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TO: Digvir Jayas
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: April 17, 2024

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Bachelor of Health Sciences Addictions Counselling Program 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 in Addictions Counselling Program at its December 1, 2023, meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of: Callista Chasse (Program Review Coordinator), Cindy Gaetz, Jason Solowoniuk, and Sandy Witdouck.

The review produced 4 documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received July 7, 2023.
2. External Review Report. Written by Dr. Honoré France (University of Victoria) and Dr. Paul Jerry (Athabasca University) based on a site visit September 11 to 12, 2023. Received October 4, 2023.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received November 2, 2023.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Jon Doan, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. Received November 24, 2023.

Self Study Report

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer feedback on several areas:

- As the only Addictions Counselling undergraduate program in Canada, why do we see our enrolment trending downward and classes not filling to capacity? Do you have ideas on how we could better promote the program?
- What is your perspective on the addictions focus in our program? Is it advantageous to continue to specialize the degree on addictions, or broaden in name and content to include 'mental health'? Is the specialization posing any drawbacks in terms of our enrolment?
- Does our program focus enough on diversity? We have made progress in incorporating more Indigenous perspectives on healing, but could we be doing more to ensure our students have sufficient opportunities to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity?

The body of the report noted several strengths of the Bachelor of Health Sciences in Addictions Counselling program:

- The uniqueness of the program offering high level counselling skill development at the undergraduate level.
- Comprehensive curriculum that addresses necessary professional competencies identified by the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse (CCSA, 2021).
- Diverse and experienced faculty members.
- Community partnerships that afford diverse student internship placements.
- Small class sizes and lab groups allowing for engaging hands-on learning opportunities.
- A pedagogical approach that encourages student self-reflection and personal/professional development, strong focus on 'counsellor's journey.'
- Student and faculty relationships are strong, students report feeling well supported by ACP team.
- A relatively high percentage of Indigenous Student enrolment.

The following weaknesses and challenges were mentioned in the body of the report:

- The lack of an accrediting professional body leading to limited credentialing options for graduates.
- High workloads limiting capacity for faculty members to engage in professional development for teaching excellence, curriculum revision, and collaboration to ensure cohesion of courses delivered in ACP.

- Students have noted overlap between courses.
- Retention issues, particularly for students who face additional barriers to accessing traditional classroom instruction.
- A lack of maintenance of Markin Hall counseling labs and an ongoing need for technology support to ensure the recording suite is functioning well.
- Challenges with cohesion between lectures and labs, and time constraints for practice in labs due to timetabling changes.

Recommendations from the body of the report:

- **Quality of programming:** Our program would benefit from improved cohesion and collaboration of our faculty members to ensure we provide the best possible learning experience for students. For instance, it could be beneficial to students if we worked on better integration of our professorial members' research work into the course content we deliver. Additional efforts to discuss course content to improve scaffolded learning and avoid unnecessary duplication of course content would also have potential to improve our program's learning outcomes.
- **Flexibility:** An additional concern articulated in the survey results and echoed by our Academic Advisor is the relative rigidity of the course sequencing in our program. Students have indicated challenges with completing their degree on schedule due to the limited times each course is offered annually. Examining opportunities for flexibility of course sequencing may therefore improve student outcomes and completion rates.
- **Public profile & community partnerships:** Increasing our efforts to have a public presence and stronger ties to community agencies may lead to improved internship opportunities for our students. Strong ties to professionals in the community also strengthens our pool of guest lecturers and sessional instructors when needed, and ensures we remain connected to the best practices of the field.
- **Internships:** Feedback from students concerning internships suggests some sites are better suited than others in supporting skill development in line with our program objectives. The ACP may therefore benefit from ensuring there will be sufficient learning opportunities and hands on work available so there is more consistency for students in opportunities. Improved communication between liaisons and site supervisors may also improve the overall quality of internship.
- **Accreditation and pathways to registration:** A repeated theme in the previous reports and highlighted in this study as well is limitations for our graduates to gain registration with a professional college or association following completion of the program. We can continue to advocate for ACTA and participate in the legislative agenda to get recognition.

