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- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);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.

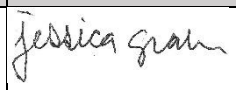
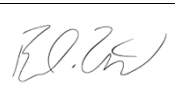
The following report template has been created for the program to report on progress made regarding recommendations presented in the Implementation Plan, and any other relevant program developments and enhancements.

- 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	Neuroscience, BSc	**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/Neuroscience-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	Jessica Grahn		June 9, 2025
Dean (or delegate)	Brad Urquhart Associate Dean, BMSUE		June 12, 2025

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Engage in a job market needs assessment.	• Develop and administer a survey to recent graduates. Re-administer survey as needed in future years. • Develop career resources webpage on the Neuroscience Program website. • With the support of the Experiential Learning Coordinator and the Science Careers and Internships Office, identify relevant job market needs and career events.	Program Committee Experiential Learning Coordinator	Survey development by December 2022; Pilot administration by September 2023.
Recommendation Implemented X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			

Progress

In conjunction with the Experiential Learning Coordinator, the Program Administrator and Director developed a job skills survey for recent graduates, including limited EDI information (related to recommendation #8). It has been sent out.

The Program Administrator has added various career and experiential learning resources to the undergraduate neuroscience program webpage. In conjunction with the Western Undergraduate Neuroscience Society, students can now attend a yearly career panel to learn about different career paths available to them.

The VPR (Academic) Office Program Innovation Specialist, Bryce Evon, conducted four Lightcast Labour Market searches to determine how the Neuroscience Program's learning outcomes aligned with job market needs. The alignment was excellent: the various reports commonly ranked the following specialized skills as most important: Neuroscience, Psychology, Clinical Research, Data Analysis, Marketing, Psychology, Medical Affairs, Neurology, Pharmaceuticals, Biology, and Clinical Trials.

The following common skills were listed as desirable: Research, Communication, Planning, Ethical Standards And Conduct, Leadership, Presentations, Problem Solving, Data Collection, Organizational Skills, Management, Teaching, Innovation. Software skills included Microsoft Office, Python, R, and MATLAB.

These findings confirm that the program's existing learning outcomes are well-aligned with current job market demands.

Next Steps (if applicable)

Evaluate the job market survey responses from recent graduates of the Neuroscience Program, integrating their insights into curriculum development.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #2	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Revise and use exit surveys/interviews to improve the program.	Develop and administer formal exit interview process.	Program Director Program Administrator	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

An exit survey has been developed and is administered yearly. The results are received by the Program committee to identify action items. As happened prior to the IQAP review, the Program Director and Administrator also meet with 4th year students in person at the end of every academic year to receive feedback on the program, which is summarized and considered by the Program Committee.

Next Steps (if applicable)

Continue to administer the exit survey and in-person interviews to determine, in conjunction with the Program Committee, how the program can be improved.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #3	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Improve the process for securing 4th year project supervisor as well as clarity about expectations and responsibilities related to deadlines and project outcomes.	• Develop annual timeline and hold events during the academic year with WUNS to help keep students informed. • Amend the 4th year honours course outline for the upcoming academic year to make the expectations and timelines clear.	Program Director Program Committee WUNS Co-Presidents	By September 2022

Recommendation Implemented

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

WUNS has held 'how to find a thesis supervisor' events each year since the review, and these are well-attended. The Program director also attends this event to provide further advice and address specific student concerns. The Program Administrator contacts potential supervisors to provide project descriptions for potential honours theses in the upcoming year, which are circulated to third year students who do not yet have supervisors.

The 4th year honours syllabus now has a clear table of deadlines, and expectations and timelines have been clarified.

