

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR February 2018 SENATE**

FOR INFORMATION

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY'S
GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

In accordance with the Laurentian University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian's response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

At Laurentian, Gerontology has been offered in various iterations by Huntington University since 1992 when it established a Certificate in Gerontology. Currently the Certificate requires students to take 4 three credit courses in Gerontology and 18 credits as electives for a total of 30 credits. The Certificate can be combined with a specialization or concentration in another discipline.

In addition to the Certificate, at the time of the review Huntington also offered:

- Minor in Gerontology (24 credits) which requires students to take GERO 1016, GERO 1017, 18 GERO credits of which 12 must be upper year GERO credits with 6 at the 3000 or 4000 level.
- B.A., 3 Year, Concentration which requires students to take 90 credits in total. Of those, 36 credits must be in gerontology with 21 of those credits in gerontology core courses and 15 credits in gerontology electives. An additional 30 credits in other disciplines minimum are required to satisfy the requirements for this degree.
- B.A., 4 Year, Major in Gerontology which requires students to take 120 credits in total. Of those credits, 42 credits are required in gerontology, which include 33 credits in gerontology core courses, 9 credits in gerontology electives, including 12 credits at the 4th year level. Other requirements towards the degree are 6 credits in ANTR 1006/07, PSYC 1105 or SOC 1 1015, 3 credits in STAT 2126, 3 credits in PSYC 2127, a minimum of 24 credits towards a minor or 42 credits towards a second major from a different discipline. Additional credits from electives may be required if the student does not meet the 120 credit minimum.
- B.A., 4 Year, Specialization in Gerontology which also requires students to take 120 credits in total. Of those credits, 60 credits are required in gerontology, which include 33 credits in gerontology core courses, 27 credits in gerontology electives, including 6 credits at the 4th year level. Other requirements towards the degree are 6 credits in ANTR 1006/07, PSYC 1105 or SOCI 1015, 3 credits in STAT 2126, 3 credits in PSYC 2127, and the successful completion of an undergraduate thesis in GERO 4015. Additional credits from electives may be required if the student does not meet the 120 credit minimum.

Huntington's Gerontology program has greatly evolved over their 20 years of existence and today the Certificate and the B.A. 3 year are also available on-line. Currently part of the Faculty of Health, the Department has three full-time professors with very diverse backgrounds who specialize in aging from different perspectives—psychology, sociology and biology. The Gerontology Department's strategic plan provides short and long term strategies that will work toward the long-term vision of the program which is to be known as the University offering the best gerontology program in Ontario/Canada and internationally.

On 15 November 2016, the Department submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University.

Part 1 of the self-study presented an overview of the program and then reviewed the program's self-perception of the faculty, physical resources, students, program regulations and courses. It also included a section on planning and concluded with an overall assessment of the program's and weaknesses. There were five Appendices: 1. Student surveys.—2. Faculty CV's (including sessionals).—3. Representative course outlines for both on-campus and distance courses.—4. Statistical summaries of student course evaluations and finally, —5. List of proposed consultants.

On 26 and 27 April 2017, after reviewing the self-study and related documents including Laurentian's IQAP process, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The external was Dr. Linda Caissie, PhD, an Associate Professor currently Chair of the Gerontology Department at St. Thomas University.

While Laurentian's IQAP process requires two Laurentian University faculty members, one from outside the unit but from within the faculty, and a second from outside the faculty, in this review only the latter requirement was met. There was not a second faculty member from the Faculty of Health on the team (although in fairness, Dr. Pegoraro had been scheduled to participate), leaving only a member of the Arts Faculty, Prof. Alison Hood, MA, Assistant Professor and currently Chair of Huntington's Religious Studies Department.¹ In addition, the team consisted of two students in the program, Anyse Laliberte and Theresa Rost.

The site visit was thorough and included visits to Huntington's classrooms, the library, a computer facility, the social centre and the board room/Chapel. Stakeholders consulted included senior members of the university administration both at Huntington and Laurentian, faculty members teaching in the program, and six students in the program. The reviewers noted that while they appreciated meeting the faculty as a group, they wished they could have also met one on one with each. They also wished they had been scheduled more than 45 minutes to meet with the students.

The review report dated May 2017, was frankly in need of a final edit.² In it, one main theme emerged consistently: the success of the distance education program and how valued the Gerontology program is to students.

In addition, the report noted that:

¹ Laurentian's IQAP process requires that in the case of a review of a program housed in a federated university, one of the faculty representatives must be a member of a unit, other than the one undergoing the review, in that federated university so Prof. Hood also met that requirement.

² In it Prof Hood was referred to as Prof. Wood, Dr. Pegoraro as Pegorara, and there were also numerous other spelling, grammar, and diction errors that might have been caught had closer attention been paid to the final text.

