

Final Assessment Report

BA Social Sciences Undergraduate Program (reviewed 2019-20)

A. Summary

1. The Program Self Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on November 5, 2019.
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 Reviewers' Report was received on February 11, 2020.
5. The Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on March 12, 2020.
6. The Program response from the Associate Dean was received on March 13, 2020.
7. The Dean of Social Sciences response was received on Apr 13, 2020.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Team gave the BA in Social Sciences program an Outcome Category of:

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

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

This program has both structural and personnel strengths. At the time of the site visit, at the beginning of the winter semester, the program had 1292 students enrolled, many of whom had just been “opted-in” to the program as they were adjudicated out of their previous major. This process, which moved students seamlessly into their new major, is best practice for retention and graduation for students who may be struggling. Other structural strengths of the program are:

- a full-time advisor, program specific for the BASS program, as well as advising available through minor areas and through central advising.
- a brilliantly designed methods class, teaching both appropriate content and skill-development, for students who may be searching for meaning and direction in their university experience.
- multiple off- and on-ramps: the BASS program will not be the final destination of all students who find themselves (by choice or adjudication) in this major. The flexible design allows students to pursue a parallel path to a major, to design their own degree which may include up to two minors, to move toward graduation while searching for their passions, or to find a path to completion/graduation. The program’s flexible design serves all of these students.

In addition, the program has numerous personnel strengths:

- the leadership of the associate dean. Both the current associate dean, ..., and the immediate past associate dean, ..., are thoughtful and charismatic leaders, with strong vision for the program and the ability to articulate that vision.
- the faculty the team met are engaged, student-focused, and working effectively to develop pedagogies that serve BASS’s interdisciplinary students within their disciplinary classes.
the commitment of [one Faculty member] to developing and teaching a truly impressive methods course for this program is especially commendable. Such a course, with its balance of content knowledge and skills building, would be a wonderful addition to any undergraduate social sciences major, and is a model for courses in the contemporary university.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

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

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

We are pleased that the reviewers recognized the value and centrality of the methods course (SOSC 2P90 Research in the Social Sciences) to the overall degree. We are pleased to explore their recommendation to offer the course annually (rather than every other year), and will do so in conjunction with the newly formed program committee (see recommendation #2 below).

The Dean responded:

I agree with the recommendation to explore offering SOSC 2P90 annually.

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 (1st 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

Recommendation #2

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

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

We concur with this recommendation. We will establish, as recommended, a program committee or advisory group composed of representative from the various departments and programs contributing to the degree. This group will assist in potentially developing or identifying more courses and/or pathways for BA Social Sciences students.

The Dean responded:

I agree with the recommendation to establish an advisory group composed of representations from unit to assist with developing and identifying and developing courses and pathways for BA Social Sciences students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st 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

Recommendation #3

Explore possibility of a capstone course

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

We welcome this recommendation, and will explore this possibility with the program committee once it is established.

The Dean responded:

I agree with the recommendation that the advisory group explore the possibility of a capstone course.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

Implementation Plan (1st 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

Recommendation #4

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

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

We welcome this observation and recommendation. With the assistance of the Faculty of Social Sciences Communications team, we have already begun to develop a new program website that sets out the program requirements in a clear and accessible fashion. We have also developed new informational promotional material for recruitment events. We appreciate and will implement the recommendation of increased direct communication via distribution lists and potentially also newsletters to faculty, advisors and students.

The Dean responded:

I agree with the recommendation to better communicate the program. The FOSS communications team has already created a website and is working on various virtual means to connect with present and future students in the program to increase recruitment and retention.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
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Recommendation #5

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

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

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

The Dean responded:

I agree with this recommendation which is being implemented by the FOSS communications team through the website, recruitment materials, and internal and external communications.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st 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

Recommendation #6

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

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

We appreciate this observation and recommendation. We will explore potential cohort enhancing options both with the program committee and at the level of the Dean’s office, such as piloting a meet and greet and encouraging a potential student association with representation on the program committee.

The Dean responded:

I agree with this recommendation and support it using the Dean’s office resources to implement it, based on input from the program committee, faculty, advisors, and students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

Implementation Plan (1st 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

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,3,4,5,6