External Review Report

The External Review Report contained seven (7) recommendations for improving the Bachelor of Health Sciences in Addictions Counselling program:

Recommendations from the body of the report:

- There has been some debate as to whether the name of the degree “Addictions Counselling” limits graduates in their prospective employment as well as in their quest for graduate education. It would be useful for the program to consider a name change, several of which were discussed during the site visit:
 - Addictions and Counselling
 - Addictions and Mental Health Counselling.
- We were informed that U of L was gifted a building in downtown Lethbridge which is currently being used as an art gallery. We propose that the ACP (in conjunction with the rest of 17 the health sciences faculty programs) lobby administration to convert the use of this space to a community street-level clinic where a variety of health services can be housed, trained, and provide service to the community.
- Practicum management may benefit from exploring the use of a practicum management/database system. Vendors of these systems ensure privacy and support setting up, training, and managing practicum administrators. A system like these can be used to house student data during placements, hold student outcomes, be tied to competency models, and serve as a digital portfolio post-graduation.
- As Canada's only undergraduate addictions counsellor training program, this sits in a unique space with essentially no real competition across the country for students. However, it would be important for the program to consider developing an ongoing marketing plan, ideally developed in conjunction with university advancement, in order to recruit students nationally.
- [I]t might be worth the program re-examining the course schedule, course sequencing, and placement hours demands to better fit with the post-Covid student body. We do recognize that this could be a complex and challenging recommendation, however, there are some challenges with credit hours and tuition, if and how prior life experience can be accounted for as prior learning credit, and exploring the number of required hours in practicum placements (is it too high?)
- [G]iven the lack of a standard education and training competency model for addictions, it might well be a value for this program to become the leader in that area, and establish what they determine to be appropriate competencies for an undergraduate counsellor.
- It may help to promote cohesion within the program to have the faculty and instructors meet on a regular basis. These meetings do not necessarily need to be face-to-face - they could include a virtual option – we were struck by how rarely the entire program met to discuss issues of growth and development and their challenges. Further, the program should explore including advising and other admin staff in these meetings, to facilitate communication

Challenges discussed in the report:

- The learning environment varies without a clear plan. In this case we would consider the learning environment to include the physical environment, and a virtual delivery of courses, and the use of any instructional technology software. We were told that some professors continue to deliver using distance technology, even though the on-campus option has returned post-Covid. While it might be convenient for both the professor and the students to not have to travel to campus for a course, it would make sense that a choice around this would be made based on student need and the curriculum to be delivered. An exception to this might be a course that's offered at a time for students who work or care for family at these times.
- One challenge that was apparent is the issue of program planning. The original program was designed to be a four-year undergraduate degree. There's a push to develop a five-year and a six-year plan to accommodate the difference between the standard degree route, and how students are actually moving through the program. The program proceeds in a sequential format. The challenge for a student is if they miss a course, they may have to sit out an entire term, if not an entire year before they can pick up the appropriate course in the appropriate sequence. It may help students to either re-organize the sequence into several pathways, or deliver courses more than once a year, if student and instructor availability permits. It may also help to review the course sequencing to determine whether the sequence is logical, or whether some courses can be offered in a different order. Scheduling courses and classrooms appears to be a significant effort each term. The complexity of scheduling classrooms has led to some student concerns about timing and length of labs vis a vis other non-ACP scheduled offerings.
- We were able to have a number of conversations with the faculty and staff during the two days of interviews and meetings, both formal and informal. This included two of the advisors in the program, which to us was significant in that these people are the "face" of the program. We were impressed with their energy and work with the students in keeping them informed and supported. We found the clerical/office staff not only helpful but with a broad sense of the atmosphere around the offices and classroom. In that sense there is a sense that they do not have the same "come and go" freedom that the faculty enjoys, which creates some friction. The staff needs to be in a relationship that is more collaborative with the faculty in the future. Our sense was that the recent strike and "shutdown" that was brought on by Covid-19 needs to be addressed and repaired (see recommendation).

Opportunities discussed in the report:

- During our conversations with researchers and students, it appears as though there isn't as much involvement by students in research as there is the potential to be. The program might consider offering research assistantships where this might be appropriate.
- This program sits in the center of Sikiska Territory and Metis Nation. However, the numbers of students who identify as Indigenous is small – approximately 15% (although the total for the post-graduate diploma in addictions is 100% - all 5 students identify). While Indigenous populations make up 6.5% of the total population in Alberta, we note the disproportionate number who are affected by trauma and addictions, and would encourage the program to target enrolment of First Nations students.

