Ryerson University

Faculty of Community Services
Graduate Studies

1 YEAR FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Graduate Program	**Master of Health Science (MHSc) Nutrition Communication**
	School of Nutrition
	Faculty of Community Services
Peer Review Team	Dr. Shawna Berenbaum (University of Saskatchewan)
	Dr. Barbara Roebothan (Memorial University)
	Dr. Angela Valeo, (Ryerson University)
Site Visit	Oct 6 & 7, 2016
PRT Report	Nov 4, 2016
Program Response	Jan 2017
YSGS Response	Sept 21, 2017
PPC Approval	Nov 2, 2017
YSGS Council Approval	Mar 14 , 2018
PPR Approved by Senate	May 1, 2018
1 Year Follow Up Report	Oct 3, 2019

As mandated by Ryerson Senate Policy 126: Periodic Program Review of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs[1], within one year of Senate approval of the PPR, a 1 Year Follow-Up Report is to be submitted to the Faculty Dean or Dean of Record and the Vice-Provost and Dean, YSGS, on the progress of the implementation plan and any further recommendations. This follow-up report will be also be reviewed by Programs and Planning Committee, YSGS Council, and finally Senate. The PPR Report to Senate may also include a date(s) for subsequent Follow-up Reports.

What follows are the PRT recommendations, the program responses, YSGS responses, and the implementation plan, including the 1 year follow-up status reports by the program.

[1] https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol126.pdf

PPR Recommendation #1

#1: Continue to build on making this program unique with a focus on nutrition communication. Many programs cover aspects of what this program does in nutrition (but do not title their masters as such) but the fact that you have chosen to name the program as a MHSc in Nutrition Communication and to focus on some areas is unique. Identify other key communication issues that would truly help set this program apart.

Program Response:

1. Establish a MHSc Nutr Comm program curriculum committee to:

a) Review the curriculum of other Canadian graduate programs to identify overlap and inform efforts to further differentiate our program.

b) Examine the breadth and depth of the nutrition communication focus reflected in the curriculum.

c) Identify areas where the nutrition communication focus can be articulated more transparently and enhanced.

d) Review curriculum for overlap with courses in our BASc program and recommend adjustments to ensure that learning is additive and incremental.

e) Examine workload across the curriculum.

f) Examine the level of difficulty of course materials and make recommendations for change.

g) Compare the course outlines to the original versions to identify curriculum 'drift'.

h) Examine the NC8101 Epidemiology for Nutrition Research and Interpretation course and identify areas where revisions are required to enhance differentiation of our program.

i) Examine changing NC8104A/B Nutrition Comm Seminar and NC8300 Professional Practice courses from Pass/Fail to graded.

2. Review our program materials to ensure that the nutrition communication focus is clearly articulated. The GPD will take the lead in this activity.

Notes:

We offer the following clarification regarding information contained in the PPR Review Team report:

i) In the three years since Option 1 of our MHSc program was accredited, we have established a roster of nearly 100 organizations and individuals across southern Ontario through which our students are engaged in practical training under the supervision of highly qualified preceptors, not all of whom are dietitians. We routinely place students in settings through which they can engage in media communications (writing for magazines, newspapers, online, preparing for TV and radio interviews, etc.) under the supervision of dietitians who work in these areas. We also place students in areas where dietitians are not (yet) employed, such as community-based food organizations. In these cases, RD faculty members collaborate with our Practicum Coordinator to provide the required oversight, while appropriately qualified organizational staff provide day-to-day supervision.

ii) PPR Peer Review team noted that our program does not provide a mechanism for gauging students' ability to achieve "Awareness of limits of knowledge" which was one of the six areas reflected in the original GDLEs framework. In the revised GDLEs framework, this statement now reads "Cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines."

iii) PPR Peer Review team noted that the admissions criteria include demonstration of high level written communication skills in English.

YSGS Response:
YSGS supports efforts of NC in further differentiating itself from similar programs at other institutions, and in the enhancement of its curriculum offerings.

Implementation Plan:
1a) Establish curriculum review committee. Review ally program curriculum
1b) Identify areas to enhance nutrition communication focus
1c) Identify areas to better articulate nutrition communication focus.
1d) Analyse curriculum drift.
1e) Analyse NC8101 and revise.
1f) Analyse NC8201 and revise.
2. Review program materials for clear articulation of nutrition communication focus.

