

Final Assessment Report

Labour Studies Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2017/18)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on November 14, 2017.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Kendra Strauss (Simon Fraser University) and Elaine Bernard (Harvard University) and an internal reviewer, Lynn Arner (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on February 11-13, 2018.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 2, 2018.
5. The Department's response was received on March 27, 2018.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on April 3, 2018.
7. The Dean of Social Sciences response from Ingrid Makus was received on Apr 13, 2018.

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

The academic programs offered by the Department of Labour Studies which were examined and rated as part of the review were:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA (Honours) in Labour Studies*	X			
BA with Major in Labour Studies		X		
BA (Pass) in Labour Studies		X		
Minor in Labour Studies		X		
Certificate in Labour Studies			X	
Combined Honours and Pass in Labour Studies with: Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies		X		
Combined BA with Major in Labour Studies with: Political Science, Sociology		X		

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

1. The Labour Studies Department's programs are supported by exceptional faculty: enthusiastic, committed, energetic, innovative in course development and approaches to teaching, and able to integrate their own research interests with the design of the programs.
2. The departmental culture is collegial and constructive. The Director has built strong and enduring relationships with other departments, as reflected in the Program Committee composition. The Department is both student-focused and on the leading edge of defining the discipline intellectually.
3. The programs are grounded in a well-developed, broad and innovative curriculum. Experiential learning is supported by, but not limited to, the co-op program. The Department has succeeded in expanding its programs by achieving sustained enrollment growth through appealing to a diverse range of students.
4. The Department has a strong track record of community engagement, which provides a solid foundation for growth rooted in good community relationships. Students benefit directly from this engagement, as in the capstone course (LABR 4P21, "Labour and Social Justice Organizing").

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

Departmental growth through expansion into new areas--health, environment, humanities, technology and the future of work--and faculty positions to support this new growth.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department is enthusiastic about the prospects for continuing to diversify our course offerings and for identifying other opportunities for student learning by collaborating within and beyond the Faculty of Social Science. We would require the additional faculty positions identified by the reviewers in order to implement this recommendation.

The Faculty Dean stated that:

The Dean's office notes that requests for faculty positions to meet new growth are subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to explore departmental growth through expansion into new areas to be accepted. ARC considers the recommendation for additional faculty positions to lie outside the Committee's jurisdiction and expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation #2

Consultation on future and role of Program Committee (including governance structure and regulations)

In its response, the Unit stated:

While many of the specific regulations referred to by reviewers are mandated by the Collective Agreement, the Department agrees that there is a need to review our governance structure more broadly. The Department intends to undertake this review promptly.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees with the Department's intention to review its governance structure and make appropriate changes, consistent with the Brock Collective Agreement.

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:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #3

Higher qualifications for instructors: PhD in hand preferred, or ABD (but currently enrolled in a doctoral program)

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department concurs with this recommendation and is committed to working with Human Resources and the Dean's Office to implement improvements to qualification requirements that are consistent with the collective agreement between the University and CUPE Local 4207.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees that improving the qualifications of Instructors in a way that is consistent with Brock Collective Agreements is desirable and agrees with the Department's proposal to work through appropriate University channels to facilitate improvements.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the Committee's jurisdiction and has implications with respect to Collective Agreements between Brock University and its various labour groups.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #4

Higher educational credentials for T.A.s (MA students, including those beyond the first year of their MA programs, or MA in hand if not current graduate students)

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department concurs with this recommendation and is committed to working with Human Resources and the Dean's Office to implement improvements to qualification requirements that are consistent with the collective agreement between the University and CUPE Local 4207.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees that improving the qualifications of Teaching Assistants in a way that is consistent with Brock Collective Agreements is desirable and agrees with the Department's proposal to work through appropriate University channels to facilitate improvements.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the Committee's jurisdiction and has implications with respect to Collective Agreements between Brock University and its various labour groups.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #5

Development of student research skills (engagement with and integration of library and information services; methods and methodology, strategy on integrating methods and methodology, especially for Honours)

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department agrees with this recommendation and is committed to exploring additional options with our Library colleagues. The Department will also be revisiting our curriculum in the coming years as part of implementing Recommendation #1, and will study the options for expanding Honours' students methodological training as part of that process and based on the number and availability of full-time faculty resources.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees with the Department's proposal to develop student's research abilities through the Library and to revisit the Departmental curriculum. Note that requests for additional departmental resources are subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. It is expected that the development of student research skills will be addressed as part of the ongoing curriculum review by the Department.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #6

Development of a fourth-year variable topics course to enhance fourth-year course offering

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department agrees that at least one additional 4th year course is required to effectively sustain our Honours program. There are currently only 1.5 FCE 400 level courses housed in Labour Studies (far fewer than any other Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences).

