



University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Program Reviewed:	Physician Assistant Program, B.Sc.P.A.
Unit in which program is housed:	Department of Family & Community Medicine
Commissioning Officer:	Dean, Faculty of Medicine
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professor Neil Gibson, Clinical Affairs and Director of Simulation, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Alberta 2. Professor Olle ten Cate, Director, Centre for Research and Development of Education, University Medical Center, Utrecht
Date of review visit:	March 26, 2018
Date reported to AP&P:	November 1, 2018

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

1 Outcome

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations.

2 Significant Program Strengths

- Thriving, small program supported by the Faculty of Medicine and the Department of Family and Community Medicine
- Successful streamlining of program administration and human resources
- Tight knit program enables good communication
- Proactive mentoring of student progress, and ample supports available through the Office of Health Professions Student Affairs

- Program aligns with the objectives of the 2015 national CanMEDS-PA document of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA)
- Innovative program design is working well and is good for accessibility
- Minimal program attrition and high pass rate for National Qualifying exam

3 Opportunities for Program Enhancement

The reviewers recommended that the following be considered:

- Addressing difficulties in placing students in clinical sites
- Consider reinstating prior paid health care working experience for applicants
- Monitoring the transition from Blackboard to Quercus
- Using Entrustable Professional Activities to enhance the breadth and depth within the program
- Connecting the program to the Faculty's research mission
- Engaging in fundraising for scholarships in response to student concerns about financial aid
- Considering outlining an agreement regarding sessional space needs



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

L. Trevor Young, MD PhD FRCPC

Dean

Vice Provost, Relations with Health Care Institutions

October 15, 2018

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto
65 St. George Street, Room 106
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2E5

Dear Professor McCahan,

Re: External Review of the BSc, Physician Assistant Program

I am responding to your request for a decanal response to the external review of the BSc Physician Assistant Program in the Faculty of Medicine.

On behalf of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, I would like to thank the two external reviewers, Professors Neil Gibson (Clinical Affairs and Director of Simulation, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Alberta) and Olle ten Cate (Director, Centre for Research and Development of Education, University Medical Center, Utrecht) for their outstanding review of the BSc Physician Assistant Program on March 26, 2018. The reviewers described the Program as “*thriving*” and “*robust*.” They conclude by stating: “*This program is a lean and viable educational enterprise that is successful in producing PAs that meet the national competency profile. It is engaged in continuous quality improvement and delivers an innovative educational process.*” I also want to thank the many faculty members and students who met with the external reviewers—their input was invaluable for this review. The Faculty of Medicine greatly appreciates the time and effort of the reviewers in providing a written report that is comprehensive and thoughtful.

I will comment on each of the specific areas that you have identified.

I. Curriculum and Program Design

The reviewers noted the difficulties in placing students in clinical sites.

RESPONSE: The program recognizes the challenges in placing students, especially in rural and remote sites. The program is continuing to monitor, through rotation-specific evaluations and clinical encounters logs, the various placements in order to compare the clinical experience of students in placements. The program plans to use this data to set 6 monthly meetings with the purpose of reviewing the data and forming ongoing action plans to improve clinical placements. This will allow the program to provide a much more fulsome review of clinical placements. The program is limited to 40 weeks of clinical placements due to funding arrangements with the MOHLTC, but will ensure the highest quality of clinical experiences through this comprehensive review. The program has already changed the process to review students’ placement location needs 6 months earlier, at the commencement of the non-clinical year, rather than waiting until 6 months prior to the start of the clinical year.

In addition, the program will increase regular communication with existing preceptors to strengthen their engagement with the program. This will be a medium term goal, as strengthening these relationships will occur over time. The Medical Director, in collaboration with the Clinical Course Director and Program Director, will be responsible for this action.

The reviewers suggested reinstating wherever possible prior paid health care working experience for applicants.

RESPONSE: The Admissions Committee is committed to reviewing the application requirements, including the requirement for previous paid health care experience. This will include analyzing the collected data comparing the outcome of graduates with and without such prior experience. This recommendation will be brought forward to the Admissions Committee for its consideration before this upcoming admission cycle.

The reviewers suggest there is a need to monitor the transition from Blackboard to Quercus.

RESPONSE: The program provided webinars and targeted individualized support for faculty in the transition to Quercus. There will be a focus in the academic lead's role on faculty development targeting the transition to the new LME platform. Since the time of the UTQAP process, the university transitioned to Quercus on September 1, 2018 and all of the BScPA courses are now on the new platform.

The reviewers suggest the use of Entrustable Professional Activities to balance the breadth and depth within the Program.

RESPONSE: The program will work with other universities and health care faculties to determine the best way to assess trainee competence. The development of EPAs is one method used by some schools. Since the UTQAP review, the program has already changed the final practical exam to be in an EPA format. The program will continue this work to ensure trainees' competencies are attained and work with the next version of the national accreditation standards in which it is expected that EPAs will play a vital role.

II. Research, Scholarship and Faculty Development

The reviewers suggested ways for the Program to connect to the Faculty's research mission; as an example, by focusing on the Program as a "test bed" for education delivery innovation.

RESPONSE: The Program Director, in the medium term, will explore embedding research and scholarly activities in the curriculum. There are student projects that could easily evolve into scholarly work; the program is already exploring introducing QI projects to the EBM course in first year. In addition, opportunities exist in the long term, to collaborate with the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) and the MD Program, the Wilson Centre and other PA programs and the Centre for Faculty Development on research projects. The Medical Director has already begun to engage with each of these potential collaborative partners.

The reviewers recommended working with other Faculty units to provide scholarship and research opportunities for students

RESPONSE: The Medical Director, in collaboration with the Chair of DFCM, will establish research opportunities within DFCM in the medium term.

III. Administration

The reviewers suggested fundraising for scholarships in response to student concerns about financial aid.

RESPONSE: DFCM and the new Medical Director are committed to collaborate with the Faculty of Medicine's Student Financial Aid office and the Advancement Office to develop additional opportunities support PA students financially. This is a long-term goal of the program.

The reviewers suggested considering outlining an agreement regarding sessional space needs.

RESPONSE: The Faculty and DFCM will work closely with the program to establish an agreement for consistent sessional space. This goal can be accomplished in the medium term, and next September's classroom schedule has already been set as a step to work on obtaining physical space for learning activities in advance.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Please let me know if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Young', with a stylized, cursive script.

Trevor Young

5 Executive Summary

The reviewers identified the programs' strengths as its status as a thriving, small program supported by the Faculty of Medicine and the Department of Family and Community Medicine; successful streamlining of program administration and human resources; the tight knit program enables good communication; proactive mentoring of student progress, and ample supports available through the Office of Health Professions Student Affairs; program aligns with the objectives of the 2015 national CanMEDS-PA document of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA); innovative program design is working well and is good for accessibility; and minimal program attrition and high pass rate for National Qualifying exam. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: addressing difficulties in placing students in clinical sites; consider reinstating prior paid health care working experience for applicants; monitoring the transition from Blackboard to Quercus; using Entrustable Professional Activities to enhance the breadth and depth within the program; connecting the program to the Faculty's research mission; engaging in fundraising for scholarships in response to student concerns about financial aid; and considering outlining an agreement regarding sessional space needs. The Dean's Administrative Response describes the Faculty and program's responses to the reviewers' recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result. The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) concluded that the Decanal response adequately addressed the review recommendations.