraduate program committee, led by the Undergraduate Chair, has been established, to ensure a formal advisory and governance process for the undergraduate program in Epidemiology & Biostatistics.

The mandate of the committee includes such items as development and implementation of EDI strategies, curriculum planning and coordination across undergraduate courses, ensuring appropriate alignment of learning expectations, development and review of policies on cross-listing, promotion of the program in years 1 and 2, and increasing general student engagement.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #2	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Develop a strategic academic plan, engaging all faculty, students, and other internal and external key stakeholders.	Develop a strategic academic plan with broad stakeholder engagement o Consider leveraging this opportunity to form closer links with Family Medicine, the MPH program, and the anticipated new school of public health.	Undergraduate Chair Newly formed Undergraduate Committee	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ **V** Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

The development of a strategic academic plan has been added to the agenda of the undergraduate program committee.

A thorough process has been set in motion that aligns the department's goals with broader institutional priorities while responding to current public-health needs.

The drafted version of the academic strategic plan proclaims that the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics is committed to addressing current local and global public-health challenges by leveraging epidemiological science, fostering interdisciplinary research, and promoting equitable health-outcomes.

The plan presents the department's core values: excellence in education and research; equity, diversity, and inclusion; scientific and academic integrity; collaboration.

The plan also presents the strategic priorities and goals: ensuring teaching excellence; faculty and staff development; infrastructure & resources optimization; and enhancement of research impact.

The strategic plan acknowledges the important role of the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics in the upcoming introduction of an undergraduate program (specifically, Honours specialization) in Public Health in 2026-2027, which will be jointly administered by the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry and Faculty of Health Sciences.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

The chair and the undergraduate program committee continue to work on further development and refinement of the strategic academic plan. Once the strategic academic plan is finalized, feedback from faculty, staff, and students will be sought, to ensure that the plan is both feasible and relevant, and to receive suggestions for improvement and adjustments.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #3	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Examine and address barriers that hinder collaboration across faculties.	• Seek guidance from the BMSUE Office on how to best identify and address any barriers to program growth. • Determine how program growth could be optimized through more robust collaborations within the institution. ○ In what ways can the Program capitalize on the potential for synergies with faculties outside of Schulich.	Undergraduate Chair Newly formed Undergraduate Committee	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ **V** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

Under the guidance from the BMSUE office, and based on thorough examination, the following barriers for program growth have been identified. Accordingly, several actions have been adopted for implementation to address these barriers, so as to enhance program growth:

Barrier	Actions taken to reduce the barrier
Marks of at least 75% required in both Bio/Stats 2244A/B and Epidemiology 2200A/B required for Major in Epidemiology & Biostatistics	Marks required in these two courses have been reduced to 60%
Marks of at least 70% required in both Biostats 3100A and Epidemiology 3200A required for Major in Epidemiology & Biostatistics	Marks required in these two courses have been reduced to 60%
Limited exposure to the discipline of epidemiology & biostatistics	- Med Sci 1000Y has one evening session devoted to Epi Bio; - Med Sci 2 students emailed prior to registering for fall/winter courses, and again before winter session, encouraging them to consider Epidemiology 2200B in second term; - Recent introduction of a Certificate in Critical Public Health, and anticipated introduction Honours Specialization in Public Health for the 2026-27 Academic Year with a Year 2 entry point will require several core Epidemiology and Biostatistics courses, including Epidemiology 2200B. With a capacity of 100 students, this will greatly increase exposure to the discipline.
Maximum capacity of the HSP module listed as (only) 15 students	Maximum capacity has been increased to 30 students

Further, it has been recognized that the program growth can be optimized through actions that provide mutual benefit, such as creation of joint academic programs. Notably, as mentioned above, in 2026/2027, an Honours Specialization program in Public Health will be introduced, jointly administered by Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry and the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics will make an important contribution to that program.

Extra efforts have now been put in place to get cross-appointed faculty members to be more heavily involved in the activities of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Further, in order to foster inter-faculty visibility and participation, faculty members from other programs and schools are invited to present their work at the weekly research seminar series in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Additional Comments

If applicable

It is recommended that collaborative work be incentivized and recognized (notably, in the promotion and tenure processes). Further, it is recommended that the existing Research Clusters include faculty members from other departments and programs.

