

Queen's University

Executive Summary of the Review of the Academic Programs in the Department of Sociology

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), the Department of Sociology submitted a self-study on November 20, 2014 to the Faculty of Arts and Science, the School of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, library report and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and the School of Graduate Studies. Appendices to the self-study contained CVs for each full-time member in the Department of Sociology and the library report.

Three arm's-length reviewers (Scott Davies, Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Neil Guppy, Professor, University of British Columbia; and, John Pierce, Professor, Queen's University) examined the materials and conducted a site visit on February 26-27, 2015. The site visit included interviews with the vice-provost (teaching and learning), vice-provost and dean and associate dean School of Graduate Studies, dean and associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and meetings with the department head, heads of cognate units, the librarian, students, staff and faculty.

In their report (March 12, 2015), the review team provided feedback that describes how the Department of Sociology's programs meet the QUQAP evaluation criteria and are consistent with the university's mission and academic priorities. The review team noted that the Department of Sociology benefits from strong leadership from the head, has exceptional undergraduate and graduate students and has been resilient in the face of attrition and adversity.

The review team did report on a number of challenges including the need to adapt the curriculum to an environment of increased enrolment and decreasing resources.

Based on all of the above documentation, a *Final Assessment Report* and an *Implementation Plan* were prepared by the vice-provost (teaching and learning) and approved by the provost (August 19, 2015).

The academic programs in the Department of Sociology have been approved to continue and are scheduled for their next review in eight years (2022-2023)

Prepared by the vice-provost (teaching and learning)

September 8, 2015

Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan for the Cyclical Program Review of the Academic Programs in the Department of Sociology

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate programs delivered by the Department of Sociology. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and, timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Academic Programs in the Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology submitted a self-study on November 20, 2014 to the Faculty of Arts and Science, the School of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The self-study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the academic programs, and program data including the data collected by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and the School of Graduate Studies. Appended to the self-study were a number of documents including CVs for each member of Department of Sociology and the library report.

Two arm's-length external reviewers (Scott Davies, Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Neil Guppy, Professor, University of British Columbia), and one arm's length internal reviewer (John Pierce, Professor, Queen's University) were selected by the vice-provost (teaching and learning) in consultation with the dean of Arts and Science and the vice-provost and dean School of Graduate Studies from nominations submitted by the Department of Sociology. The review team evaluated the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to Queen's on February 26-27, 2015. The site visit included interviews with the vice-provost (teaching and learning), vice-provost and dean and associate dean School of Graduate Studies, dean and associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and meetings with the department head, heads of cognate units, the librarian, students, staff and faculty.

In their report (March 12, 2015), the review team provided feedback that describes how the Department of Sociology's programs meet the QUQAP evaluation criteria and are consistent with the university's mission and academic priorities. The review team noted that the Department of Sociology was committed to providing a rich and valuable student learning experience. In particular, the review team noted that the Department of Sociology benefits from strong leadership from the head, has exceptional undergraduate and graduate students and has been resilient in the face of attrition and adversity.

The review team did report on a number of challenges including the need to adapt the curriculum to an environment of increased enrolment and decreasing resources.

The head, after consultation with faculty and staff in the department, submitted a response to the review team report (April 8, 2015). The vice-provost and dean of the School of Graduate Studies (April 29, 2015) and the associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science (May 12, 2015) also submitted their responses to the provost's office. Specific recommendations were discussed, and clarifications and corrections presented.

Subsequent to receipt of the review team report and the internal responses from the department, the associate dean of Arts and Science and the vice-provost and dean of Graduate Studies, the senate cyclical program review committee (SCPRC) dedicated part of its meeting of June 9, 2015 to this particular discussion.

The SCPRC would like to recognize the following strengths of the Department of Sociology:

- Strong leadership in the department that has led to resilience and creative responses to fiscal challenges;
- Maintaining program quality during a period of unprecedented undergraduate growth (54% increase in enrolment between 2008-09 and 2012-13);
- Innovations in blended and online learning;
- Strong graduate programs attracting good external funding;
- Strong mentorship of graduate students;

The SCPRC would like to identify the following opportunities for enhancement. The department should seek to:

- Expand online and blended learning offerings for students;
- Expand experiential learning opportunities;
- Continue its work to shorten graduate times to completion;
- Reintroduce the independent speaker series;

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Head's, Vice-Provost and Dean's and Associate Dean's Responses

Stronger Presence of Methods Training, Particularly in Quantitative Methods

The review team observed the need for more sustained efforts to ensure that sociology graduates (both undergraduate and graduate) are solidly grounded in research methods. They noted that the most immediate need is in the area of quantitative methods (social statistics, survey methods, research design) but that there is also a need for more rigorous qualitative methods. Students noted that the department currently lacks software and capacity to use programs such as NVivo and AtlasTi. The review team was concerned that Queen's risks falling behind the norm of other U15 graduate programs where advanced training in both qualitative and quantitative methods is increasingly offered.