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees with the proposal to add a 4th year course that draws on the resources of the four-tenure track faculty.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee stated that:

the committee members agree with recommendation number 6.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. It is expected that the development of a fourth-year variable topics course will be addressed as part of the ongoing curriculum review by the Department. It is noted that "variable" in this case does not refer to current Brock calendar language.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #7

Strategic review of certificate program and its purpose and audience

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department's Certificate program has been moribund for well over a decade, largely because the courses required to complete the certificate are not offered online or during times convenient to publics interested in pursuing that option. We agree with the reviewers that revival of the Certificate Program provides the Department with an excellent opportunity to bring new people and resources to the University. The Department commits to working with the Dean's Office to investigate the feasibility of establishing an online Certificate option targeted towards labour movement activists across Canada. A market exists for this type of program and Athabasca is the only other university in Canada offering such a program. Given the Department's stellar national reputation, its close relationships to national and international unions, and its impressive social media presence, a suite of online courses designed for the certificate program could serve the needs of union members across Canada seeking a university education while simultaneously expanding the number, format, and variety of courses offered to our traditional students at Brock. This would, of course, require additional faculty resources, but would also open a brand-new revenue stream.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees that investigating the feasibility of establishing an online Certificate option is desirable and notes that resources for new program development are subject to the budgetary approvals and processes within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. It is expected that the review of the certificate program will be addressed as part of the curriculum review by the Department. The Department is expected to proceed through normal channels of advocacy for the resources to support this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation #8

Build on initiatives on high school entry to create strategy for longer-term growth in direct entry (ambassadors)

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department commits to establishing a formal recruitment plan after consultation with existing majors.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office agrees with the recommendation to establish a departmental recruitment plan that integrates with Faculty and University-wide high school recruitment initiatives.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Department is encouraged to work with other groups on campus (e.g. Recruitment, Marketing and Communications) in order to move this forward.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation #9

Better information for student pathways after graduation

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department will work with the pertinent University offices to ensure that students are aware of pathways after graduation, as well as develop our own resources to better inform students. Following the recent migration of the departmental web site to Brock's new web software, we are in the process of updating our content and will ensure that resources are provided.

The Faculty Dean stated:

An additional newly-appointed social media person in the Dean's office can assist the Department of Labour Studies in updating its website presence.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation #10

Long-term growth and retention needs long-term, dedicated, contiguous accessible space. This includes dedicated space for students to gather, which could help facilitate student engagement with other students.

In its response, the Department stated:

Space has long been an issue for our Department. The location of faculty and part-time instructor offices in one building and our administrative assistant and teaching assistants in a different building across campus is certainly an odd setup.

Our overarching concern, however, is for greater student space given that none currently exists. Labour Studies faculty and part-time instructors currently share the 3rd floor of the PLAZA building with the Department of Political Science. This space has a meeting room, designated as the "Political Science meeting room PLZ 324", which our Department has access to on an ad hoc basis through a formal booking request process. The large meeting room is locked and sits empty on most days. Given the underuse of PLZ 324, we would like to see the space opened to students from both departments to use on a drop in or scheduled basis when it is not in use for departmental meetings. This could include use by department-affiliated student clubs, or informal study groups.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office notes that securing space needs entails working through the newly-formed University wide space committee which has Faculty representation

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for space resources.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #11

Clear and timely information on funding and grant opportunities for faculty

In its response, the Department stated:

The Office of Research Services' web site and section of the Share Drive synthesizes research opportunities for faculty, and these are supplemented by regular emails from the ORS and from the Social Justice Research Institute. We will ensure that all faculty members are aware that this information is available.

The Faculty Dean stated:

In addition to the sources of information listed in the Departmental response, the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences provides assistance and information to faculty in securing internal and external funding for research and scholarship.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be already current practice.

Implementation Plan

No action required.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations #2,5,6,7

Second Priority:

Recommendations #1,8,9

Not accepted:

Recommendations #3,4,10

Not requiring further action:

Recommendation #11