

**TO:** Mike Mahon  
President and Vice Chancellor

**DATE:** December 19, 2013

**FROM:** Robert A. Boudreau  
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

**RE:** Bachelor of Health Sciences – Addictions Counselling, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Bachelor of Health Sciences – Addictions Counselling at its December 6, 2013 meeting.

The Program Review Committee for this review was comprised of Karim McCallum (Program Review Coordinator), Gary Nixon, and Jason Solowoniuk. The review produced four documents:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Academic Quality Assurance 2013 Self-Study Report, Addictions Counselling Program, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge* (received July 3, 2013) – Self Study Report, developed by the B.H.Sc. Addictions Counselling Self Study Committee.
2. *External Review Report of the Addictions Counselling Program in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge* (received November 4, 2013) – External Review Report by Corinne Koehn (UNBC) and Honoré France-Rodriguez (University of Victoria), based on their site visit of October 7-8, 2013.
3. *Program Response* (received November 19, 2013) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. *Dean’s Response to the Addictions Counselling Program Review* (received November 27, 2013) – response to the review, written by Chris Hosgood, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> All documents are available upon request.

## **Self Study**

According to the Self Study Report, the B.H.Sc. Addictions Counselling program has the following key strengths:

- It is the only baccalaureate program of its type in Canada. Program demand has been steady, with 90-120 applicants per fall term from 2007 to 2012 and 40-70 registering for the program.
- Professors provide an average of 6.7 hours per week of student contact time.
- The program moved to Markin Hall in 2010, which enhanced program resources, including state of the art counsellor training facilities.
- Graduate surveys from 2011 and 2013 showed that 89% of graduates were employed, 84% directly or indirectly working in their field.
- Supervisors of treatment facilities have stated that Addictions Counselling graduates have superior counselling skills and a strong understanding of the impact of addictions on communities.
- 90% of graduates surveyed were satisfied with the Addictions Counselling program.

The report noted the following program challenges:

- Alberta Health Services is moving towards requiring that all counsellors, therapists, and mental health workers become registered in a recognized health profession, and/or are supervised by a registered health professional. There is no recognized regulatory college for counsellors, and so Addictions Counselling program graduates can face barriers to employment, limited chances for career advancement, and a limited range of practice.
- Student attrition rates have increased since 2006.

The report presented six future directions for the program:

1. Address the ongoing licensing issues for graduates.
2. Consider developing an M.Ed. Counselling Psychology program in Addictions and Mental Health.
3. Increase connections with community stakeholders and FNMI representatives, and expand internship opportunities.
4. Expand program focus areas to include prevention, outreach, trauma, and emerging technology addictions.
5. Enhance academic support and resources to FNMI students and “at risk” learner groups to decrease attrition rates.
6. Consider changing the name of the program to “Addictions and Mental Health Counselling.”

## **External Review**

The External Review Report noted the following strengths of the program:

- The program is unique as the only baccalaureate program in addictions counselling in Canada.
- The program's holistic approach to addictions is consistent with how health and addictions are viewed in Canada.
- The program includes multi-intervention models, for example: individual, group, and family counselling; harm reduction; health promotion and prevention; and community development.
- Labs emphasize experiential learning, which develops practical skills.
- Lab facilities and equipment are outstanding.
- The program reviews its curriculum regularly, to ensure alignment with national standards.
- The program uses a blended approach that emphasizes both personal and professional development.
- Student satisfaction is high.
- A Learning Facilitator provides academic and personal support services for FNMI students.
- The program houses a node of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.
- The program has a growing national and international exposure.
- Library acquisitions related to Addictions Counselling are excellent.
- There are initiatives, like a laddering option with the U of C Faculty of Social Work, that add value to the program.
- The program has successfully piloted an M.Ed. in Addictions and Mental Health Counselling, and will offer it again in 2014.
- The program is well positioned to offer a Master's degree in Addictions and Mental Health Counselling.

Other program strengths noted in the body of the report were:

- The program aligns well with the U of L's Mandate, Vision, Mission, and Strategic Priorities.
- The program falls within the certification guidelines of most Canadian counselling programs.
- Faculty members are actively engaged with students and strive to provide rich learning opportunities.
- The diverse interests and specialized skills of faculty promote a comprehensive learning environment, and will help attract graduate students if a Master's program is developed.
- Faculty are active in delivering presentations, workshops, and other academic training, and contribute to the profession and the community in diverse ways.
- Faculty are attentive to their own professional development.

