External Reviewer(s)

Marilyn Macdonald, RN, PhD  
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1. Outline of the Visit
• Who was interviewed

See Appendix A

• What facilities were seen

See Appendix A for locations of interviews

• Any other activities relevant to the appraisal

No

2. General Objectives of the Program
• Is/are the program name and degree designation(s) appropriate?

Yes

• For graduate programs that wish to have a Quality Council endorsed field(s), are the fields indicated in the proposal appropriate?

N/A

• Are the general objectives of the program clear and are they consistent with University and Faculty missions and academic plans?

General objectives are clear and consistent with the University Academic Plan 2010-2015
3. Need and Demand

- Is there sufficient explanation of need/demand for the program?

The proposal outlines the following related to need and demand: Aging population and professorate; prevalence of chronic illness; changing demographics related to immigration in the York region which they see as a community laboratory. The need and demand can be strengthened by including the annual number of PhD graduates in nursing (Canada), and the number of vacancies in the nursing professorate (Canada). This information is available via CASN.

4. Program Content and Curriculum

- Does the curriculum reflect the current state of the discipline or area of study? If applicable, comment on the appropriateness of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.

The curriculum does reflect the current state of the discipline. The introduction of a curriculum based on critical philosophies/theories/perspectives (post-colonial, post-structuralist, post-modern, feminist, queer, etc.) is very important and fills a gap across Canadian Nursing PhD programs. The proposed PhD program will be very distinct from those offered elsewhere in Canada. The number of courses must be reduced (otherwise it will deter prospective students) and we suggest that four courses be the maximum. For example, philosophy 3 credits, research 3 credits, doctoral seminar 6 credits. Students may add courses (electives) as needed in consultation with their supervisor and committee. Seven new courses are proposed and this is excessive given what is already offered at York U. For example, there are multiple research courses across the Faculty of Health.

The requirements for Comprehensive exam seem excessive and should be looked at. We suggest looking at other PhD nursing programs in Canada as well as practices within other faculties at York U (see comment in section 5 below).

- For graduate programs, is there adequate evidence that each graduate student in the program will take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses?

Yes

5. Program Structure, Learning Outcomes and Assessment

- Are the program requirements and learning outcomes clear, appropriate and in alignment with the relevant degree level expectations?

In general program requirements and learning outcomes are clear and aligned with degree level expectations. In 4C, include that students demonstrate capacity for grant capture through success in obtaining student funding provincially and nationally, and that they work in the research program of the supervisor. There is no evidence of requirements for: research training in the program of the supervisor, and applications for awards and scholarships (could be added under section C (b)).

- Comment on the appropriateness of the program curriculum and structure to support the program learning outcomes. For research-focused graduate programs, comment on the nature and suitability of the major research requirement(s).

Comprehensive exam: Establish the exam structure. For example, two questions (one theoretically focused, one methodologically focused) 15-20 pages each, double-spaced. These can become publications at a later date. We understand there are multiple comprehensive formats used at York University. Completion of the comprehensive exam is essential by the end of year 2 so that the thesis can be well underway. Also, twice yearly thesis committee meetings are normally a minimum requirement of FGS. The more frequent the better to keep the momentum with fixed deliverables for each meeting.

- Are the methods and criteria for assessing student achievement appropriate and effective relative to the program learning outcomes?

To become independent scientists the evidence of research training needs to be articulated. For example, awards and scholarships, presentations, publications, participation in student life.
• For graduate programs, comment on the appropriateness of the program length, including on how students' time-to-completion will be supported and managed to ensure that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

The program length is appropriate, as is the requirement for full-time study. Delivering the doctoral courses over one year is a good strategy to provide for faculty and peer support. Again, yearly progress reports are not sufficient to keep students on track.

• Comment on the appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the program learning outcomes.

The proposed model of delivery is face-to-face and deemed appropriate.

6. Admission Requirements

• Are the admission requirements appropriately aligned with the program learning outcomes?

In general admission requirements are aligned with learning outcomes. It is noteworthy that the admission GPA falls below that required for students to be eligible for Tri-Council funding, a hallmark of doctoral training.

• Is there sufficient explanation of any alternative requirements, if any, for admission into an undergraduate, graduate or second-entry program, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience?

N/A

7. Resources

For all programs

• Adequacy of the administrative unit’s planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.

The governance structure for the programs in the school needs to be added to the proposal to make evident the supports in place for all programs. The school has a MScN program and a coordinator; therefore, it is logical this structure will support the doctoral program as well. The proposal has outlined linkages made across departments in the faculty, and with three research institutes among the 26 that York U has to offer. PhD students will receive $20,000 annually for four years. Emphasis on additional award capture will be essential to allow students to move through the program in a timely manner.

We encourage the development of a human resource plan to make sure that human resources (with adequate nursing graduate training) will be sufficient in 3-5-10 years. The leadership team must consider the dramatic shortage of PhD graduates in nursing (Canada wide) and recruit their best PhD graduates upon completion of the program. Several schools/faculties of nursing in Canada are using this recruitment strategy.

