

University of Alberta Quality Assurance Suite of Activities

Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine: Academic Program Reviews and President's Visiting Committee

Excerpted Reports

Executive Summary

The Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (FRM) at the University of Alberta (UA) is one of the leading Canadian faculties in rehabilitation education and research with a strong reputation in Canada and abroad. In the 2016-2017 academic year, FRM's professional programs, thesis-based programs and research and scholarship were examined through the University of Alberta Quality Assurance Suite of Activities. Three separate reviews took place between February and April 2017 with a total of ten external reviewers invited from the best rehabilitation science programs in Canada and internationally.

Reviewers were unanimous in their commendations of the academic programs offered by FRM. The three professional programs were recognized for their high-quality, outstanding and well-respected professional education in Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech Language Pathology (SLP). Reviewers commended the distributed learning programs which offer OT and PT programs in satellite sites in Calgary and Augustana Campus in Camrose.

The Rehabilitation Science Graduate Thesis Programs (MSc. and PhD) were also recognized for their strengths including the quality of their faculty and students, and the intensity and productivity of research being conducted by them. The long term research partnerships that have been cultivated by faculty members were found to be a strength.

The President's Visiting Committee (PVC) endorsed the four broad goals laid out in FRM's strategic plan which was approved in 2017. The PVC was impressed by the research funding, the entrepreneurial spirit in the Faculty as well as its well-earned reputation as a student-centered academic unit.

All three committees had the opportunity to tour the Corbett Hall facilities and on-site clinical facilities. They found the teaching, clinic and research resources to be state-of-the-art.



Professional Program Review

Programs Reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Master of Science in Occupational Therapy ● Master of Science in Physical Therapy ● Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology
Review Dates	February 27-28, 2017
Reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Luc De Nil (Chair, SLP Representative) Professor, Department of Speech-Language Pathology, and Vice-Dean Students, School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto ● Dr. Cheryl Sadowski (UAlberta Internal Member) Professor, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Alberta ● Dr. Alan Wilman (FGSR Representative) Professor and Associate Chair (Graduate Studies), Department of Biomedical Engineering, University of Alberta ● Dr. Emily Etcheverry (OT Representative) Professor, Occupational Therapy, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba ● Dr. Stephan Milosavljevic (PT Representative) Director, School of Physical Therapy, University of Saskatchewan

Outcome

The external review team was impressed by the overall quality of the professional programs in OT, PT and SLP and the support provided to these programs from the Dean’s office and the University.

They found the programs were offering innovative learning opportunities to students, both on the central campus and on the two satellite campuses in Calgary and Camrose. Students, faculty and staff reported a positive attitude towards the programs and the academic leadership. The external review team recommended the Faculty continue to work to find the right balance between the needs of the professions and interprofessional education. They encouraged FRM to make supporting Indigenous students a priority.

Program Strengths

The committee noted the following strengths in the OT, PT and SLP programs:

- Interprofessional integration is a strength of the FRM learning environment



- The professional programs employ several positive innovations which allow students to be more actively engaged in research
- Faculty and staff are engaged and invested in the success of the professional programs, willing to strive for innovation in teaching, open to collaboration and interprofessional teaching and actively engaged in research.
- The mentorship program which matches senior and junior students is appreciated by students looking for mental health supports.
- Students at the satellite campuses in Calgary and Augustana Campus are very satisfied with the programs and appreciated the opportunities for interaction with instructors and responsiveness of faculty located in Edmonton.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and enhancement

The committee made several recommendations:

- Finding the right balance between discipline-specific training, required for the profession and mandated by the accreditation bodies, and greater interprofessional education, is difficult. The Faculty should continue its efforts in this area.
- Working with Indigenous students in the FRM is an emerging area of priority which will require more diverse representation in the Faculty and involvement of the local communities and stakeholders.
- Students reported a lack of social and study space so available spaces need to be communicated to the students.
- Additional communication about existing resources and supports available to students for mental health should be provided.

