Health Sciences 4X03: Collaboration and Peer Tutoring
Course Outline

4X03 Team:

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Course Philosophy and Description:

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s ideas and responding to others’ reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.


There is strong educational evidence that a sense of community is important for the success of all. An important part of our responsibility in the BHS(C (Honours) Program is to develop a community that incorporates aspects of collaboration, peer tutoring and life-long learning. HTH SCI 4X03 is a three unit course taken over four years that encourages the development of this, both formally and informally. Students begin the course in Level I, but officially enroll in Level IV. Each student will be evaluated individually through an assessment of their yearly submissions. Evaluations are **not simply a quantitative measure** of what each person has done or contributed, but rather are based on personal growth and the development of community-building, collaborative learning skills, and other personal elements.
The broad purpose of this course is to encourage the development of a community that is shaped by interaction, cooperation and collaboration. This community consists of ‘learners’ and those who facilitate learning, as well as those who serve as resources and work administratively. It is a dynamic environment that involves a group of individuals coming together to work towards a common goal, learning from one another and integrating ideas and perspectives along the way.

Within the broader purpose of community-building, 4X03 has been specifically conceived as a means to formally and informally foster the development of individual skills needed to successfully contribute to and take part in this collaborative environment. It is understood that each individual will find a place and roles through which they can contribute their strengths and continue to develop their areas for growth. The purpose of 4X03 is to make this intuitive experience an active process, to encourage personal reflection and goal setting in this context and to foster the development of skills that create socially conscious, interactive, lifelong learners.

**Areas of Individual Growth Fostered by 4X03:**

**Positive Interdependence:**
- Teaching and learning from each another
- Feeling of “being in this together” – group cohesion
- Developing a team approach to solving problems
- Dividing responsibility
- Developing trust with peers

**Interpersonal Skills:**
- Developing verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Developing active listening skills
- Integrating one’s own ideas with those of others
- Questioning others and responding to their questions
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Working with others to resolve conflicts
- Explaining information and ideas to others
- Developing patience and the ability to view situations from different perspectives

**Individual Accountability:**
- Following through
- Developing a sense of responsibility to peers, group and community members, staff, faculty, etc.
- Understanding one’s own contributions to group process
- Self-reflecting and self-evaluating to improve functioning within the group
Group Process and Evaluation:

- Identifying individual and group strengths, areas of improvement, and developing the ability to give and receive constructive feedback
- Understanding of group functioning and learning how to optimize the group experience

Course Components and Year-Specific Requirements

1) Collaboration and Community Involvement

One of the central goals of the BHSc (Honours) Program is to foster skills and an environment conducive to collaboration. It is only by building communities and connections with others that we are able to create a rich environment in which to learn, work, and play. Collaborative learning communities necessitate teamwork and the sharing of ideas. They encourage an appreciation of diversity, spirit of cooperation, and a sense of connection between individuals. Collaboration enables individuals, through working together, to help one another and to enact positive change within their communities. It is not limited solely to the classroom experience, but includes informal learning by being involved within the BHSc, McMaster, Hamilton, and global communities, to name a few.

Please note: 4X03 activities must be distinct from any other activities for which you are receiving academic credit. For example, if you volunteer at a soup kitchen as part of your thesis, you cannot use this activity for credit in 4X03.

2) Reflection/Evaluation Forms

A Plan of Action (POA) and Year End Reflection (YER) MUST be completed and submitted to a private conference on LearnLink. The POA consists of setting goals for personal development in the context of the course philosophy and outlining a plan of action for how to achieve these goals throughout the year. The YER involves a reflection on the past year, including how community involvement has addressed the goals specified in the POA and contributed to skill development.

Please note: These forms are merely a guide to help express growth and learning within the context of 4X03, however, students are welcome to communicate and submit these forms in any format that best meets their learning style and needs.

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<tr>
<th>YEAR-SPECIFIC REFLECTION/EVALUATION FORM REQUIREMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POA</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEVEL I</td>
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<td>LEVEL II</td>
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<td>LEVEL III</td>
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<td>LEVEL IV</td>
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* In Level I, completion of the POA and YER forms are **OPTIONAL**, as we recognize that first year is a transition period.

** In Level IV, the YER is a unique version.

3) Feedback

Providing and receiving constructive feedback is an integral part of the course and is provided largely by peers in the BHSc program, but may also be acquired through individual initiatives by those with whom students work, instructors, faculty members, etc.

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<tr>
<th>YEAR-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>PROVIDE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL I</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEVEL II</td>
<td>✓ (optional)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEVEL III</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEVEL IV</td>
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How does the process work? Once the POAs have been submitted for the year, they are anonymously distributed to upper year students for the purpose of providing feedback. Students will provide support via feedback and **will not assign a grade**. Each Level IV student will be paired with a Level III student and each Level III student will be paired with a Level II student. Feedback is due **within 48 hours** after receiving a peer’s POA. This feedback can be considered a starting point for an ongoing, anonymous dialogue between peers. If the student chooses, they can indicate on their POA a willingness to continue in this dialogue.

4) Class

All Level IV students are required to attend the first class of the term to discuss responsibilities for the year as a large group. Individuals are sectioned to a weekly tutorial, which provides a forum for collaboration. As a result of feedback from students in the past, there is now a second large class session scheduled during Term 2.

5) Evaluation

Evaluation and mark determination will take place at the end of Level IV and will be based on personal growth in the context of the course philosophy. This growth will be evaluated using **evidence** from yearly POAs and YERs, participation in year-specific requirements, and community involvement.
This progress will translate into a letter grade using the following descriptors:

A range... has attained a high level of individual growth in all, or almost all, of the skill areas stated. The student is aware of areas requiring further development and has developed strategies for continued growth.

B range... has attained a high level of individual growth in many (but not all) of the skill areas stated or has attained moderate growth in all of the skill areas stated. The student will have developed a plan of action for further development in those areas that need it.

C range... has attained a moderate level of growth in some of the skill areas stated or has attained a low level of growth in all of the skill areas stated. The student cannot appropriately recognize concerns and has difficulty discussing a plan of action.

Course Administration

All of the forms required for the completion of the course are available online in the HTH SCI 4X03 LearnLink conference. The 4X03 conference will also serve as a medium for any questions, comments, suggestions and discussion relating to the course. Announcements in regards to deadlines and specific dates for information sessions will also be posted here. Year-specific sub-conferences will contain information pertinent to each individual level, including the year-specific POA and YER forms.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the fundamental code by which we all abide. In the event one is in doubt, and is about to consider activities that may deviate from this code, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/.

The instructors, program and the university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term.