1-year Follow up/update:
1a) MHSc Curriculum Review Committee has been established and meets bi-annually. Ally program curriculum has been reviewed to inform our efforts to further differentiate the unique aspects of our curriculum in our program materials.
1b) Nutrition communication focus has been emphasized across all courses by ensuring that communication skill development and assessment are addressed as components of every assignment.
1c) Program materials have been revised to emphasize and clarify the nutrition communication focus.
1d) Revision of our GDLEs provided an opportunity to review and address curriculum drift.
1e) NC8101 has been extensively revised and renamed: NC8101 Appraising Scientific Evidence
Emphasis will be placed on understanding how to evaluate and interpret research to make informed judgements regarding complex nutrition issues. Students will learn to interpret the tools used by scientists to measure the impact of interventions and scientific outcomes from a variety of research approaches and study designs. Students will learn how to synthesize knowledge and formulate an evidence-based position on a complex nutrition issue by conducting a systematic literature review
1f) NC8201 (Understanding Health Behaviour) is currently under revision by a new instructor.
2. We have reviewed all program materials to highlight the nutrition communication focus.

PPR Recommendation #2

#2: Work on collaborating with more programs at the university; there might be new and unique ways to work together with the Faculty of Communication and Design (e.g., joint courses/workshop; students collaborating on projects together in the community). This is an opportunity that other universities would not be able to capitalize on.

Program Response:
We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other programs at Ryerson. We have collaborated with the Professional Communication (PC) program since our MHSc was in the planning stages. Four PC program faculty members were included as "founding faculty" in our MHSc program proposal. Since introduction of our NC8209 Knowledge Translation course in 2013, we have ensured access for a limited number of ProComm students and we value the varied perspectives that they bring to classroom discussions.

In 2014-15, we welcomed the opportunity for a small number of our graduate students to take part in a weekend "Strategic Communication" workshop financed by ProComm. For 2015/16, we are investigating the feasibility of purchasing this workshop independently, so that all of our students can attend.

In 2014, our GPD proposed that FCS programs that engage external preceptors to supervise students could collaborate on education and training activities that promote interdisciplinary practice, make efficient use of resources, and create opportunities for preceptors and students from health profession programs to interact and learn together. Since that time, the appointment of an FCS Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Strategic Initiatives has expanded on opportunities for collaboration and information sharing among FCS programs that has benefited our preceptor and student education initiatives. We will continue to pursue opportunities to collaborate with other FCS programs.

YSGS Response:

YSGS encourages collaboration between NC with other programs at Ryerson, both within FCS and outside (continuing its collaboration with Professional Communication).

Implementation Plan:

1a) Complete Strategic Communication workshop.
1b) Communicate with ProComm to explore opportunities to collaborate.
2. Explore opportunities for collaboration with other FCS professional programs.

Follow up/Update:

1. We have successfully implemented ProComm's Strategic Communication workshop for our students for two years. Escalating costs of providing this workshop (offered by a US expert) have made it prohibitive to continue offering it for our students. We have successfully identified other avenues through which to expose our students to this content (e.g., hiring expert dietitians who work in strategic communication)

2. Other collaborations:

- We have engaged School of Nursing faculty to provide therapeutic communication workshops for MHSc students.
- We have engaged staff from many Ryerson departments to provide workshops that are specifically designed to meet the needs of our MHSc students, including the: Equity, Diversity & Inclusion office, Counselling Centre, Career Centre, Library (citation management software, systematic literature reviews, copyright and intellectual property laws, etc.), Student Affairs' Scholar in Residence, Academic Integrity Office, Learning & Teaching Office. These workshops have been incorporated into existing courses, attendance is mandatory and subject matter is included in course assessments.
- We continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other Ryerson programs and departments to augment our curriculum and enrich our students' experience.
- We collaborate with our external PMDip Dietetics partner organizations (Sunnybrook & Women's College Hospital, SickKids, North York General Hospital and Unity Health) to provide workshops that engage both MHSc and PMDip Dietetics students in collaborative, experiential learning. For example, we have implemented a joint program orientation initiative that enables our students to gain access to knowledge specific to each of these partner organizations.

PPR Recommendation #3

#3: Strengthen the research component. We recognize that this is a professional program vs a thesis based program, however, as previously described, the research component and the Epidemiology course could be strengthened. A small well-defined research project where data are collected and analyzed (vs systematic literature searches) would be valuable for students. Projects focusing on researching communication strategies would fit well with a masters focusing on nutrition communication.