Implementation Plan

In response, the Faculty made the following commitments:

- The Faculty will continue to support collaborative interprofessional initiatives that are prioritized in the upcoming strategic planning. This will include consideration of how experiences can be offered to satellite students.
- The FRM will continue to include designated seats for Indigenous students and work towards appropriate representation within all programs. In addition, FRM will integrate the work being done by the UA Health Sciences Council to establish resources for Indigenous health instruction into all programs.
- The FRM will continue to work closely with provincial and national regulatory bodies to gather feedback regarding knowledge and skill gaps. Any information received will be tabled at the FRM Teaching and Learning and program advisory committees for discussion.
- The Fall 2017 Student Orientation Package will include information on student social and study spaces.



Thesis-based Program Review

Programs Reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Master of Science in Rehabilitation Science (thesis-based) ● Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Science ● Post-Doctorate programs
Review Dates	March 14-15, 2017
Reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Susan Rappolt, (Chair) ● Associate Professor and Chair Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto ● Dr. Dave Collins, (UAlberta Internal Member) ● University of Alberta, Associate Professor, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta ● Dr. Clayton Dickson, (FGSR Representative) ● Professor of Psychology, Faculty of Science, University of Alberta ● Dr. Nancy Mayo, (External Member) ● James McGill Professor, School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, McGill University

Outcome

The external review team identified many strengths of the Rehabilitation Science Graduate Thesis-based programs (RSGTP), including the quality of their faculty and students, the intensity and productivity of research being conducted by faculty and students, and the excellent long term research partnerships that have been cultivated by faculty members. Going forward, the Review Committee recommends that the RSGTP strengthen the methodological courses available to students, and attract and support students through competitive funding packages. The suggest that RSGTP could contribute more directly to the public good through targeted faculty and student recruitment and incentives to build programs in translational and systems level research.

Program Strengths

The committee noted the following strengths:

- RSGTP faculty members have strong research funding and output, and students



appreciate their research mentorship. The financial strength of the RSGTP is exceptional.

- Students are highly qualified, enthusiastic, and overall very satisfied with their programs.
- RSGTP faculty members have excellent partnerships with local and provincial research centres, clinical sites and labs.
- A new governance structure has been implemented, including creation of separate Associate Dean – Graduate Studies and Associate Dean- Research positions (previously these positions were combined). This allows focus on graduate studies separate from research planning and creates opportunities to build the academic and research programs of the RSGTP and the FRM as a whole.
- The administrative, information technology and communications personnel within and available to the RSGTP are highly revered.
- RSGTP faculty members have excellent partnerships with local and provincial research centres, clinical sites and labs.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and enhancement

The review committee made the following recommendations:

- Work to renew the RSGTP core curriculum should continue and the FRM should consider adding requirements for broadly based methodological foundations, data analysis, and knowledge translation.
- Increased engagement of the departments should be encouraged for example, through inviting faculty to teach courses in the RSGTP.
- Student funding packages which complement faculty stipends and student scholarships should be made a priority so each student has a minimum funding package comparable to competitive rehabilitation science and other thesis-based programs.
- Increased funding for the Rehabilitation Research Centre to purchase methodological consultation and professional development services for students in need would be an asset.
- A clear definition of rehabilitation science should direct the academic and research training programs with respect to both the FRM and University of Alberta strategic directions.
- Development of faculty and student translational and systems-level research, as well as lab focused research should be an area of focus.

Implementation Plan

In response, the Faculty made the following commitments

- The rehabilitation science curriculum review is underway and over the next two to three years it will address two primary goals:
 - a. A collective understanding of what it means to be a rehabilitation scientist



- b. Development and articulation of expected competencies (knowledge, skills, attributes) of graduates.
- New interdisciplinary courses will be developed in collaboration with other health faculties. Funding of graduate studies will be addressed through:
 - a. a consultative process with faculty,
 - b. an analysis of the current funding allocation in summer 2017, and
 - c. the question of teaching assistantships which will be explored with the department chairs.
- In the next three years, FRM plans to have minimum funding levels established for graduate students.
- The Rehabilitation signature areas of research are currently under development and defining these areas will influence hiring decisions as well as the branding of the graduate programs.