The department head responded that the absence of advanced courses in quantitative or qualitative methodology is due to the department's EFT decline. However, three of the department's 10.3 EFTS are strong quantitative methodologists available for students requiring assistance or supervision in quantitative oriented research projects. Further, two of the department's most esteemed instructors have taught or now teach the required, core research methods course. The response went on to say that this situation will change with the two future EFTs' arrival and because of greater inter-departmental cooperation in advanced, specialized methodology courses. The head's response explained that under the faculty office's leadership, sociology, biology, geography and kinesiology launched a carefully and cooperatively planned, well resourced, blended learning course in statistics, taught by one of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics' premier instructors, tailored to the specific needs of students in each participating department.

The vice-provost and dean responded that the School of Graduate Studies can facilitate broader university-wide discussions to explore the possibility of offering workshops on, for example, the use of NVivo and AtlasTi software. The School of Graduate Studies can also provide details on the online modules on research methods and analysis currently under development by members of the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies.

Clarify and Broaden Undergraduate Offerings

The review team noted that with the recent increases in enrolment and decreases in faculty compliment a growing gap has emerged between the number of courses listed in the calendar and the number that are actually offered. In light of staffing challenges, the review team recommended that there needs to be efforts to improve undergraduates' knowledge about what courses are actually offered and what those courses will cover. The response went on to say that in the short term, the department may wish to develop one or two more online courses, perhaps in deviance and consumer culture, to help meet its teaching needs. If the faculty complement grows in the coming years, the department may consider increasing the number of required 400-level courses to three and then four, since those courses tend to give students a different and more intensive educational experience than do lower-level courses. And to create more

variety, the review team suggested that the department may wish to expand opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., community service, internships).

The department head responded that with the shift to the activities-based budget model in April 2015, the department has already begun to implement this recommendation. With a larger base budget, the department will offer more undergraduate courses than in the past three years, including core, disciplinary courses the review team report identifies (e.g. Power and Change, Sociology of Work and Technology, Family Diversity, Social Psychology and Applied Sociology). With the plans to offer additional 400-level courses, students will have the opportunity to participate in more seminar courses than their degree requires.

The associate dean responded that Arts and Science regards the Department of Sociology as one of the most high-functioning units in the faculty. It boasts a long history of collegial planning, consensus-based decision making and collaborative program development. As pointed out in the department's response, it is already strengthening its disciplinary core with two new hires (one this year in digital media and technology and one this coming year in the area of criminology and advanced quantitative methods) and should be able to continue hirings as the department benefits from the full implementation of the new budget model.

Clarify and Rationalize Graduate Offerings

The review team noted that while graduate students were generally complimentary towards faculty, several MA students complained that they initially entered Queen's with hopes of doing a thesis, and then were discouraged from doing so (mostly due to limited faculty resources). Those limited resources also created situations where the research interests of admitted graduate students could not be fully accommodated. While these problems can be partly solved in the long run by boosting faculty resources, in the immediate term the department could further clarify its stance on the thesis versus essay streams, and better link graduate admissions to faculty members' ability to supervise, perhaps making admission contingent on latter.

The department head responded that neither he nor the graduate chair had received any comments from students indicating they had moved into the essay option when they preferred the thesis option. Nevertheless, over the next three years sociology will increase its supervisory capacity, reducing any pressures students might feel regarding the thesis option. With increased EFTs, the department will also be able to increase and broaden its graduate course offerings.

The vice-provost and dean responded that the new budget model brings transparency to the availability of financial resources to support faculty renewal and other budgetary requirements. The school of graduate studies will support strategies/initiatives to enhance offerings in the MA and PhD programs in Sociology and assist with graduate recruitment, academic and professional development for students.

Implementation Plan:

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
<p>1. The Department of Sociology, in conjunction with the Faculty of Arts and Science, should develop a strategic plan for faculty renewal that takes into account the needs of the program. The strategic plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify critical positions and positions that will be difficult to recruit; b. Include an inventory of existing skills and core competencies (including scholarly fields of knowledge) and potential skills within the department; c. Succession planning for critical roles in the unit, and; d. Include a strategic plan for recruitment of additional positions should opportunities arise in the future 	Initiate discussion with department head and associate dean Arts and Science	Department head and associate dean Arts and Science	Dean, Arts and Science's <i>annual report</i> to the provost 2016

2. The Department of Sociology should complete a curriculum review of all of its courses in conjunction with the Centre for Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the curriculum review would be to identify potential gaps and/or redundancies in the curriculum. The review should also aim to eliminate courses from the calendar that are no longer offered.	A curriculum mapping of all courses to DLEs, LOs and other indicators of achievement	Head, Department of Sociology and associate dean (Arts and Science)	Dean of Arts and Science's <i>annual report</i> to the provost 2016
3. The Department of Sociology should take action to improve communications with its graduate students. In particular, the department should ensure that all MA students are aware early on of the options (thesis or non-thesis streams) available to them to complete their degrees.	Initiate discussion with Department Head and Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies	Head, Department of Sociology and associate dean, School of Graduate Studies	Vice-Provost and dean School of Graduate Studies' <i>annual report</i> to the provost 2016

The vice-provost and dean School of Graduate Studies and the dean of Arts and Science shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made will be presented in the deans' annual reports and filed in the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (academic). Monitoring reports will be posted on the university web site.

Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan

September 16 2015
Approval Date

Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)



Signature

Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies



Signature

Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science



Signature

Final status of academic programs in the Department of Gender Studies

Approved to Continue

Date of next program review

2022/2023 Academic year