Master of Nursing, Nurse Practitioner

Program Review Summary Report, April 2025

Programs Reviewed:

Poste Masters Diploma

- Nurse Practitioner

Master of Nursing:

- Nurse Practitioner

External Review Team Appointed by the Provost & Vice President Academic:

- Mohamed El-Hussein, Professor, Faculty of Health, Community & Education, Mount Royal University
- D. Stewart MacLennan, Associate Teaching Professor; Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta
- Lisa Carter, Associate Professor, Human Biology, Faculty of Science and Technology, Athabasca University (Internal Observer)

Key Milestones:

- Program Review Kick-off: October 24, 2023
- Self-Study Approved by Faculty of Health Disciplines Faculty Council: May 24-29, 2024
- Virtual Site Visit: October 21, 22, & 24, 2024
- Receipt of External Reviewer Report: December 13, 2024
- Program Response Report to Faculty of Health Disciplines Faculty Council: April 28 to May 2, 2025
- Program Response Report to Faculty of Graduate Studies Faculty Council: May 8, 2025
- Program Response Report to Academic Planning, Priorities and Standards Committee (APPSC) of General Faculties Council: June 3, 2025
- Public Posting of MN-NP Program Review Summary Report: following APPSC meeting
- Annual Program Update to APPSC: June 2026

Summary of Key Findings:

The External Reviewers' Report offers the following overview of the quality of the MN-NP program:

Overall, the NP program is strong. As an institution, AU is well-positioned to lead the way in online and virtual learning, particularly in relation to professional nursing and NP education in Canada. It is well known that this institution has brought credibility to online and distance education. However, we

continue to recognize the significant risks that online programs can devolve into discreditable mills. In addition, we know that there are many predatory online institutions around the world that do offer worthless degrees. AU should remain a leading institution, setting the standard for rigorous, meaningful, and credible virtual university education.

Within the context of the NP program, AU has national responsibilities to ensure that the virtual education for nurse practitioners is excellent. NP clinicians graduating from AU must be reliably prepared to take on important healthcare roles during a time when Canada's healthcare system is under tremendous strain. Many of the faculty in the NP program, the broader Faculty of Health disciplines, and even those sitting at the highest ranks of the University are highly potent leaders who are capable of achieving these aims. Dr Tammy O'Rourke, for example, is nationally known for her work in developing nurse-led clinics in Ontario and Alberta. She was at the forefront of many early negotiations around NP funding. Dr. Knopp-Sihota is a gifted researcher and nurse practitioner who has significantly influenced elderly care. Debbie Frazer is another great example; she is internationally known and has been instrumental in shaping the neonatal NP in Canada and the USA. These are only a few examples of the excellent people who are at AU - and there are many more. In many ways, the people of the AU have the greatest strength.

Importantly, the NP program increased the accessibility to graduate-level NP education. This provides educational opportunities for people living in remote areas, people who need additional flexibility for personal or family reasons, or people who have financial limitations and simply cannot move to a geographical location offering a similar university program. This not only benefits the individual, sometimes who is the first in their family to have achieved a graduate-level education, but it improves the whole community. Communities are enriched by individuals with a graduate-level education, this is an important measure of community health. You are helping to educate NP from rural and remote areas of Canada and indigenous nations, which helps improve (or stabize) healthcare access in difficult-to-recruit areas. This NP program is very important.

As these NP programs are very important, we carefully scrutinized the program materials and reflected on the virtual site visit to provide specific recommendations that should be addressed to further improve the program. We believe that the overall program is strong.

External Reviewer recommendations are addressed in the Program Action Plan below.