Program Response:

We agree with the PPR Peer Review report conclusion that our program does not prepare graduates to create and implement advanced original research that would give rise to publishable findings. As a master's level MRP program, it is not intended to do this. The reviewers note that it can be challenging to achieve this goal within a thesis-based masters program, let alone a program such as ours, in which a major research project is the capstone achievement for students in the three semester Option 2. We do not offer a thesis-based masters; however, it has been possible for some Option 2 (MRP) students to complete a small original research project within the 1-year program, many of which have led to publications.

To address the review team's recommendation, we revised our MHSc GDLEs to ensure that they accurately reflect the research-related potential and expectations associated with our accredited practicum and major research paper options. Our accredited practicum students are not required to complete original research to meet the professional competencies related to research. We ensure that they have opportunities to meet and exceed these research-related competencies through their coursework and practicum rotations.

YSGS Response:

While we support the strengthening of SRC elements within the NC program, we advise against making changes that potentially would compromise degree completion.

Implementation Plan:

Revise GDLEs

Follow up/Update:

We agree with the YSGS concern that strengthening the research component could create a barrier for program completion. In 2017, our GDLEs were revised and implemented to more accurately reflect the research-related expectations of both of our program options: Option 1 - accredited practicum (for which no original research is required) and Option 2 - MRP (for which original research may, or may not, be completed). The unique needs of our Option 2 students can best be met by ensuring that the MRP option can take many forms (e.g., completion of a practice-based project in conjunction with a community organization, an in-depth systematic review of a burgeoning area of practice, a comprehensive communication plan for a nutrition intervention, primary data collection and analysis, etc.) This flexibility is attractive to potential MRP applicants who want to complete a project that can be customized to meet their needs, interests and career goals and is a key recruitment strategy for this option.

PPR Recommendation #4

#4: Strengthen the funding base for the program. It is expensive to offer a program for individuals aiming to attain registered dietitian status. It appears that similar programs in Ontario are paying field preceptors for their services or entering into exclusive agreements. This program may be at a disadvantage in the future in attracting high quality preceptors.
In addition, a program focusing on Nutrition Communication must look at state of the art communication technologies, and these are expensive.
Finally, the current responsibilities of the Practicum Coordinator are not reasonable or feasible. Additional funding to hire a second coordinator is probably warranted. We recognize that all of these suggestions would require external support.

Program Response:

Ontario comparator programs (Brescia and U Guelph) recently started paying preceptors who supervise their students during the practical training portions of their programs. U Guelph is currently tripling enrolment in their accredited MAN program. This practice has already negatively impacted our program's ability to secure needed preceptors and will continue to do so. In some cases, our comparator programs have established exclusive affiliation agreements with some institutions. Given that there are four university programs engaged in practical training for future dietitians in Ontario (Ryerson, U Guelph, Brescia, U Ottawa (French)), we do not believe that it is appropriate or ethical to seek exclusive agreements with institutions to provide such training. Students from all programs deserve access to the high quality, specialized dietetic practice environments available in Ontario.

In the coming months, we will engage the Deans FCS and YSGS Associate Dean Grad Studies, FCS and UPO in discussions of the ways in which program funding might be altered to enable payments to preceptors. Since there are two other dietetic practical training programs at Ryerson (the PMDip Dietetics and the upcoming program for internationally educated dietitians) the impact on these programs will need to be considered.

In terms of ensuring access to state of the art communication technologies, we will continue to seek the support of the Dean FCS and Associate Dean Grad Studies, FCS regarding acquisition of equipment, as well as funding for the ongoing licensing and access fees associated with these technologies.

In the coming months, we will engage the Deans FCS and YSGS, Associate Dean Grad Studies, FCS and UPO staff in discussions concerning possibilities for addressing the current Practicum Coordinator workload issue. As we understand it, the issue is with classification of the position - the actual responsibilities of the position do not match the OPSEU classification. We believe that reclassification of the position would address this issue.

YSGS Response:

YSGS supports the effective and appropriate funding of all our graduate programming. We support efforts of NC to work with FCS towards these goals.