• Appropriateness of the collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program.

The proposal outlines three research foci around which the research programs of the faculty members are organized. The presentations made by faculty demonstrated congruence with these foci.

• Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program, including qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record.

The school proposes admitting 5-6 students per year. This is too ambitious for a faculty not experienced in PhD supervision and where workloads are still oriented toward teaching and not research. We recommend beginning with 2-3 qualified students per year for the early years until you gauge the resources required and build faculty
experience. Six faculty members presented highlights of their programs of research demonstrating capacity to supervise PhD students. Although the SoN has 28 faculty with FGS membership, several retirements are pending, and all 28 faculty are not situated for PhD supervision. We recommend a careful start and attendance to progress and productivity in this exciting new program.

This school like all schools of nursing in Canada has experienced failed faculty member searches. The establishment of this program is an opportunity to prepare some future faculty for York U and elsewhere.

- Evidence that there are adequate resources (e.g. library, laboratory) to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students’ scholarship and research activities.

Yes, well resourced.

**Additional criteria for undergraduate programs only**

- Evidence of and planning for adequate numbers and quality of: (a) faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program; or (b) of plans and the commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program; (c) planned/anticipated class sizes; (d) provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and (e) the role of adjunct and contract faculty.

N/A

**Additional criteria for graduate programs only**

- Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation and foster an appropriate intellectual climate.

See comments above. CVs not provided.

- Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.

PhD students will receive $20,000 annually for four years. Emphasis on additional award capture will be essential to allow students to move through the program in a timely manner. External funding is often essential to PhD studies (sometimes coupled with the supervisor’s own research money) and the connecting of students and supervisors before admission to facilitate successful scholarship applications is an important strategy for success.

- Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

Guidelines regarding assignment of supervisors are recommended. If 5-6 students are admitted a year, supervisory capacity will be exhausted quickly and we recommend beginning with 2-3 very strong candidates to situate the program for success.

8. **Quality of Student Experience**

- Is there evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience?

The faculty presentations (7) demonstrated intellectual quality. The students (3) we met after the presentations were very happy with the MSc program and would not hesitate to apply to the PhD program at York U.

9. **Other Issues**

N/A
10. Summary and Recommendations

This proposal for a PhD in Nursing grounded in a critical perspective is a most welcome addition to doctoral education in Canadian universities. The Vice-Provost Academic, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Dean of Health, Director of Information Technology and all others interviewed enthusiastically support the proposed PhD in Nursing as do we. Based on the written proposal and the site visit we have the following recommendations:

1. Curriculum: Reduce the number of courses to four (e.g. Philosophy, 3 cr., Research 3 cr., Dissertation 6 credits). Minimize the development of new courses.
2. Comprehensive Exam: Establish an explicit format and reduce the requirements; for example: two questions (one related to theoretical perspectives, and one to methodology) 15-20 pages each (double-spaced).
3. Modify the number of planned admissions to 2-3 per year while building faculty resources and experience with supervision.
4. Develop a human resource plan to make sure that human resources (with adequate nursing graduate training) will be sufficient in 3-5-10 years.
Appendix A
York University
New Program: Nursing PhD Program
May 26, 2015
External Reviewer Site Visit Agenda

Time Meeting Escort to Next Meeting
8:00- 9:00 AM
Breakfast with Vice-Provost Academic, Alice Pitt and Associate Vice-President Graduate/Dean of Graduate Studies, Barbara Crow
Location: Schulich Dining Hall Christine Kurtz Landy
9:00-9:30 AM
Meeting with Ilo Maimets – Health Librarian Nursing
Location: Steacie Library Ilo-Katryn Maimets
9:30-10:00 AM
Meeting with Bob Gagne, Chief Information Officer, University Information Technology
Steacie Science and Engineering Building, Rm 108 Elsabeth Jensen
10:00 – 11:00 AM
Meeting with Dr. Elsabeth Jensen (GPD) and Dr. Janet Jeffrey (Director)
Location: HNES 313 Elsabeth Jensen
11:00 – 11:30 AM
Meeting with Dr. Nazilla Khanlou, Chair, Ontario Women’s Health Council
York Lanes 270G
Nazilla Khanlou
11:30- 1:00 PM
Lunch with Graduate Faculty Committee
Location: Schulich Dining Hall
Christine Kurtz Landy
1:00 – 2:00 PM
Meeting with Dean Harvey Skinner, Faculty of Health
Location: HNES444A
Christine Jonas-Simpson
2:00 – 3:00 PM
Meeting with Dean Barbara Crow, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Location: 230M York Lanes
Christine Jonas-Simpson
3:00-3:15 PM Break HNES313
3:15 – 4:00 PM
Meeting with faculty –Presentation of faculty research activities, education, partnerships that
support PhD students in research and education
Facilitated by Dr. Mary Fox
Location- HNES402
Beryl Pilkington
4:00 — 4:30 PM
Meeting with graduate students
Location: HNES B26
Beryl