



Experience and Suggestions for Preparing for Accreditation of a Health-Related University Program

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction - A rigorous regular accreditation process is a priority for publically assisted Ontario universities. Preparing for accreditation offers an opportunity for collaborative reflection by program faculty, students, and staff. This presentation will share our reflections on the accreditation process for two northern Ontario graduate health programs, discuss steps involved in the process, and offer suggestions for other programs.

Methods - Documents were prepared in 2019-20 for the Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Rural and Northern Health and the Interdisciplinary Health Master's Program in the School of Rural and Northern Health at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. A core team of students, an administrative staff member, and faculty (Graduate Coordinators and the unit Director) were involved in document preparation. The team worked closely with a curriculum development and review specialist. The process commenced a year in advance of document submission.

Results - For both programs, steps involved included: 1) constructing new program and course learning outcomes linked to evaluation methods, 2) obtaining statistical information, 3) writing the self-study document, 4) assembling appendices (program and course learning outcomes, course syllabi, student survey, faculty information, student handbook, and library resources), 5) identifying suggested self-study external reviewers, and 6) reviewing the self-study document. In close partnership with the curriculum development specialist, much effort was directed to constructing relevant specific program and course learning outcomes, linked to evaluation methods, which will be presented. Statistical information gathered at university and unit levels took time to acquire and format. Suggested external reviewers were selected based on rank, field of study, geographic location, and administrative experience.

Conclusions - It is important to allocate enough time for accreditation self-study preparation and review to produce a clear, organized, formatted, and readable document. Allocating sections of writing the self-study document can work well. Working closely with a curriculum development and review specialist is strongly recommended.