Implementation Plan:

1. Discuss options for paying preceptors
2. Examine technology needs
3. Submit PC position description for review

Follow-up/Update:

1. Our MHSc program practicum semesters are self-funded and short of increasing fees charged to students, there is no alternate source of funding through which payments to preceptors could be generated. Some of our Ontario ally programs charge students additional fees to pay preceptors. To maintain the advantageous affordability of our MHSc program, we prefer to add value to preceptors'

experience by providing free educational and upgrading opportunities through our bi-annual newsletters, online forum, bi-annual education events, and through engagement of preceptors in courses. Preceptors' feedback on the effectiveness and value of these workshops is excellent. Expansion of our external partnerships for our PMDip Dietetics graduate program has opened up new access to hospital based preceptors for our MHSc students. We have also focused our efforts on development of ongoing relationships with both MHSc and PMDip graduates to develop new preceptor capacity. This strategy has been very successful.

2. We examined our technology needs and found cost-effective sources of streaming video and other communication software that is routinely used in our courses.
3. PC position description was reviewed and upgraded in 2018.

PPR Recommendation #5

#5: Aim for more scholarships for students in both options.

Program Response:

We agree that students would benefit from the availability of additional scholarships. In the coming months, we will discuss the possibilities for expanding available scholarships with the Deans FCS and YSGS, Associate Dean Grad Studies, FCS, and the FCS Director of Development.

YSGS Response:

YSGS supports the program response.

Implementation Plan:

Contribute to efforts of Associate Dean, Graduate Programs and Special Initiatives to expand scholarships and awards

Follow-up/Update:

- We contribute to Faculty-level efforts to increase the number of scholarships available to our students whenever possible.
- We have identified several external awards for which our students are eligible and they have been highly successful in those competitions (e.g., the Elizabeth Feniak Award for Technical Writing, the Dietitians of Canada Graduate Awards, the RSU Career Development Awards).
- Since the PPR, the process for OGS administration at Ryerson has changed and our students are now eligible for both Faculty and University level OGS awards. This change has been very advantageous for our students as the number of OGS recipients has grown steadily (1 OGS award in 2015; 6 OGS awards in 2019). In addition, our MHSc program was allotted one QEII Scholarship and one Ryerson Graduate Scholarship for 2019/20 in recognition of the high caliber of our students.
- Lobbying for additional scholarships is an on-going activity.

PPR Recommendation #6

#6: Re-examine the responsibilities of the Practicum Coordinator.

See Recommendation #4 above.

PPR Recommendation #7

#7: Continue to provide preceptors with the support they need. As there is competition for preceptors from programs in Ontario the program needs to continue to monitor the situation and if possible, offer incentives to preceptors.

We remain committed to providing exceptional support to preceptors through the activities of our Developing Preceptor Excellence Committee. We currently offer bi-annual preceptor education events, web-based education resources, a bi-annual newsletter, open classroom events, and a process through

which preceptors can apply for Associate Member status in YSGS as incentives for preceptors who supervise practical training for our students.

In terms of the recommendation to provide incentives (payments) to preceptors, see Recommendation 4) above.

YSGS Response:
YSGS supports the program response.

Implementation Plan:

a) Continue preceptor education and training efforts.
b) Examine preceptor incentives

Follow-up/Update:

- We provide multiple opportunities for preceptors to participate in learning and skill development opportunities, including: fall and spring preceptor education days, access to YSGS Associate Member Status, bi-annual newsletters, creation of a searchable online database with examples of activities that enable students to meet professional competencies, engagement of preceptors in classroom activities and course planning. Annual letters of recognition are provided to participating preceptors for inclusion in their personnel files and annual reports to their organizations.
- We have also determined that while there is strong competition for preceptor opportunities within the Toronto area, there is considerable untapped preceptor capacity outside the GTA/province. We have identified a niche market by recruiting students from outside the GTA/province and making a commitment to identify suitable practicum training opportunities for these students in their home regions. This saves these students considerable amounts of money as they do not have to live in Toronto during the practicum semesters (when they are engaged 40 hrs/week in practicum rotations and cannot work). This strategy has proven highly successful for us as we attract growing numbers of students from outside the GTA/province. This also enables us to draw on underutilized preceptor capacity at hospitals, health units and organizations outside the GTA/province.
- We strive to create a culture of lifelong learning among our students and graduates. We foster long-term relationships with graduates to support their development as future preceptors for our students. In our experience, great preceptors are nurtured and supported through ongoing long-term mutually-beneficial relationship building. We look to our program graduates as future preceptors.

PPR Recommendation #8

#8: Continue to explore the feasibility of conducting an employer survey. We note the difficulty of such a survey, but it could give more insight into community and societal needs.

