



Cyclical Program Review of Music Therapy

PROGRAMS:

Honours Bachelor of Music Therapy
Master of Music Therapy

Final Assessment Report

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PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

Please provide a brief response to each of the following.

A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS

(SELF-STUDY, REVIEWERS' REPORT, UNIT RESPONSE)

The Self-Study, Reviewers' Report and Unit Response are thoughtful, detailed documents that balance quantitative and qualitative data. They describe the current state of Laurier's undergraduate and graduate programs in music therapy, and articulate their strengths, challenges, opportunities and aspirations. The frequent quotations from the BMus Self-Study document in the BMT/MMT Self-Study document reflect the interdependence of the Faculty of Music's programs. It is clear that one of Music Therapy's conspicuous strengths is that it is closely integrated with the other programs in the Faculty of Music.

The Reviewers' Report (RR) is a strong and helpful document that makes a couple of missteps that the Unit Response addresses and which will be addressed in this Final Assessment Report. The reviewers grouped their recommendations into six categories, each of which is identified below along with the unit's response.

It is clear from all three documents that the Music Therapy programs are pushing above their weight in terms of attracting students to Laurier. Both the undergraduate and graduate programs are attracting increasing numbers of students and, with no comparable programs in the province and few elsewhere in Canada, the interest in Laurier's programs is apt to continue growing. It is remarkable what the program is able to achieve given that it comprises only three full-time faculty members, each of whom has assumed administrative duties: Carolyn Arnason is Graduate Coordinator, Colin Lee is Undergraduate Coordinator, and Heidi Ahonen is Director of the Manfred and Penny Conrad Institute for Music Therapy Research. It is also clear that the programs are expensive ones and that the cost of the undergraduate program has risen substantively as a result of the final internship's inclusion in the program.

B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The reviewers are clear that the BMT and MMT programs are current in their approaches. "Clear and appropriate standards of entrance with requirements of advanced musical skills and musicianship" (RR, p. 3) ensure that the programs attract cohorts able to cope with the music-centred approach that defines music therapy study at Laurier. "Having the MT training in the music faculty is correlated well with the music-centred approach and the development of advanced musicianship." (RR, p. 3) Other strengths of the Music Therapy programs include the emphasis on clinical practice and the deep commitment of the full- and part-time instructors.

C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Opportunities for enhancement will be discussed in more detail under “Recommendations Approved for Implementation”, but one opportunity in particular will be highlighted here. The reviewers “encourage the program to consider having a greater presence across campus, potentially encouraging Music Therapy in the counseling centre on campus. As well, there may be interest for students from other faculties to consider course work related to Music Therapy, such as Music and Health, Music and Psychology....” (RR, p. 11) In light of Laurier’s new responsibility-centred budget model, this recommendation is important and timely. As noted earlier, Music Therapy is an expensive program – it features studio instruction, small classes, and supervised placements – and opportunities to generate new revenue will need to be explored. Offering courses with wide appeal, which is likely not difficult in areas like music and health, could generate funds to realize expansionary goals broached in the Reviewers’ Report and Unit Response.

D) RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN PRIORITY ORDER

Recommendation #1: Overall Vision Statement

Unit Response: We accept this recommendation, with modification

The external reviewers recommend “a unified mission, vision, and values statement that could inform decision-making in future.” (RR, p. 10) The Unit Response notes that the mission, values, and mission of the BMT and MMT program are different from one another. In the strategic planning process in which the Faculty of Music will become engaged in the fall each program will be asked to define clearly its role and function within the Faculty and within the discipline. Music Therapy will have opportunity through this process to refine its statements so that prospective students and others will clearly understand the strengths and attributes of our undergraduate and graduate music therapy programs. Integrated strategic planning will, in fact, help address a number of areas flagged in the RR.

Recommendation #2: Collaboration and Engagement Outside the Program

Unit Response: We accept this recommendation, with modification

The external reviewers recommend “further collaboration with programs offering related and potentially synergistically aligned programs such as Community Psychology, the Seminary, Entrepreneurship, and Social Work.” (RR, p. 11) We also encourage the program to develop a greater presence across campus.

Under the section on “Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement” we have alluded to the role partnerships and relationships, internal and external, will play across campus, but especially in smaller programs for which robust networks are crucial. In

particular, the development of courses that have wide appeal, and perhaps a program that can attract non-specialist students, will ensure that the unit's self-described "niche programs" are sustainable in challenging times. The expense of the BMT and MMT programs will be an ongoing challenge in the new budget model as revenue generation becomes an increasing priority.