- An informal mentorship program helps new faculty members in their transition to the U of L's academic and work environment.
- The staff believe that the program is well organized and resourced, and they perceive faculty-staff relations as supportive.
- Faculty to student ratios are within acceptable ranges as compared to other universities.
- Faculty members are active in writing books, book chapters, reports, and journal articles.
- A senior faculty member is Coordinator of the U of L node of the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, and is world renowned for research in gambling prevention and gaming policy.
- Faculty have both quantitative and qualitative research expertise.
- Faculty have established a unique peer-reviewed journal, *PARADOXICA: Journal of Nondual Psychology*.
- The program is highly-regarded and in demand.

The report discussed several areas for improvement:

- The program could strengthen its alignment with two strategic priorities from the Strategic Plan, namely: "enhance the experience of FNMI students" and "promote and enhance diversity within the University."
- If a Master's program were established that aimed for certification by the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, the Addictions Counselling Program curricula would have to be expanded.
- The program should develop more courses related to Indigenous Counselling.
- A required course in trauma should become a core part of the curriculum.
- Building on the elective gender studies course already offered, material on gender differences should be infused in relevant courses throughout the program.
- There is an urgent need for an FNMI faculty member, to address the needs of FNMI communities and students.
- The environment could be made more welcoming for FNMI students through, for example, Indigenous symbols and artwork on the walls.
- With only two female faculty members, there is a gender imbalance among the program faculty.
- Filling the vacant tenure track position, which is currently on hold due to budgetary constraints, would strengthen the program.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences should consider changing the designation of three Academic Assistants in the program to Lecturer positions. These Academic Assistants teach regular courses, carry a significant workload, and are vital to the program's success.
- The Addictions Counselling Community Advisory Committee should seek an FNMI representative.

- The program should consider moving the Learning Facilitator to a more inviting office and establishing a gathering place for FNMI students.
- Though gambling is a research focus, other research areas should be valued and encouraged. For example, other mental health issues related to people in southern Alberta.
- The program must keep abreast of licensing issues and help students regarding registration under the Alberta Health Professions Act. (A Master's program that meets Alberta College of Psychologists requirements is one way of doing this.)

The External Review Report presented 14 major recommendations for improving the program:

1. Hire a faculty member who is representative of the FNMI community.
2. Establish more connections with the FNMI community, including internships and other partnerships.
3. Find a representative from the FNMI community to sit on the Addictions Counselling Community Advisory Committee.
4. Find ways to boost the engagement and functioning of the Addictions Counselling Community Advisory Committee.
5. Strive to make a more welcoming environment for FNMI students by, for example, placing Indigenous art and symbols and establishing a Gathering Place.
6. Offer a required course in counselling FNMI peoples.
7. Offer a required course in the area of trauma, as addiction and trauma are often interrelated.
8. Review the curricula, through a curricula working committee or faculty retreat. In the review, consider curriculum suggestions from stakeholders, which include: more course content on youth counselling; more couples and family counselling content; more course content on process addictions, especially sex and technology addictions; more lab practice on solution-focused counselling; greater pharmacology content; and more preparation for working with an interdisciplinary team.
9. Infuse content on gender differences throughout relevant courses.
10. Consider the "fast-track" option and decide if it should be kept or discontinued.
11. Study the reasons behind the increasing attrition rate through a survey of students who have prematurely left the program.
12. Fill the vacant, on-hold tenure track position as soon as possible.
13. In future hiring decisions, consider addressing the gender imbalance among faculty members.
14. Establish an M.A. in Addictions and Mental Health, with a thesis and non-thesis option.

## **Program Response**

In their Program Response, professors McCallum and Nixon responded to the External Reviewers' 14 recommendations:

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Self Study Committee Response:</b>
1. Hire a faculty member who is representative of the FNMI community.	Agreed. However, it is unknown if an FNMI person could be recruited as a faculty member. Furthermore, the current budget reductions make hiring difficult.
2. Establish more connections with the FNMI community, including internships and other partnerships.	The Addictions Counselling Program is currently working on internship opportunities with Red Crow Community College, Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society, Blackfoot Family Lodge, St. Paul's Treatment Centre, and Sunrise Native Addictions Services. The Addictions Counselling Program will continue to pursue partnerships and internship opportunities with FNMI-based community agencies.
3. Find a representative from the FNMI community to sit on the Addiction Counselling Community Advisory Committee.	The Addictions Counselling Program will attempt to recruit two local FNMI representatives to participate in upcoming advisory committee meetings.
4. Find ways to boost the engagement and functioning of the Addiction Counselling Community Advisory Committee.	The Addictions Counselling Program will continue to hold Community Advisory Committee meetings with community stakeholders twice a year. The next meeting will be in March 2014.
5. Strive to make a more welcoming environment for FNMI students by, for example, placing Indigenous art and symbols and establishing a Gathering Place.	The Addictions Counselling Program will continue to provide weekly gathering space for FNMI Health Sciences students and will expand this activity. The Addictions Counselling Program will reintroduce its former Aboriginal Student Support Group. The Addictions Counselling Program will explore initiatives, including further FNMI artwork and symbols in labs and the round room (M2004).
6. Offer a required course in counselling FNMI peoples.	The Addictions Counselling Program is developing the course HLSC 1235 - First Nations Counselling. Offered in the spring term of year 1 of the program, the plan is for this course to be taught by a local FMNI representative.
7. Offer a required course in the area of trauma, as addiction and trauma are often interrelated.	The current curriculum already offers opportunities to study areas related to trauma: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A trauma course is one of two special series courses that are degree requirements.</li><li>• A trauma course is one option to fulfill the third year requirement of one population course.</li><li>• Trauma is part of the course content for several existing HLSC courses (1020, 1220, 3120, 3240, and 3420).</li></ul>

Recommendation:	Self Study Committee Response:
<p>8. Review the curricula, through a Curricula Working Committee or faculty retreat. In the review, consider curriculum suggestions from stakeholders, which include: more course content on youth counselling; more couples and family counselling content; more course content on process addictions, especially sex and technology addictions; more lab practice on solution-focused counselling; greater pharmacology content; and more preparation for working with an interdisciplinary team.</p>	<p>Every May, Addictions Counselling Program faculty hold a meeting to review curriculum changes. The May 2014 meeting will be a half-day retreat to review curriculum and future directions in depth.</p> <p>A youth and addictions populations course is currently offered.</p> <p>A family cycle populations course is currently offered. This will change into a couples counselling course in Fall 2014.</p> <p>A course on sex addiction is offered every year. In future it will include internet addiction, video games addiction, and other technology addictions.</p> <p>Solution-focused counselling is offered in individual and family counselling courses. The Addictions Counselling Program will strive to include more skill practice in labs.</p> <p>The third-year course HLSC 3140 - Neurophysiology of Addiction covers pharmacology. In 2014 this course will be renamed "Behavioural Pharmacology."</p> <p>Starting in 2014, preparation for interdisciplinary teamwork will be included in the seminar components of the junior and senior internships.</p>
<p>9. Infuse content on gender differences throughout relevant courses.</p>	<p>The Addictions Counselling Program has a gender and addictions population course in its third year. This course will be changed to a HLSC 3759 populations course. Students will be able to take it to fulfill the requirement to take a course on addictions in a particular population.</p> <p>There will be a discussion of more gender material in courses at the May 2014 Addictions Counselling Program faculty retreat.</p>
<p>10. Consider the "fast-track" option and decide if it should be kept or discontinued.</p>	<p>Addictions Counselling Program faculty decided to keep the fast track option because of the high student demand for it.</p>
<p>11. Study the reasons behind the increasing attrition rate through a survey of students who have prematurely left the program.</p>	<p>The Addictions Counselling Program is developing a survey that will be implemented by summer 2014.</p>
<p>12. Fill the vacant, on-hold tenure track position as soon as possible.</p>	<p>The Addictions Counselling Program has recommended a tenure-track hiring for July 2014.</p>
<p>13. In future hiring decisions, consider addressing the gender imbalance among faculty members.</p>	<p>The Addictions Counselling Program encourages female applicants to faculty positions and has historically had a more balanced gender representation.</p>
<p>14. Establish an M.A. in Addictions and Mental Health, with a thesis and non-thesis option.</p>	<p>The Addictions Counselling Program agrees with establishing a Master's program, but there are budget implications that require further investigation and discussion.</p>

### ***Dean's Response***

In his response Chris Hosgood, Dean of Health Sciences, noted that he agreed with the key strengths of the program as noted in the review documents. He went on to support and reiterate the recommendations of the External Review Report and the response of the Self Study Committee.

Finally, in his response Dean Hosgood underscored the importance of two points. First, the need for increased staffing. Specifically, a local FNMI representative to teach the HLSC 1235 course, and a tenure-track faculty position. And second, the priority for establishing an M.A. in Addictions and Mental Health.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the B.H.Sc. – Addictions Counselling academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

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Robert A. Boudreau

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)