Program Response:

We will continue to explore ways in which an employer survey could be devised. Since there are confidentiality and privacy issues associated with conducting employer surveys at the individual program level, a provincial or national survey, conducted by Dietitians of Canada or the College of Dietitians of Ontario, might be more feasible and appropriate. We will investigate these possibilities.

YSGS Response:
YSGS supports the program response.

Implementation Plan:

Explore opportunities for national level employer survey with Dietitians of Canada.

Follow-up/Update:

- While Dietitians of Canada expressed interest in development of an employer survey, funding required for this endeavor has not been available.

- In July 2019, we initiated outreach to employers to examine the feasibility of various forms of feedback concerning the suitability of our program curriculum to their employee training needs in preparation for our upcoming accreditation review in 2020.

PPR Recommendation #9

#9: Consider what the students had to say about the program. These did not necessarily transfer into concrete recommendations, but these comments are important to consider nevertheless.

- **course work not that difficult, but there is a lot of it**
- **the cases we work on are not that complex; we had more difficult cases in our undergraduate programs; more challenging cases are needed**
- **more content is needed in some courses and perhaps at a higher level**
- **at times, there is too much self-directedness and teaching themselves and other graduate students**
- **we would like more clinical courses; more needed before rotations on developing clinical skills**
- **if you did your undergraduate degree at Ryerson, some of the courses are exactly the same in the graduate program; need to differentiate more**
- **counseling work in courses was offered too early – too distant from actual placements**
- **offer an orientation before rotations start**
- **more focus on two way communication and team building needed (too much focus on writing reports and on giving presentations)**
- **the program is recommended, but it does have more potential**
- **the unpaid internship is a problem**
- **more scholarships are needed**
- **a better understanding is needed of why we are charged what we are for this program**

Program Response:

We place great value on students' feedback concerning our program. In the coming months, we will examine the following issues through faculty meeting discussions:

a) difficulty of coursework
b) total workload
c) the suggestion re: adding clinical courses
d) overlap between our BASc and MHSc curricula
e) scheduling of counselling workshops
f) ensuring a breadth of communication activities

Please note the following corrections:

a) at the present time, there is no mechanism in Ontario, or Canada, that would enable dietetic interns to be paid

b) students participate in orientations (at Ryerson and at each practicum location) prior to the practicum courses.

c) Students reported that one course in the curriculum is "entirely self-directed" (p. 2, paragraph 2). We can only assume that this refers to NC 8205 Directed Studies, taken by Option 2 students only. Through this course, each Option 2 student works closely with their faculty supervisor to identify course deliverables and outcomes that will support completion of their MRPs. Students meet regularly with their faculty supervisor for guidance, obtain detailed feedback on submitted deliverables, and discuss their progress through mid and end of semester evaluations. A standardized course outline, which is augmented to meet each student's learning needs, is used to ensure that the course meets our expectations in terms of student-faculty interaction, level of learning, and GDLEs criteria.

YSGS Response:

YSGS supports the program response, and echoes the values placed on student feedback before, during, and after the PPR. We encourage the participation and engagement of our graduate students on governance issues through GPCs and Department/School councils.

Implementation Plan:

a) Change NC8300 to graded
b) Address other student suggestions

Follow-up/Update:

a) NC8300 was changed to graded as of winter 2018
b) Address other student suggestions:
    i. Faculty meeting discussions concerning coursework difficulty and workload have resulted in revisions to course content and implementation of a flexible learning approach that empowers students to set their own due dates and deadlines.
    ii. A successful application for funding has enabled us to revise the two practicum courses to align with a blended learning approach, which empowers students to set the place, pace, and time of their learning. These revised courses will be launched in spring/summer and fall 2020.
    iii. The suggestion to include clinical courses would require a major revision of our program that would take away from the nutrition communication focus (see recommendation #1). To address students' anxiety about their readiness for clinical practicum rotations, we have implemented additional clinical refresher workshops in our pre-practicum orientation days that occur immediately before students start the practicum semesters. This strategy has helped to ease tension and apprehension about hospital-based placements.
    iv. Additional counselling practice is also provided during the pre-practicum orientation days. This has allayed much student anxiety.
    v. We have examined the MHSc curriculum to ensure that courses provide depth and breadth of experience in nutrition communication, ranging from completion of academically-oriented systematic literature reviews, to media skills training, to creating social media posts and more. Across the curriculum, students are engaged in a comprehensive array of nutrition communication tools, vehicles, media and strategies that enables them to compile portfolios that showcase a wide range of communication expertise.