Recommendation #4	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Work with cross-appointed faculty to leverage the potential for increased engagement of the program across unit and faculty boundaries.	• Formally invite cross-appointed faculty members to contribute to the Program via teaching of courses, presentations at seminars, and supervision of undergraduate-thesis projects. • Determine how the summer research programs can be used to better engage cross-appointed members from clinical departments.	Undergraduate Chair Newly formed Undergraduate Committee	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ **V** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

All cross-appointed faculty members have been contacted and provided with updates regarding the current Epidemiology & Biostatistics undergraduate program. Further, they have been invited to contribute to the program via teaching of courses, presentations at seminars, and supervision of undergraduate theses. Proactive measures are taken to inform cross-appointed faculty members and 3rd-year students about Summer Research Award opportunities available to BMSc students in the Epidemiology & Biostatistics modules.

These actions have resulted in an increase in the number of cross-appointed faculty members expressing their interest in supervising undergraduate students for their thesis projects and other types of engagement with the program.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #5	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**

Review the internship pathway for undergraduates to gain career-relevant experience.	Explore internal and external avenues to enhance undergraduate research opportunities. o Leverage the expertise and connections of the Science Career Services Office.	Undergraduate Chair Newly formed Undergraduate Committee	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ **V**Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

A collaborative relationship been established between the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and The Science Career Services Office.

The Science Career Services Office has agreed to deliver an information session and share promotional materials regarding internship and other career-relevant experience opportunities to 3rd-year Epidemiology & Biostatistics students. Further, the Science Career Services Office has offered to hold a workshop on building networking will be offered for 3rd- and 4th-year students.

The internship program will be actively promoted during 3rd-year courses of the Epidemiology and Biostatistics modules. Information about the Science Co-Op Program will be included into the welcome package for 3rd-year students entering the Epidemiology & Biostatistics modules.

The Epidemiology & Biostatistics students will also be informed about the Undergraduate Summer Research Award Opportunities. Guidance will be provided for the application process.

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

Recommendation #6	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Proactively develop, implement and lead strategies at all levels to foster a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion and indigeneity.	• Work with the School's EDI Committee to develop and embed EDI strategies into the Program. • Consider adding this topic as a standing item at each Undergraduate Committee meeting. • Share and co-develop EDI best practices with other programs across Schulich and the Faculty of Science.	Undergraduate Chair Newly formed Undergraduate Committee	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ **V** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken?

EDI has been added as a standing item to the agenda of Undergraduate Committee meetings.

An EDI committee has been formed.

The overarching mission of the EDI strategy is to create and maintain an inclusive culture benefitting faculty, staff, and students.

A set of principles has been adopted as the fundamental elements of the EDI strategy in the program: 1) Leadership commitment; 2) Inclusive curriculum and teaching; 3) Faculty, staff, and student diversity; 4) Training and capacity building; and 5) Eradication of discriminatory practices.

Implementation of the EDI principles will involve EDI prioritization by departmental leadership, integration of diverse perspectives into pedagogy and research, workload equity, fostering of a sense of belonging, establishment of a system of reporting and addressing discrimination or bias incidents, and periodic reviews of departmental policies for equity implications.

An *Epidemiology in the EDIDI Context* workshop has been hosted by the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, led by several faculty-members of the department. The workshop included a panel discussion on "Integration of EDIDI principles in epidemiological research." Additional EDI-related workshops and events will be hosted by the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics to further promote the culture of inclusivity and diversity.

An asynchronous course on EDIDI has been developed by Dr. Melanie Katsivo (Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Epidemiology of Biostatistics), with inputs from Canadian and African subject-matter experts. Free access to this course will be given to Epidemiology & Biostatistics students, faculty and staff in 2025. This course is a first of its kind, representing a case-based approach to achieving equity in healthcare ecosystems, with examples from Canada and Africa. The overall goal is to help healthcare practitioners and researchers to adopt use of EDIDI lenses in their daily work, irrespective of geographical location. The Certificate Course comprises fix self-paced online modules. Module 1 presents definitions of the concepts of EDIDI and how they manifest in healthcare ecosystems. Module 2 describes Systematically-
Excluded Groups (SEGs), including how they intersect and the challenges that they face when accessing healthcare. Module 3 articulates biases that people have and how they lead to micro-aggressions within health care ecosystems. Module 4 is on Indigeneity and Decolonization and their impact on how Indigenous people access healthcare. Module 5 describes an approach to making healthcare services equitable, affordable and accessible, through use of frugal biomedical technologies. Module 6 is on how to write EDIDI cases.

EDI will be included as a topic into the revised Research & Seminar course for 4th-year students starting in 2025-2026. The students will be provided with a set of on-line EDI-related resources and will then take a quiz on the required readings/videos, followed by an in-class discussion.

A set of EDI-related resources has been put together for faculty members to consider in their curriculum development and teaching.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

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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? N/A