President’s Visiting Committee

Dates	April 10, 2017
Reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jim Weese, (Chair) • The University of Western Ontario • Dr. Sharon Switzer-McIntyre, (PT Representative) University of Toronto, • Dr. Jacqueline Rousseau, (OT Representative) University of Montreal, • Dr. Kathryn Yorkston, (SLP Representative, International Member) University of Washington, • Dr. Elizabeth Harrison, (PT Representative, Special Interest) University of Saskatchewan, • Dr. Olive Yonge, (UAlberta Internal Member) University of Alberta, • Dr. Bill Connor, (Provost Office Representative) University of Alberta

Outcome

The Committee found that FRM attracts exceptionally strong students in numbers that surpass the available seats. They note there is need for graduates of this Faculty and for the results of research activities led by its professors, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students. The PVC acknowledged that the reputation of the Faculty is built on research leaders, an entrepreneurial



spirit and the success of student-centered academic programs. They found the progressive and innovative program of distributed delivery models to be especially laudable. They agreed with the strategic pillars designated in the strategic plan and recommended that the Faculty make workplace culture a high priority.

The PVC endorsed the four pillars of the FRM strategic plan and recommends that research and research support should be a priority for future development. They support the idea of examining the feasibility of expanding distributed learning programs and potential collaborations for new program areas.

Faculty Strengths

The President's Visiting Committee noted the following strengths:

- The communications and development team use both traditional and progressive electronic and social media vehicles.
- The record of success in securing research grants from the Tri Council granting agencies, other competitive funding sources and even the NIH is on par, and in some cases, slightly ahead of similar Faculties from other research-intensive universities in the country
- The creation of the Associate Dean, Research role and the plan to create a Strategic Research Plan for the Faculty is an important step.
- Students are proud, satisfied with their professors and their programs.
- The quality and success of the distributed education program including how technology has been used for delivery, the increased connections with external expertise across the province, and the support for the participation of external examiners in graduate programming.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and enhancement

The PVC identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- A higher premium should be placed on research and support including, but not be limited to:
 - a. support for the Associate Dean, Research,
 - b. the creation of a tight FRM Research Plan,
 - c. support positions,
 - d. fund raising efforts focused on securing student scholarships, endowed and industry research chairs, and infrastructure.
- The leaders in the Faculty need to make research attainment a high priority and part of



the fabric of the Faculty. What leaders recognize, celebrate and resource often helps shape the culture of an organizational unit.

- The Faculty should heighten efforts to address the externally-validated space needs to FRM (e.g., activities to ensure that the development appears on the campus/facility development master plan; that a FRM facility development is a priority on the campus fundraising and development plan).
- The FRM should continue to refine their progressive alternative delivery programs and ensure that a comprehensive capacity audit be conducted prior to branching out to other regions throughout the country/world.
- The Faculty will continue exploring the development of additional undergraduate courses
- The Faculty, in collaboration with their regional health care sector and respective government health care leaders, should continue to explore the feasibility of launching of a Tri-Province Audiology program.

Implementation Plan

In response, the Faculty made the following commitments

- The Associate Dean, Research will continue to receive strong support from the Faculty in the development of the research plan. Resources will be available to implement the strategic initiatives that are developed to support the Research Plan and the Strategic Plan.
- The development of the Research Plan and identifying the key areas of research impact will guide the fundraising efforts related to research. The development of a Research Chair aligned with each of the areas of research impact is a preliminary goal of the Research Plan. From this focal point, the development of scholarships, fellowships and infrastructure funding will emerge with a clear target and objective for any subsequent fundraising efforts.
- The Faculty will continue to work with our partners, both at the University and beyond, to build the case for sharing space which would be used to achieve shared goals.
- The use of distributed education in the Rehabilitation Science graduate programs will be explored and refined to allow students in Camrose and Calgary to fully participate in graduate activities in Edmonton. Efforts will be made to leverage faculty, especially in Calgary, to participate in graduate education of Rehabilitation Science students in all of our locations.
- The Faculty will explore avenues to garner public support and educate governments as to the importance of an audiology program. Efforts will be conducted in collaboration with the provincial speech language pathologists & audiology associations from across the prairies.