

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### **Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**

#### **Water Without Borders, G.Dip**

**Date of Review: March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019**

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the Water Without Borders Graduate Diploma. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it 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 entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.*

#### **Executive Summary of the Review**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Water Without Borders graduate diploma submitted a self-study in February 2019 to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its diploma. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2019. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research, Director of the diploma program and meetings with groups of current students, faculty and support staff.

The Director of the School and the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (February 2020 and September 2020). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

- **Strengths**
  - Uniqueness of the program;
  - International experiential learning opportunity;
  - Career-relevant engagement with UNU-INWEH; and
  - Potential for growth, impact and excellence.
  
- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**
  - Curriculum integration;
  - Governance; and
  - Promotion.

**Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations with the Department’s and Dean’s Responses**

**Implementation Plan Chart:**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Follow-Up</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up</b>	<b>Timeline for Addressing Recommendation</b>
<b>1</b>	Integrate Course content of WOB 701, WOB 702, and WOB 703	Curriculum revision: centralize WOB 701 within WOB 703	Directors of WWB, at McMaster University & UNU - INWEH	1) In progress. Likely to be completed by April 30, 2020.
<b>2</b>	1) Envision the WWB Program within the McMaster context more broadly.  2) Consider enhancing the role of WOB 701 Field Course and of the status of WOB 703 Mini-Paper.	1) Conduct visioning consultation with: President, The Provost, The Director of UNU INWEH, the Faculty Deans and key sister units who could contribute to curriculum enrichment.  2) centralize field experience in current course requirements for WOB 702 and position as central in curriculum revision review:	Program Leads: WWB Program Director, McMaster University Co-Director: Water Without Borders Graduate Program, UNU INWEH	1) By March 31, (to start following completion of WWB 701 Peru Field Course)  2) In progress: Draft Curriculum Proposal likely to be completed by May 15, 2020, to go to Graduate Council in June.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) experience of students,</li> <li>2) existing papers, and</li> <li>3) views of participating students' home departments</li> </ol>		
3	Nurture greater continuity of co-directors - place co-directors who will serve for the coming five years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 5-year appointment to N. Doubleday, effective July 1, 2019</li> <li>2) N. Nagabhatla designated UNU – INWEH WWB Co-Director, effective July 1, 2019</li> </ol>	<p>Dean, SGSR, McMaster University Senate</p> <p>UNU – INWEH, Director, UNU Rector</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Done, approved by Senate, January 2019</li> <li>2) Done, approved by UNU Rector, May 2019.</li> </ol>
4	Clarify roles and responsibilities of partner institutions	Revisit 2010 program approval agreement	Dean, Graduate Studies, McMaster University; Director, UNU - INWEH	Consult and draft renewed program agreement for wider discussion. Prepare draft by April 2020
5	Review implementation of roles and responsibilities of partner institutions	WWB Co-Directors will work with their respective institutional leads	Provost, McMaster University & Director, UNU-INWEH	WWB Co-directors will work with their respective institutional leads January 2020
6	Enhance program identity & visibility	Two-stage process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) internal profiling - this should be primary - the WWB program is only for McMaster students</li> <li>2) external profiling - part of McMaster university profiling and branding e.g. contributing to SDG rankings</li> </ol>	Director WWB, McMaster;	<p>Done:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) internal profiling successfully raised applications from 10 students to 51 students in June 2019</li> <li>2) McMaster University ranked second in the world in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking, for implementing SDGs (April 3, 2019). WWB would be an asset.</li> </ol>

<b>7</b>	Address institutional home	Consult with respective partner institutions; faculty, students; Deans; & wider, “water community”	Provost, Council of Deans McMaster University	Link to the Visioning process in #20
<b>8</b>	Review program size considerations and identify limitations	WWB Co-Directors consult with their respective institutions & request necessary resources	WWB Co-Directors and Dean (SGSR)	Done in 2019-2020 Should continue Goal: annual process
<b>9</b>	Maintain an alumni database.	Maintain the existing database sheet	WWB Co-Directors, & Maintenance by student program staff	Started in September 2018, Continuous process.
<b>10</b>	Promote the success stories of alumni and launch PR activities to increase visibility	Establish websites at McMaster and UNU – INWEH to share alumni news	Communications Staff, McMaster & UNU - INWEH	Survey students annually. Last completed in 2018, repeat in October 2020.
<b>11</b>	Synchronize course content	Shared water vocabulary & and water knowledge foundations	WWB Co-Directors	On-going curriculum development Between September 2019 and March 2020
<b>12</b>	Identify additional guest lecturers	Consult with UNU – INWEH Director and staff; and McMaster Faculty	WWB Co-Directors	5 additional lecturers were identified. September 2019
<b>13</b>	Revisit schedule for WOB 703	Consult with UNU – INWEH Director and staff;	WWB Co-Directors	Completed in May 2019.
<b>14</b>	Identify “champions” in each faculty	Consult with Faculty Deans	WWB Director	March 31, 2020
<b>15</b>	Create an active and engaged advisory committee	Consult Faculty Deans, Designates and Graduate Council	WWB Co-Directors	Consult by March 31, 2020; announce in May 2020

