

# Four Year Report (2024) BA Social Sciences Undergraduate Program (reviewed 2019-20)

## A. Summary of Review

1. This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Byron Sheldrick (University of Guelph) and Elizabeth Birmingham (Lakehead University) and one internal reviewer, Rob Alexander (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on January 7-9, 2020.
4. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on May 27, 2020.
5. The academic programs offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences which were examined as part of the review are listed below, with the reviewers having assigned the following outcome categories:

Program (s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA Social Sciences	X			

6. The next review of the BA Social Sciences program will be in 2027/28.

**B: Recommendations**

**Recommendation #1**

The current methods class is an important component of the program and should be retained.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes the program is best-positioned to determine the frequency of the course offering.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Program  
 Responsible for resources: Program  
 Responsible for implementation: Program  
 Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Complete
Action #1 Course has been retained.	2021	2021

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

The course has been retained.

**Recommendation #2**

A curriculum committee for the BA Social Sciences should be established.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

<b>Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)</b>	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Complete
Action #1 A program committee will be formed following the Spring 2021 Faculty of Social Sciences retreat.	2021	2022

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

As per the Collective Agreement, a Program Committee was established. Expressions of interest were sought from faculty members in the Faculty of Social Sciences in the Fall term 2021 and early Winter term 2022. The Program Committee was convened in March 2022, and an interim director was selected for the remainder of the Winter term 2022. The Program Committee and Program Director are now both in place.

**Recommendation #3**

Explore possibility of a capstone course.
---

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

<b>Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)</b>	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 The program committee will explore capstone course options in spring 2021.	2022	2023

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

The Program Committee (PC) discussed and rejected the proposal. The PC primarily views the BASS program as a safety net for students. The PC does not want to create a program that will then draw students away from other substantive programs in the Social Sciences with dedicated faculty members. Further, there are no dedicated faculty resources attached to the program. The PC, in considering whether to offer its method course in the 23/24 academic year, declined to do so, precisely to avoid drawing students away from equivalent courses housed within standalone major programs.

**Recommendation #4**

Better communications about the program and its structure to both faculty and students, including the creation of a website and information materials.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and already in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Communications, website, and information materials have been updated and modified.	2021	Ongoing

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

Communications, website, and information materials have been updated and modified, both in response to COVID-19 and in anticipation of future needs. We view this item as ongoing and iterative, so will modify as needed moving forward.

**Recommendation #5**

Promote the BA Social Sciences as a unique entry point into Brock University.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and already in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 We have integrated this pathway into our recruitment materials.	2021	2021

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

This recommendation flows from recommendation #4 (above), and we have integrated this pathway into our recruitment materials.

**Recommendation #6**

Work to create a richer “cohort” experience for the BA Social Sciences.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**  
Responsible for approving: Program  
Responsible for resources: Program  
Responsible for implementation: Program  
Timeline: Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 The PC discussed the potential of introducing cohort enhancing options.	2021	2023

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

The Program Committee (PC) rejected the above recommendation. The PC primarily sees the program as providing a safety net for students in the social sciences to be able to graduate with a degree in Social Sciences if they fail to meet the standards for a standalone major/combined major degree. The PC does not want to draw students away from programs housed in Departments and Centres, where they are better served by dedicated faculty. That said, the Program does host an orientation event. We also send out information about events and opportunities that may be of interest to the BASS students.

**C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation**

**1. To what extent has the Program achieved the improvements suggested by the reviewers?**

The Program Committee considered all recommendations from the review. We attended to the governance of the program, maintained the methods course, created a unique

entry point into the Program, and updated information materials. The unique entry point into the Program allows for even greater flexibility for incoming students to explore a variety of subjects within the social sciences before (potentially) selecting a major.

**2. What overall impact has it had on the program?**

The program functions well as a general social science program, allowing students who want breadth in the social sciences without a major field of study, to graduate with a BA degree. Further, the program supports students who have struggled to meet the requirements within a major field of study. Those students are able to easily transfer out of their major programs into the BA Social Sciences and use their already completed social science courses towards a BA. Creating a Program Committee helps ensure collegial governance of the program continues. The changes to website and information materials have improved our delivery of pertinent information for current and prospective students.

**3. How is the Program adopting a process of continuous quality improvement?**

Despite not having any faculty members housed with the Program, the small Program Committee has faculty dedicated to ensuring the success of the Program. The Program Committee meets regularly to discuss matters of concern to the Program. The Program serves a vital student retention function for the Faculty of Social Sciences. And, of course, enables a large number of students to graduate with a general degree in the social sciences.

**4. How well does the program now align with Brock University strategic priorities?**

The BA in Social Sciences, which offers a broad and flexible academic experience is in line with the University's strategic plan. Specifically, the Program responds to the Plan's call to be a "destination of choice for undergraduate ...students" and to offer flexible academic pathways. Given the latitude provided for students in course selection, the Program is able to ensure that it reflects students' interests. The wide variety of course offerings, drawn from across the Social Sciences, makes our program both accessible and unique in the Province.

**5. How does this review and its results position the program as it moves into the next review cycle?**

The recommendations from the external review process provided opportunities for the newly implemented Program Committee to carefully think about and discuss the Program. The Committee acted to implement some of the recommendations. The Program has healthy enrollments which speaks to the need for this kind of broad and flexible program at the University.

#### **D. ARC Final Summary**

In final summary of the 2019/20 cyclical academic review of the BA Social Sciences program offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences, ARC has determined the following:

1. That the Reviewers' Recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.
2. That the Program has established a direction for next steps as it prepares for the next review cycle.
3. That the Program has achieved a broad-based, reflective, and forward-looking self-assessment.