- The program was consistent with its mission statement: *to empower Gerontology practitioners and students to assume leadership for advanced levels of knowledge development, innovation and care that will enhance the optimal ageing, holistic health and spiritual vitality of older adults and their families, communities and institutions that embrace them.*
- The program properly reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of the gerontology field. The curriculum follows the biology-psychology-social perspective, which is essential to gerontology.
- Faculty scored high in the following areas related to teaching: (1) course objectives followed, (2) clear communication, (3) quality of interaction, (4) stimulating interest in learning, (5) fair appraisal of student performance, (6) effectiveness as a teacher, and (7) recommendation to peers. "It was evident that the student representatives and the students, who engaged in discussion, were passionate about gerontology and thought highly of the Gerontology program. This is reflective of the teaching they receive."
- Although Huntington University is primarily an undergraduate teaching university with a substantial teaching load, the faculty members are to be commended for what they have accomplished. Considering the current size of the faculty and their teaching load they are still able to offer different program options, distance education, secure articulation agreements, engage in thesis supervision, receive awards, and become involved with the community and professional organizations, all while successfully engaging in research and other scholarly works.
- The program has been successful using various strategies to attract students—its affiliation with the Faculty of Health, its distance education program, its articulation agreements with various community colleges, and its success in cross-listing courses. .
- Students during the on-site meeting did not hesitate to praise the 40-hour internship in Gerontology, which allowed them invaluable experience working with older adults. Students commented on how the internship assisted with their learning through "hands-on" experience, they were able to link theory to practice, and it improved their critical and problem-solving skills.
- Students are actively involved in the community and on campus. Based on a number of projects they are engaged in, these student members have also become advocates for older adults and for the field of Gerontology. These students are to be congratulated for their involvement. Gerontology will need future leaders like these individuals to combat ageism and continue to advocate for older adults.

Amidst these encomiums, there were some concerns expressed about the program in the body of the report. These included:

- Although, it was clearly described in the Unit Self-Study what the learning objectives and expected learning outcomes of each program, it was not always clear for the students interviewed.
- One drawback, according to the on-site interviews, is the inability of students completing neither the B.A., 4-year Major in Gerontology nor the B.A., 4-year, Specialization in Gerontology via distance education
- Unfortunately, the program does not have a virtual classroom
- The program is insular—in spite of its vision to offering the best gerontology program in Ontario/Canada and internationally—it has few contacts with similar programs across the country and it could benefit from the sharing of ideas, support, research collaboration, and the promotion of Gerontology in Canada.
- Some students, especially those interested in entering healthcare, felt more experiential learning opportunities would enhance their Gerontology education and give them more practical skills for employment. This would especially be beneficial for those in the B.A., 4Year, Major in Gerontology.

- It is unfortunate that one statistics course is hindering some students from majoring in Gerontology.
- The department could attract more international students by retooling its curriculum.
- Students should be able to independently study in-depth an area of interest in gerontology under the supervision of a faculty member in lieu of a thesis.
- More cross-listing of courses would increase options available to students and assist with enrolments. Cross-listing with other disciplines also replicates the interdisciplinary nature of gerontology studies.
- There are few graduate programs in gerontology in Canada, and Huntington's program is currently not meeting that potential.
- Part-time faculty members do not have an office to call their own.

On 13 June 2017, the Department submitted its comments on the Report and the Department's comments were followed by a set of comments from the Dean of Health. A synopsis of the of the review team's recommendations plus comments from the Department and the Dean appears below.

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE DEPARTMENT'S (U) RESPONSES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEAN OF HEALTH s(D)

It is to be noted that the recommendations did not appear in order of priority, as recommended by the Quality Council's document, "Best Practice Advice for the Preparation of Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans Arising from Cyclical Program Reviews." Rather the recommendations were organized under four headings: 1. Students.—2. Curriculum.—3. Faculty and --4. Resources.

1. Students:

- R1) More clarification of the objectives and outcomes of each academic program would be beneficial.**
- U1) The department will discuss the existing stated objectives and outcomes with students and determine how to better clarify both to students.
- D1) The unit has addressed the suggestion but should consider setting a timeframe and indicate who from the unit will be responsible for completing this task.

2. Curriculum:

- R2) To offer The B.A. 4-year programs via distance education would certainly increase enrolments, nationally and internationally, and promote the Gerontology program to a wider audience.**
- U2) The 4 year program is being developed for administration via distance. Currently, the development of two fourth year distance courses has been approved.
- R3) To consider virtual classroom in the future would also increase student enrolment.**
- U3) Laurentian University has expressed interest in developing both a virtual and/or a blended classroom model. This is a positive step for development of the virtual classroom mode of course delivery.
- R4) Students interested in applied Gerontology suggested longer internship/practicum hours would be beneficial in providing more skills for healthcare careers.**
- U4) The department will discuss the potential for developing additional practicum base courses.
- R5) To remove STATS 2126 as a requirement for majoring in Gerontology; some students had indicated that the course discouraged them from majoring in Gerontology**
- U5) The removal of STAT 2126 and PSYC 2127 is a relevant point. The department will discuss using alternatives to eliminate these courses as a barrier to enrolment to out 4-year program.

