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- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);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, MSc, PhD	**Faculty / Affiliated University College**	Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-G: November 7, 2022 ACA: November 23, 2022 Senate: December 2, 2022	**Year of the Next Review**	2028-2029
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	*https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/academic_programs/iqap_reports/schulichundergrad/Final%20Neuroscience%20Grad%20FAR.pdf*		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)	*Dates to be populated by the OAQE (if applicable)*		

	Name	**Signature**	**Date**
Program Chair/Director	Paul Gribble		May 29, 2025
Dean (or delegate)	Tom Drysdale		May 30, 2025

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Student funding: Standardize the minimum student funding package across all units involved in the program.	• Discuss minimizing the stipend differences between Neuroscience students from different units with the decanal group and the steering committee. • Determine a feasible strategy across units, indicating the responsibilities and opportunities appropriate to each unit and a plan for sustainability.	Director, Graduate Program Vice Dean, Basic Medical Sciences Associate Dean, Grad and Postdoctoral Studies Steering Committee	By July 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

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

Progress

The Steering Committee met October 24, 2022, at which time this was brought up. It was clear that this is not something that can be resolved at the program level, as it has implications on the budget models of different Faculties.

While it is not feasible at present to standardize funding packages across faculties, we have implemented the recommendation to make explicit to students in all faculties the amount and source of student stipends. Funding packages are constructed each year based on the home department of the student's supervisor, and dollar amounts for all components of the funding package (GTAs, scholarships, supervisor grant contributions, etc) are explicitly stated. Supervisor and students sign off.

Next Steps (if applicable) *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?* We are working on providing more details on our website about details of funding packages.
Additional Comments *If applicable*

Recommendation #3	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Seminar course: The seminar course should be redesigned to enhance faculty attendance and feedback to students.	• Develop a plan for the enhancement of the seminar course which clarifies its purpose, bolsters faculty engagement and rethinks the provision of feedback to students. • Consider scheduling more in-person seminars, which may result in increased vibrancy of the seminars and overall engagement.	Director, Graduate Program Program Committee	Redesign to be completed by September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

The seminar course has been changed to a milestone, and students no longer receive a numerical grade. Instead, they receive constructive feedback on a number of scales using on online web-based form and feedback is collated and communicated to students afterwards. Completion of the milestone is based on attendance. Students giving presentations receive written feedback from the other student attendees from the Director of the graduate program and from their supervisor(s) who attend the seminar. Seminar is now 100 % in person.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #4	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
b) Redevelop and broaden the metrics for award adjudication at the University level to recognize the diverse nature of the student body. c) Continue the collection of data on post-graduate career outcomes for in depth analyses and future development of the program's research and teaching plan.	b) Assess the impact of changes made in the adjudication of awards in Fall 2022, and solicit ideas and strategies used by other programs to further enhance the adjudication process. c) Develop a strategy with feasible mechanisms to obtain data on postgraduate career outcomes from graduates.	Director, Graduate Program SGPS	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken? b) We currently are following the recommendations from SGPS for award adjudication ; c) We currently perform our own exit polls of our graduating class including current position and future career plans, and feedback about

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**
Support staff: A second support staff member should be permanently added to the program annual budget.	Develop a plan with partner faculties to turn the recently approved 0.5 Schulich funded FTE into a 1.0 FTE position in 2023.	Director, Graduate Program Decanal Group	By September 2023
Recommendation Implemented **X** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Progress A full-time second support staff member is now part of the operating budget of the graduate program and an individual has been hired into the position.			
Next Steps (if applicable) *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?*			

Additional Comments *If applicable*

Recommendation #7	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Physical space considerations: Secure a program office for support staff and a meeting room for committee meetings and program events.	• Engage with the Steering Committee to review available space options, in particular in the Robarts Research Institute or the Western Interdisciplinary Research Building. • Develop a feasible plan to secure space and a timeline to transition into it.	Director, Graduate Program Decanal Group Steering Committee	By December 2023
Recommendation Implemented **X** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Progress A new dedicated office in the Western Interdisciplinary Research Building has been allocated for the two full time staff members and they have moved in.			
Next Steps (if applicable) *What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?*			

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #8	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Enhance community: Develop recurring activities for neuroscience faculty and students to provide a sense of community.	• Increase the number of in-person social events, including monthly socials at the grad club, a welcome BBQ, a holiday event, and other events in accordance with pandemic guidelines. • Determine options to increase budgetary support for program community events, in particular those coordinated by SONGS.	Director, Graduate Program Program Committee Associate Dean, Grad and Postdoctoral Studies	By September 2023

Recommendation Implemented

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially

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

Progress

We have monthly in-person NeuroSocial events at the grad club which are attended by students and Faculty members. In September we have an in-person welcome BBQ at Gibbons park attended by students and Faculty. In December we have an in-person holiday event at The Wave in the UCC, attended by Faculty and students. The annual Neuroscience Research Day, organized by SONGS with new support from the Western Institute for Neuroscience, is in-person and attended by students and Faculty.

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

Recommendation #9	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Department recognition of faculty contributions: Recognize the teaching, supervision and administrative contributions made to the program. These should be considered equal to home department contributions when it comes to consideration of promotion and tenure.	• Engage in a discussion about how work within the Neuroscience Program is recognized across academic units. • Determine a feasible strategy across units, indicating the responsibilities and opportunities for each unit and plan for sustainability.	Director, Graduate Program Vice Dean, Basic Medical Sciences Associate Dean, Grad and Postdoctoral Studies Steering Committee	By December 2023
Recommendation Implemented **X** Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? ☐ Yes ☐ No			

Progress

What specific actions have been taken? Each year the Director of the program sends a letter to the Chair of the home Department of each member of the Neuroscience Program Committee, clarifying the role and responsibilities involved in service on the program committee. In addition, Schulich has a commitment that ALL teaching, including in the interdisciplinary Neuroscience program, is a part of a faculty member's regular workload, and thereby also subject to annual performance evaluations. Finally, the Schulich Dean's office has developed a process with the Department Chairs that ensures that interdisciplinary courses such as those in the Neuroscience Graduate Program are assigned to a core faculty member for teaching.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #11	**Proposed Action and Follow-up**	**Responsibility**	**Timeline**
Long term sustainability: Explore the long-term establishment of an autonomous Neuroscience entity that can hire its own faculty to fulfill the teaching requirements in the undergraduate and graduate Neuroscience Programs, as well as support the ongoing Neuroscience research.	Determine a medium-term hiring plan for Neuroscience programs that focuses on the long-term sustainability of teaching and research requirements.	Steering Committee	By December 2023

Recommendation Implemented

☐ Yes ☐ No **X** Partially

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

Progress

What specific actions have been taken? Even in the present climate of fiscal restraint, we remain interested in advocating with leaders on campus for the support necessary to maintain excellence in our teaching and research mission. In the absence of a dedicated budget to enable us to hire our own Faculty to fulfill the teaching requirements of our program, we continue to rely on Faculty members who are willing to participate, and on their Departmental Chairs who allow them to allot part of their teaching workload to Neuroscience.

Neuroscience is an interdisciplinary program between four/five faculties and not an academic unit. There is currently no appetite to create additional faculties within Western – rather to the contrary. Neuroscience will therefore not be able, nor is it necessary (see #9 above), to hire their own faculty.

Next Steps (if applicable)

What actions remain? Is there further follow-up?

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
What additional initiatives or changes has the program been working on in relation to continuous program improvement?