16	Update description of the WWB's administrative structure, procedures	Prepare new handbook once program home & design decisions are final	WWB Director & SGSR	June 30, 2020
17	Secure an institutional home at McMaster University	given the on-going and emergent institutional negotiations at McMaster university around water in general, the needs of WWB should be considered as part of a central visioning of McMaster's water commitments	Provost and Council, Dean SGSR, VP Research & WWB Director	BY: January 2021 (to allow complete cycle of approvals, up to Senate & BOG)
18	Seek scholarships or other funding support to subsidize costs of field trips		Dean & Staff, SGSR; & WWB Co-Directors	Annually, with budget cycle
19	Encourage the co-directors to explore the possibility of expanding the program significantly	WWB Co-Directors consult with UNU – INWEH, Dean, SGSR & Provost to ascertain viability of increased student load, resources required and proposal to obtain required resources (Provost).	WWB Co-Directors consider preliminary expansion in short-term and seek resources for sustained growth in mid-, and long-term.	Done: August 2019. Expanded intake by 33% in 2019-2020, from 9 to 12 students.  To do: Before June 1, 2020, structural issues of funding need to be addressed before further growth is possible.
20	Raise Profile: Develop McMaster branded TED talks on water-related issues; AND Make these TED talks available on the web, this would draw	Recommendation: 1) consider "profile" more broadly within the McMaster context 2) look into Brighter Worlds initiatives such as "Designing	Director, WWB in consultation with Dean SGSR, Provost	This is would seem to be more appropriately considered within an institution-wide analysis.

	attention to the program.	Paradise” to determine possibilities for McMaster-wide water-focused programming.		
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**4) Potential for growth, impact and excellence:**

The visions for the potential for the program are proportional to the need for synergistic approaches to global water concerns and needs, present and future, across scales of human development and the needs of the biosphere. On a trial basis, the decision was taken by the program leads at UNU INWEH and McMaster, in consultation with the Dean of SGSR, that the number of students admitted would be increased to 12 students for 2019-2020 - a very modest number - but representing a 33% increase over the previous intakes, and without new resources beyond those previously drawn from SGSR.

This included an allocation for a 0.2 FTE for administrative support with student applications, recommended in the administrative review in 2016, and paid to the Institute on Globalization and the Human Conditions for the share of administrative time involved.

More importantly, McMaster received over 50 viable applications for admission from students, indicating the existence of a very real interest in, and demand for the Water Without Borders Program. Clearly the potential for growth exists. As can be expected, there will be needs for resources that will accompany any efforts that are to be made to realize this potential. For this reason, we recognize that budgetary issues must be considered urgently, and two possibilities are under consideration. First, that a modest fee (perhaps 1/3 of the regular graduate fee) be levied; and second that the intent and funding strategy of the original proposal for Water Without Borders from McMaster to the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies, be implemented. In the OCGS approved program documents, the funding expectation presented was that there would be faculty-level contributions, in the amount of \$1000 per student, times the number of students from a given faculty. (If we are to pursue this second strategy, in consideration of changing funding models, perhaps this could be pro-rated at 2/3 of the regular student fee). In any event, the budget model will want to reflect flows from any new fee arrangements that are negotiated.

In any event, in order to grow, and deliver international experiential learning, additional resources for faculty support are needed. An expanded program with multiple small cohorts would offer better quality experience, and safety considerations must remain paramount. Once the budget decisions are made, the viable alternatives among programming options will become clear.

The discussion of a budget model is a tangible shared concern and could function as an inducement to bring parties with relevant interests across the faculties into a common conversation about this interdisciplinary program. Once engaged, the discussion of governance could be considered: if the Faculty Deans are prepared to support this in alignment with the OCGS program approval, clearly there

will need a reporting structure to ensure accountability, transparency and alignment. One option, is to take the current reporting line to the Dean of Graduate Studies and to the Provost, and to strengthen it with a requirement for an annual report to the Provost's Council. Undoubtedly other possibilities made be identified in the course of the "visioning exercise" recommended under Item 20 (above).

### **Response by Dr. Doug Welch, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies**

The (McMaster-side) Director of the Water Without Borders program reports to Dr. Welch – he acknowledged that this was a unique situation in the institution and one which also places him in potential conflict with his responsibilities for the overall quality assurance processes of graduate programs.

Dr. Welch noted he was very grateful to the reviewers for their careful assessment of the WWB program and the guidance for ways in which it may be improved, and its impact extended.

The nominal timeline for this report being completed was interrupted by the pandemic and so a few of the target dates are understandably somewhat behind at this point. Nonetheless, the challenges introduced by COVID-19 have also led to new opportunities as Dr. Welch would articulate. Furthermore, UNU-INWEH has just recently received notification that its funding has been extended by five years (until 2025) and they look forward to our continued positive partnership.

During the 2019-20 academic year, tuition for this additional credential was introduced and approved by the Board of Governors effective September 2020. The total tuition paid for the three courses is \$1050/student which provides a very significant contribution to the operating costs of the program and its financial sustainability. In addition, it provides a sound basis for funding future curriculum development.

The program Directors noted early on this year that it was likely that the field trip would not be possible during the 2020-2021 academic year due to travel restrictions. They responded by enhancing online offerings and allowing for a larger number of accepted applicants. At this writing there are very nearly 50 students who have accepted their offers and will participate in WWB this academic year.

The long-term financial model to sustain the program and the contributions of different Faculties is still to be fully established. Dr. Welch spoke with the new Provost, Dr. Susan Tighe, and noted that they are both keen on making these arrangements in the coming year. The disruption caused by COVID has prevented any real opportunity to make such progress in the interim.

Overall, Dr. Welch was delighted to acknowledge how much the leadership of the Water Without Borders program has responded positively to the challenges and changes in circumstance that it has encountered and look forward to continuing to work with them to allow it to prosper. When field trips are again possible, it will be in a far stronger position to offer enhanced programming and bring more McMaster student's minds to concentrate on - and contribute to - the water security challenges of our world.

### **Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation**

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.