Program Response

In their Program Response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

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| <p>1. There has been some debate as to whether the name of the degree "Addictions Counselling" limits graduates in their prospective employment as well as in their quest for graduate education. It would be useful for the program to consider a name change, several of which were discussed during the site visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Addictions and Counselling</i>• <i>Addictions and Mental Health Counselling</i> | <p>Faculty members in the ADCS program agree that a potential name change merits further discussion to better communicate our program outcomes through a congruent name for the degree. This topic has previously been debated among program members with discussion centering on whether our program title is too specific, thereby not entirely capturing the range of skills and knowledge our students acquire, or if its specificity is actually an asset in distinguishing us from more generalized counsellor training programs. The committee members agreed this recommendation is worth exploring and will prioritize this discussion at future program meetings and/or strategic planning day in 2024. We are cognizant that a name change to our program will require many layers of approval, and possible ministerial approval as well, therefore this is not a change we can expedite.</p> |
| <p>2. We were informed that U of L was gifted a building in downtown Lethbridge which is currently being used as an art gallery. We propose that the ACP (in conjunction with the rest of 17 the health sciences faculty programs) lobby administration to convert the use of this space to a community street-level clinic where a variety of health services can be housed, trained, and provide service to the community.</p> | <p>The reviewers seem to have connected with an idea discussed during their site visit regarding the possibility of a community clinic in which our students could interact with the public directly. We are aware that there is a long history regarding the use of the Penny Building in downtown Lethbridge for a potential Health Sciences clinic, and that there may be some renewed interest in getting such an enterprise off the ground. We agree that the prospect of this building being used in this way is of interest to our program and has capacity for excellent learning experiences for students, as well as community development and improved partnerships between the Faculty and the citizens of Lethbridge. Program members agree this idea would be worthwhile to pursue but recognize there is limited power for decision making at the program level for this institutional asset. We are open to exploring this idea with our Dean and colleagues in the broader Faculty of Health Sciences.</p> |
| <p>3. <i>Practicum management may benefit from exploring the use of a practicum management/database system. Vendors of these systems ensure privacy and support setting up, training, and managing practicum administrators. A system like these can be used to house student data during placements, hold student outcomes, be tied to competency models, and serve as a digital portfolio post-graduation.</i></p> | <p>While we aren't fully informed on the merit of a management/database system to be used at the program level, we agree that more ongoing agreements with internship sites would greatly improve the process for staff and students alike. Orienting other faculty members to the internship tracking process would increase capacity as well in the event that our program members who currently manage our internships were unable to do so for any reason. An extension of this need we discussed in our self-study report is the connection between field education and our community profile. We would like to take some steps to raise our profile at the municipal, provincial, and national levels, and in doing so there may be opportunities to expand our list of partners who would be willing to support internships. Internal discussions concerning internships have also highlighted the need for some analysis of the parameters for internships (ie: hours requirements, assignments, etc.) to ensure a fair and positive field education experience for our students. Our Internship Coordinator and Placement Specialist have confirmed plans to have a planning day in the near future to work on these aspects of our program. During the site visit, the question was also raised about the possibility of students challenging the internship requirement based on documented work experience in the field. This item will need significant discussion and consideration at the program level to determine whether it would be possible to approve this suggestion.</p> |