Recommendation #3: Instrument Proficiency and Applied Practice**Unit Response: We do not agree with this recommendation**

Instrument Proficiency and Applied Practice seem to be strengths of the existing programs, so this recommendation and the findings attached to it are indeed baffling. The students' perception will need to be addressed, however. Determining why the students feel the way they do about this and other matters is important.

Recommendation #4: Student Emotional Readiness and Appropriate Therapy Training**Unit Response: We do not agree with this recommendation**

Since there is "no experiential course in the BMT program" the issue is moot at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level, it is hard to imagine how the instructors of "experiential" courses could be exempt from grading our students in these or other courses. The practice in the Music Therapy program is consistent with the practice in similar disciplines, Social Work and the Counselling program in the Seminary and, accordingly, it is agreed that no action is required.

Recommendation #5: Undergraduate Instruction and Supervision**Unit Response: We accept this recommendation, with modification**

The Unit plans to address this recommendation (actually a series of recommendations under one umbrella) by initiating "annual supervisor orientation workshops for undergraduate supervisors as well as graduate supervisors. These workshops will take place in early September and be conducted by the placement coordinator, and both the [undergraduate and graduate] coordinators. We plan to have the revised undergraduate and graduate student handbooks, plus supervisor handbooks available for discussion at the September 2015 orientation workshops." (UR, p. 8) In a program that is so reliant on CAS the purposeful coordination and orientation of the part-time teaching complement is of course encouraged.

Recommendation #6: Direction of the Master's Program**Unit Response: We accept this recommendation, with modification**

The substance and direction of the MMT programs is uncontroversial. Where there is controversy is around the credential that is awarded or, more specifically, the name of the credential. Since a change in degree nomenclature "has substantial implications in the reputation and operations of the program," it is agreed that there is still the need for further research and debate." We concur that "a substantial inquiry into all the areas that would be affected [should be undertaken], collecting data and utilizing research where applicable, prior to making the [proposed] name change." (RR, p. 13) It is expected that at the end of this process it will be easy to make a case for the name change, or not, as the research outcomes dictate.

E) PERSONNEL ISSUES

None were cited. It is acknowledged that "the full time faculty are highly regarded therapists and educators, each with unique strengths that help balance the program offerings. All remain active in scholarly endeavors and are engaged with the students" (RR, p. 6). This assessment is reiterated later in the document: "The three core faculty are actively engaged in both research and pedagogy, each maintaining an independent reputation outside the university" (RR, p.10). It is also acknowledged that "CAS Faculty demonstrate a commitment to the university and the students as well, but with less experience and support there is more variance in their effectiveness and qualifications" (RR, p. 6). This variance is inevitable and there were no instances cited of under-qualified or poorly qualified personnel.

If any change is in order, it applies not to personnel *per se* but to the number of hours worked by the Placement Coordinator. The review supports upgrading "the coordinator position to a more integrated position within the team" (RR, p. 6). The Unit Response is clear on this point:

We strongly agree that hours for the Music Therapy placement coordination position hours must be increased. Not only is this a placement coordination position for 50+ students in both the BMT and MMT programs, the position also provides the primary administrative staff support for both programs.

With current placements and additional internships within both the BMT and MMT programs, plus growing enrolment, the current number of hours for the placement coordinator is insufficient. We are making a strong plea that this 2-day position (10 hours per week) be increased to at least 3 full days per week over 52 weeks. (UR, p. 7)

Whether or not an increase in the Coordinators' hours is possible is a budget matter and in the new budget model will depend on revenue generation.

The only other personnel issue cited was the students' desire for clinical supervisors to have specializations in relevant areas. This is, of course, ideal, although, as the Unit Response makes clear, not entirely practicable.

PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Please include any of the recommendations that came out of the review that are to be implemented by the academic unit.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#5: Undergraduate Instruction and Supervision	Unit	Faculty of Music	September 2015	
#2: Collaboration and Engagement Outside the Program (including increased presence on campus)	Unit	NA	May 2016	
#1: Overall Vision Statement	Unit/Faculty of Music	NA	May 2016	
#6: Direction of the Master's Program (resolve degree name)	Unit/Faculty of Music/FGPS/SAPC/Senate	NA	May 2016	
Note: there are other, non-itemized recommendations (such as the proposed increase in the coordinator's hours) that merit consideration.				