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Program Action Plan for Implementation of Recommendations, Including Dean's Response:

	Program-based Recommendations (in order of priority for the program)	Proposed Action(s)	Action Timeline (include specifics)	Measure of Success and Proposed Completion Date of Measure	Individual(s) Responsible for Leading the Action(s) (by role)	Responsibility for Resourcing Action(s) (if applicable; by role)	Dean's Response
1	Program evaluation strategy	- Survey stakeholders (graduates and employers) - Create an AU alumni strategy - Suggest to AU creation of alumni email	June- July 2025-review and revise survey tool April 2025 and August 2025: ask graduating students for contact email and permission to send survey May 2025- meet with advancement to discuss survey dissemination. August 2025, for graduates of 2024 fall term, send survey and analysis of results	September 2025 -data from August survey analyzed -plan in place for regular collection of email addresses and dissemination of survey six months post-graduation	Program Director	Assistance from University Relations -Administration assistance to set and send survey	In agreement. We have already initiated this action plan.

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			Meet with advancement to discuss alumni strategy and email				
2	Address attrition rates	Send survey to those who have not completed two courses in 2024	March 2025 meet with APO advising and student services to discuss survey project April 2025- develop survey tool and eligibility criteria	Survey sent out in June 2025 Sept 2025- data analysis complete October 2025- meet with stakeholders to discuss results and response plan	Curriculum lead	Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning Research assistant to send survey Administration assistance to identify those that meet the survey criteria and to assemble email addresses	In agreement. We have initiated this action plan and in early planning stage.
3	Improve admission criteria	Revise admission criteria	March 2025- submit new regulations to FHD faculty council	April-May 2025- new regulations approved September 2025- new regulations in place for winter admission deadline	Program director	Governance officer to assist	In agreement. We have initiated this action plan.
4	Revise program philosophy	Program philosophy will be revised with new curriculum	April 2025- Curriculum lead	August 2025- new program philosophy and	Curriculum lead		In agreement. We have initiated this action plan with plans to finalize with program faculty

			to develop new philosophy June 2025- In person NP faculty mtg to finalize new philosophy	pedagogy adopted			members at our FHD retreat in June 2025.
5	Increase publications related to NP practice	Develop a mentoring program for faculty authors Encourage faculty research in the area of NP education Search for strategic partnerships	January 2026- develop plan for writing mentoring program March 2026- develop resources for research partnerships, writing for publication	September 2026 Mentoring program in place;	NP faculty committee	Research office to assist with writing resources	In agreement. IN the Fall of 2024, a kickoff meeting was held to introduce Academic CAreer Mentoring Program (A-CAMP) to define clear objectives and goals for the mentoring program, aligning them with the institution's mission and strategic priorities. These goals and objectives outline what the program aims to achieve and how it will benefit both mentors and mentees. A framework was also introduced. The Dean will continue to work towards creating a mentoring culture, supporting career development and skill development through the program. A committee will be formed to support this work and achieve the milestones outlined in this action plan.
6	**Prioritized Leverage Faculty Expertise:** The NP program should utilise the skills, experience, and	Not prioritized – see explanation above					

opportunities provided by its entire faculty to broaden student connections, learning opportunities, and professional experiences.						

University-based Recommendations (in order of priority for the program)	Proposed Action(s)	Action Timeline (include specifics)	Measure of Success and Proposed Completion Date of Measure	Individual(s) Responsible for Leading the Action(s) (by role)	Responsibility for Resourcing Action(s) (if applicable; by role)	Dean's Response
FGS to develop minimum outcome standards for scholarly projects	The scholarly project will be removed from the NP program	Spring 2025		FGS Faculty Council	Provost Office	FGS Dean's response: Agree. FGS Faculty Council could embark upon this work.
Create teaching-focused faculty roles						
Support NP scholars in academic progression						
Share online education expertise through the development of a training program for institutions to foster excellence in online education.						

Establish a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program					
Foster global affiliations and cross-training opportunities			Dean and Vice-Dean FGS can lead grad-related opportunities		FGS Dean response FGS has made many connections in this space (e.g., Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico), but AU needs to clearly articulate this a priority along with support for these efforts.
Set Benchmarks for Online Education Quality: AU should continue to lead in online education by establishing benchmark indicators that define quality virtual/online degree programs.					