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<p>4. <i>As Canada's only undergraduate addictions counsellor training program, this sits in a unique space with essentially no real competition across the country for students. However, it would be important for the program to consider developing an ongoing marketing plan, ideally developed in conjunction with university advancement, in order to recruit students nationally.</i></p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation and will be making efforts to plan more marketing of the program. Arranging for program members to attend networking events, conferences, career fairs, recruitment events, etc. would be needed to help boost the profile as well. The Self-Study committee has also discussed the possibility of connecting with organizations like the Canadian Counselling Psychology Association (CCPA), Alberta Counselling Therapists Association (ACTA), and the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse (CCSA) to build connections for knowledge exchange. We also discussed the possibility of gathering representatives from local organizations to network and provide feedback on program outcomes. Financial support from the Faculty, and/or possible course release/service recognition for these tasks may make it more feasible for faculty to engage in these activities, particularly with the present requirements CE requirements and the challenges with inequitable weighting of teaching commitments within the Faculty and the broader institution.</p>
<p>5. <i>[[It might be worth the program re-examining the course schedule, course sequencing, and placement hours demands to better fit with the post-Covid student body. We do recognize that this could be a complex and challenging recommendation, however, there are some challenges with credit hours and tuition, if and how prior life experience can be accounted for as prior learning credit, and exploring the number of required hours in practicum placements (is it too high?)</i></p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation in so far as we internally wish to examine the course sequencing and curriculum to address overlap in courses and feasibility of completing all required courses in four years vs. five or six. Some work has already been done in this area, and an ad hoc committee has been recently struck to examine curriculum and clarification of program outcomes. This task is complex and involves an examination of competencies expected in the field, pedagogical principles of our program, and a compassionate examination of how our students are managing their educational journey amidst many other demands on their time and resources. We have heard of institutional trends relating to students taking fewer than five classes per term resulting in extended timelines to complete degrees, and our advisor and program specialist have created amended sequence plans for students opting to move at a slower pace through their requirements. More work is needed here, and this item will also be a key priority for our strategic planning session in 2024. We had hoped the report would offer some more specificity and guidance in regard to the curriculum, but we recognize that we have the necessary expertise within the program complement to undertake this important work, and we will liaise with external sources as needed to ensure we are delivering program outcomes that are congruent to the competencies expected in the field.</p>
<p>6. <i>[G]iven the lack of a standard education and training competency model for addictions, it might well be a value for this program to become the leader in that area, and establish what they determine to be appropriate competencies for an undergraduate counsellor.</i></p>	<p>We as a program continue to struggle with the lack of a provincial regulating body. While we recognize the need for ongoing advocacy at the provincial level to get ACTA ratified, we as a program don't have power over the decisions at this governmental level. With that said, we recognize the need to evaluate our program outcomes to ensure we are meeting the competencies currently available through CCSA and the preliminary expectations from ACTA so that if/when regulation is available our students and grads will be prepared to register. This work can be accomplished in part by the ad hoc committee examining the curriculum. More strategic planning in this area will also be needed and will be discussed in subsequent program meetings.</p>
<p>7. <i>It may help to promote cohesion within the program to have the faculty and instructors meet on a regular basis. These meetings do not necessarily need to be face-to-face - they could include a virtual option - we were struck by how rarely the entire program met to discuss issues of growth and development and their challenges. Further, the program should explore including advising and other admin</i></p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation as well. We as a program team are setting intentions to have more regular meetings and connect in person as much as possible to address program needs. Advising and support staff will be included to ensure cohesion of our program delivery. We, along with units across the institution, continue to grapple with the changes in attitudes and expectations regarding in person vs. remote work. Motivating members to work from campus and attend meetings in person is a broader challenge at the institutional level post-pandemic. We certainly take this note from the reviewers into consideration but remain mindful and respectful of our colleague's autonomy in their work.</p>