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**
Increase mechanisms for students to receive feedback on their learning and ensure that mechanisms exist for student concerns about the program to be heard.	• Changes to the 2nd and 3rd year course (e.g., set Office hours and increased number of check-in meetings) for the upcoming academic year. • Program Committee to discuss alterations to the membership of the committee to include a student role.	Program Committee	By September 2022 By December 2022
Recommendation Implemented X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			

Progress Office hours have been increased in the 2nd year course. The students have reported adequate contact time with professors in the yearly in-person feedback session that are conducted with the Program Director. We have added a student representative to the Program Committee, and there is a standing item on the agenda to specifically address student concerns. This, coupled with 4th year feedback sessions in-person and virtual exit interviews, results in continual updating of the program.
Next Steps (if applicable) Continue to monitor and respond to student feedback.
Additional Comments *If applicable*

Recommendation #8	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**

Better integrate EDIIA considerations into the curriculum and pedagogy. Track EDIIA indicators and make available specific bursaries / scholarships for equity-deserving groups.	Initiate a dedicated discussion at upcoming Program Committee meetings and outline an actionable EDI strategy which may include: o Development of a module on EDI-issues in research in the 2nd year course. o Development and promotion of more local resources as part of all neuroscience courses (e.g., Council on Reforming Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for Trainees (CREDIT)). o Integrate anonymous mechanisms to collect EDIIA information from students (e.g., in exit surveys). o Investigate the possibility of bursaries/ scholarships to equity deserving groups o Evaluate and update EDI strategy items annually. o Consider adding the topic of EDIIA as a standing item at each Program Committee meeting. o Share and co-develop EDI best practices with other graduate programs.	Program Committee Dean's Office	By September 2023
Recommendation Implemented **X** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? X Yes ☐ No			

Progress

In the second year course, the lecture and chapter on sex and the brain has been updated to include a critical evaluation of the way the topic is addressed in the textbook and traditionally in neuroscience research, indicating emerging themes and how the field is changing. A second term assignment presents students with older psychology experiments and how to update them for current neuroscience techniques. The assignment objectives include identification of issues related to EDI in the original study and incorporating EDI considerations in the updated version of the study.

Finally, in the fourth year honours course, students complete several EDI readings (listed below), complete a quiz on them prior to class, and then participate in a class discussion on EDI considerations in research (both in research conduct and in the research context).

NSERC guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research
Tri-Agency Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
CIHR: Key considerations for integration of sex and gender in research: https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50835.html
The Science of Racism (~50 minutes): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_tTpw0yQSw
Unconscious bias Royal Society (~3 minutes): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVp9Z5k0dEE
Unconscious bias in tech (~17 minutes): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP-cqFLS8Q4
Implicit bias: https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/how-implicit-bias-and-lack-of-diversity-undermine-science/

Student feedback on these resources and the resulting discussion have been very positive.

EDI questions have been integrated into our exit survey, which has been administered twice thus far.

EDI is regularly discussed at Program Committee meetings, with ongoing discussion about further EDI strategies and incorporation that program level. Moreover, this topic is considered at the BMSUE meeting of undergraduate program chairs/directors, and EDI materials and strategies are shared across programs.

We have investigated the possibility of bursaries, but we do not have a budget for these. We do highlight opportunities whenever possible (e.g., participation in the Diversity in Neuroscience Summer Research Internships, Global Undergraduate Awards).

Next Steps (if applicable)

We will continue to update and integrate EDI resources in the curriculum. The Program Director was co-applicant on a successful grant to BrainsCAN's EDI initiative, entitled "Rethinking Representation: Tools to address EDID barriers in Undergraduate and Graduate Education". The development of these tools is now ongoing, and will be incorporated into the Neuroscience curriculum (as well as other curricula from which the Neuroscience Program draws, such as Anatomy and Cell Biology and Physiology and Pharmacology).

Schulich Faculty has run an EDI pilot project focused on Indigenous students and will be working with the Indigenous student office to incorporate relevant content into the curriculum.

Additional Comments

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

We continue to monitor new course offerings that are relevant to our students and integrate them into the module. We have also been working with the Computer Science department to determine a pathway for students to develop expertise in computational neuroscience, as requested by students themselves.