- R6) To consider a Minor in Intercultural Aging to attract more international students.**
 U6) The department will benefit from a Minor in Intercultural Aging. The department will embark on creation of this minor.
- R7) Students suggested offering a course that allows an in-depth study of a topic in lieu of a thesis.**
 U7) The potential to develop a directed readings course in lieu of a thesis is an excellent idea. The department will work on developing at least one course in the next two years.
- R8) To explore cross-listing with other faculties at Laurentian University.**
 U8) No comment
- R9) To consider offering a MA in Gerontology**
 U9) The creation of an MA program is a complex endeavour and will require synergy from multiple stakeholders to support its creation. This question can be presented to the administration at Huntington at some point in the future.
 D2-9) The Unit has addressed each element. However, it would be useful to add more specific details and expected outcomes to ensure that the unit is able to monitor whether the outcomes have been achieved when the program undergoes its next review. For instance, what two specific fourth year distance courses have been approved and what are the next specific steps envisaged to develop the 4-year programs via distance education (timeframe and who is accountable for initiating and seeing the changes through to completion)? What specific steps will be taken and what is the timeframe to develop the minor in intercultural aging? Etc.

3. Faculty

- R10) It was suggested that the faculty network/collaborate with other Gerontology departments in Canada.**
 U10) The department is likely to benefit from clearly outlined program to program participation. The department will review existing undergraduate programs in Gerontology and assess suitable partnership arrangements that are mutually beneficial.
 D10) The department acknowledges potential benefits of creating synergies with other Gerontology programs. It is recommended that the unit give some thought on the timeframe to achieve this objective and to indicate who is accountable for initiating, advancing and eventually seeing the process through to completion.

4. Resources

- R11) To consider designating office space for part-time faculty members of the Gerontology Department and to consider more separate spaces for classrooms.**
 U11) Additional space for classrooms and offices are structural changes that go beyond the department's ability to address directly. We appreciate the recommendation and it will be forwarded to the administration at Huntington University for consideration.
 D11) The department acknowledges the usefulness of this recommendation. The unit is encouraged to provide a brief plan to lobby the administration for additional office space for part-time faculty. The unit should document such efforts to facilitate preparation of the 18-month IQAP report and the subsequent self-study document.

ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN does not endorse the following recommendations from the Review Team:

R9) To consider offering a MA in Gerontology

Such a degree would add too much strain on Huntington's finances since new faculty would most certainly be required and existing faculty would have to devote more time to research than is currently possible.

R10) It was suggested that the faculty network/collaborate with other Gerontology departments in Canada.

This is already occurring. The Chair, Dr. Mercer, has conducted national research on gerontology curricula with the support of other gerontology programs. Further the Department is actively represented on the Ontario Interdisciplinary Council for Aging & Health (OICAH) and it also has institutional membership with the Canadian Association on Gerontology and U.S. based Association for Gerontology in Higher (AGHE). Not only do department members attend both annual conferences but currently Dr. Pianosi is on the Exec of AGHE.

R11) To consider designating office space for part-time faculty members of the Gerontology Department and to consider more separate spaces for classrooms.

A office currently exists for part-timers and is rarely used. There is no reason to establish another space. While classroom space is not ideal, there is adequate space for gerontology classes. In addition, much of the program is Online.

In addition, ACAPLAN has some discomfort with the following recommendation:

R4) Students interested in applied Gerontology suggested longer internship/practicum hours would be beneficial in providing more skills for healthcare careers

While ACAPLAN fully supports the intent of this recommendation, it must acknowledge that the department would need additional staff to manage the practicums. In addition, students should be paid if they are going to participate in full-time practicums as in Co-op programs.

LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline
1. Clarify the objectives and outcomes of each academic program	Discuss the existing stated objectives and outcomes with students and determine how to better clarify both to them	Chair	June 30 2018
2. Offer the B.A. 4-year Major via Online learning.	Expand the number of courses available via Online learning towards an online 4-year degree	Chair with Unit	Ongoing, with annual reports to Dean
3. To consider establishing a virtual classroom	Consult with Laurentian's IT unit about feasibility	Chair	June 30, 2018
4. Consider removing STATS 2126 as a requirement for Gerontology majors	Examine alternative requirements that do not water down 4-year degree	Chair with Unit	June 30, 2018
5. Establish a Minor in Intercultural Aging	Communicate with all academic departments at Laurentian U, U. of Sudbury, Thorneloe and Huntington U. to invite interested faculty to participate in the development of a Minor in Intercultural Aging.	Chair with Unit	June 30, 2018
6. Offer a course that allows an in-depth study of a topic in lieu of a thesis	Develop at least one 3-credit course	Chair with Unit	June 30, 2019
7. Explore cross-listing with other faculties at Laurentian University	Consult Directors of the Schools of Nursing, Social Work about including Gero courses in their degrees—and also examine courses in Anthropology, Music, Nursing, Sociology and Women's Studies for courses that could become Gero electives	Chair	June 30, 2018

The Dean of Health shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean's Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The Executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University's web site.

CONCLUSION

The Gerontology program is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2024.