staff in these meetings, to facilitate communication.

Dean's Response

The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences responded to the seven (7) recommendations from the External Review Report:

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| <p>1. <i>There has been some debate as to whether the name of the degree "Addictions Counselling" limits graduates in their prospective employment as well as in their quest for graduate education. It would be useful for the program to consider a name change, several of which were discussed during the site visit:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Addictions and Counselling</i>• <i>Addictions and Mental Health Counselling</i> | <p>The merits of changing the name of the program have been discussed previously. Renewed discussion and decision should be taken here, likely in conjunction with 2024 FoHS strategic planning activity that will also consider the name of the faculty.</p> |
| <p>2. <i>We were informed that U of L was gifted a building in downtown Lethbridge which is currently being used as an art gallery. We propose that the ACP (in conjunction with the rest of 17 the health sciences faculty programs) lobby administration to convert the use of this space to a community street-level clinic where a variety of health services can be housed, trained, and provide service to the community.</i></p> | <p>FoHS currently delivers undergraduate educational experiences in Community Health from our Nursing program through U of L's downtown building. We plan to do an in-service on this offering in early 2024 so that other programs could consider similar opportunities for relevant existing courses in their catalogue, plus as a conduit to internship and research opportunities. As a unit FoHS will continue to consider plans to develop the Penny Building into a student-led inter-program community health clinic.</p> |
| <p>3. <i>Practicum management may benefit from exploring the use of a practicum management/database system. Vendors of these systems ensure privacy and support setting up, training, and managing practicum administrators. A system like these can be used to house student data during placements, hold student outcomes, be tied to competency models, and serve as a digital portfolio post-graduation.</i></p> | <p>Refer to the response to recommendation 5.</p> |
| <p>4. <i>As Canada's only undergraduate addictions counsellor training program, this sits in a unique space with essentially no real competition across the country for students. However, it would be important for the program to consider developing an ongoing marketing plan, ideally</i></p> | <p>Marketing and communication will be amongst the priority initiatives for a new Associate Dean in FoHS, intended to be in place no later than February 2024, in conjunction with new Administrative Assistant already in place. This activity will consider existing institution materials and initiatives, available resources, and expertise required to build this message. As noted by the externals, this profile should capitalize on the unique nature and location of the program.</p> |
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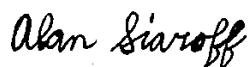
<p><i>developed in conjunction with university advancement, in order to recruit students nationally.</i></p>	<p>The program is directly connected to an international conference that will take place at U of L in 2024, and the program and faculty should find ways to make this investment connect with provincial and national level academic colleagues and prospective undergraduate and graduate students.</p>
<p>5. <i>[[It might be worth the program re-examining the course schedule, course sequencing, and placement hours demands to better fit with the post-Covid student body. We do recognize that this could be a complex and challenging recommendation, however, there are some challenges with credit hours and tuition, if and how prior life experience can be accounted for as prior learning credit, and exploring the number of required hours in practicum placements (is it too high?)</i></p>	<p>The ACP are dedicated to reviewing the curriculum, and have started some activity in this area. As noted, it is a complex issue – there are pedagogical practices and competency outcomes to consider, but a lack of specific accreditation for the program makes it impossible to work from a single established standard. Possible ratification in the profession at the provincial level is underway here, and this group are keeping apprised of those developments.</p> <p>The group are considering at least five steps here wrt/ structure and sequencing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with advising to definitively identify pinch points for student sequencing. • Use ACP faculty knowledge plus student feedback to identify content overlap. • Preliminary plan for reducing overlap plus preliminary plan to add sections at pinch points. • Examine sequence and content against CCSA competencies. • Finalise revised program. <p>The last two steps here may take place, in whole or in part, with the support of an external facilitator as part of an ACP program planning retreat (currently unscheduled). The Dean's Office can commit \$2000 to support this activity.</p>
<p>6. <i>[G]iven the lack of a standard education and training competency model for addictions, it might well be a value for this program to become the leader in that area, and establish what they determine to be appropriate competencies for an undergraduate counsellor.</i></p>	<p>Refer to the response to recommendation 7.</p>
<p>7. <i>It may help to promote cohesion within the program to have the faculty and instructors meet on a regular basis. These meetings do not necessarily need to be face-to-face - they could include a virtual option – we were struck by how rarely the entire program met to discuss issues of growth and development and their challenges. Further, the program should explore including advising and other admin staff in these meetings, to facilitate communication.</i></p>	<p>As noted, ACP is setting [the] intention to meet more regularly and more personally to improve internal cohesion. There is a need for faculty members to embrace service at the regional, provincial, and national levels. This would help drive regulation of the profession and important networks for internships.</p> <p>The ACP group is currently in the process of a job search. That new human resource, ideally in place for July 1 2024, will be a welcome addition to the faculty and highly helpful in addressing some demands in the program, in some capacity along the whole workload (teaching, research, service).</p>

While the External Reviewers' Report contained seven (7) recommendations for improving the Bachelor of Health Sciences in Addictions Counselling program, the area, Dean Doan, and the Academic Quality Assurance Committee each felt that the recommendations were too narrow in focus and were better presented as broad goals to be met before the next review. The committee simplified and consolidated the external reviewers' seven (7) recommendations into the following:

1. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will hold a program wide retreat to discuss the future of the program with the intention of:
 - a. The possibility of changing the program name.
 - b. Review of course sequencing, placement hours, and practicum placements.
2. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will pursue possible accreditation by lobbying government.
3. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will establish and promote appropriate competencies for a counsellor in addictions counselling.
4. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will consider engaging with administration to assess the viability of more fully utilizing the Penny Building to include space for a community street-level clinic, where a variety of health services can be housed, trained, and provide service to the community.
5. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will explore the use of a practicum management/database system.
6. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will develop an ongoing marketing plan in conjunction with SEARS and university communications in order to recruit students nationally and internationally.
7. The B.Sc. Addictions Counselling program will hold meetings including all faculty, instructors, and staff on a regular basis.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Bachelor of Health Sciences Addictions Counselling Program Bachelor of Health Sciences in 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,



Dr. Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee
Professor, Department of Political Science

cc Michelle Helstein, PhD
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)