



Four Year Report (2020)

Sociology Graduate and Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2015/16)

A. Summary of Review

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

1. The academic programs offered by the Department of Sociology which were examined as part of the review were:

BA in Sociology
MA in Critical Sociology

2. The Review Committee consisted of: Patrizia Albanese (Ryerson University), Wallace Clement (Carleton University) and Danny Samson (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 20-22, 2016.
4. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on October 5, 2016.
5. The reviewers assigned the programs an outcome category of "Good Quality".

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|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Excellent Quality | Good Quality | Good Quality with Concerns | Non-Viable |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------|

6. The next review of the undergraduate program in the Department of Sociology will be in 2023/24.

B. Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Strike two sub-committees: one for core Theory and another for core Methodologies to report to the department as whole. The theory committee should review its current offerings with a total of one full credit required. Is that sufficient? The methodologies committee is to consider adding an offering SOCI 3PXX Qualitative Sociological Methods II and changing the requirements for Honours and Pass students to at least three from SOCI 3P11, 3P12, 3P02 and 3PXX for Honours and at least two from that list for Pass.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to strike 2 sub-committees to examine core Theory and core Methodologies to be not accepted. However, the Department agrees that the issue raised by the reviewers regarding theory and method curriculum should be considered by the Department Committee with a view to providing clear directions to students such that a balance between theory and methods content is present in the program.

The Committee encourages the Department to undertake an ongoing process of curriculum review and revision, utilizing the curriculum map which was prepared for the cyclical review.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Responsible for approving: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of the academic year 2016/17 |

| Actions Taken | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Action #1 Development and implementation of concentration in Applied Social Research & Data Analysis. Secured resources from Dean's Discretionary Fund to research, improve and market the above concentration | 2017 | 2020 |
| Action #2 Developed and received approval to launch a new degree in Critical Criminology. | 2016 | 2020 |
| Action #3 Created a new 4 th year course on Digital Social Research to offer students skills relevant to social media and social network analysis | 2018 | 2019 |

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|--|-------------|-------------|
| <p>Action #4 Hired new tenure-track faculty member (for a position in the Political Economy of Gender, Social Policy and Work) with established expertise in - and expressed willingness to teach - Critical Social Theory</p> | <p>2019</p> | <p>2020</p> |
|--|-------------|-------------|

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

While making appropriate use of the curriculum map prepared for its cyclical review, the department has made significant progress over the past four years in reflecting upon and enhancing its theory and methods curriculum. Its new degree in Critical Criminology is nested within the structure of the BA in sociology, and as such will both fill out existing theory and methods courses and add greater theoretical formation in criminological theory. The department's new concentration in Applied Social Research and Data Analysis, for which innovative new courses have been developed and supportive research funds have been secured, will help our students package their methodological expertise for careers that are demanding data driven, theoretically informed social science students. Our commitment to enhancing our theory curriculum as an integral part of what we do is evident on a variety of fronts - including, most recently, the hiring of a new tenure-track faculty member with particular expertise in critical social theory.

Recommendation #2

For the Graduate Methods requirement, have the Graduate Committee consider recasting SOCI 5P02 to reflect more of the logic of the research process approach toward developing proposals for Master's theses and Research Papers, especially in light of the suggested methodologies requirements above.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Responsible for approving: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Social Sciences to report by end of academic year 2016/17 |

| <p>Actions Taken</p> | <p>Year Action Started</p> | <p>Year Action Completed</p> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <p>Action #1</p> | <p>2017</p> | <p>2020</p> |

| | | |
|--|------|------|
| Discuss and then implement the scheduling of required theory and methods courses in separate terms | | |
| Action #2 Differentiate 5N00 from 5P02 more clearly by establishing it as the primary space for helping students put together a supervisory committee, apply for grants, develop a research statement and achieve other pragmatic program goals. | 2017 | 2020 |

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The department has devoted much thought to defining and clarifying the relative roles and functions of SOCI 5P02 and 5N00. In 2019/20, the required theory course was offered in the fall term and the required methods course was offered in the winter term for the first time. So far this change seems to be working well as this change left 5N00 (which runs across two terms and is led by the GPD) more clearly as the space for supporting students in putting together a supervisory committee, applying for external grants and developing an initial research statement in the fall term. The 5P02 winter term course then serves to engage students in deeper methodological exploration while "actively facilitating ...work on, and writing about, the practicalities of doing research." We await student feedback on how the winter term combination of 5P02 and 5N00 is working but so far it seems to be successful. Faculty appear to be happy with the change and student representatives on the Program Committee have not raised any concerns.

Recommendation #3

Faculty replacement. As the current complement of 17.75 reduces, consider the following priorities in hiring: the broad areas of gender, sexuality, work and labour within a political economy perspective; the capacity to teach theory; the capacity to teach qualitative methodologies. In all appointments the hiring of Indigenous scholars should be prioritized where possible.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. ARC expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for faculty replacement.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Given that this recommendation was not accepted insofar as it sits outside of the committee's jurisdiction, no actions have been listed and no explanation provided.

Recommendation #4

The department as a whole should reconsider its identity as Critical Sociology by expanding to Critical and Engaged or some similar broadening to reflect the activist and engaged way in which the program undertakes critical sociology. This includes recasting the Community

Engagement Course which should be opened to Sociology majors for program credit and consideration of offering a similar course at the third year specifically for Sociology majors.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be in two parts.

a. The Committee considers the recommendation that the Department “reconsider its identity by expanding its focus to Critical and Engaged” to be accepted.

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 2017/18

b. The Committee considers the recommendation on “recasting the Community Engagement Course” (SOCI 2F60) 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 2016/17

| Actions Taken | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Action #1 Development of an Honours Co-Op in Sociology | 2017 | 2020 |
| Action #2 Development and introduction of a minor in Africana Studies | 2018 | 2020 |
| Action #3 Development of nine new courses that expand existing offerings, including two courses in the new Critical Criminology degree stream which focus on community engagement in the criminal justice system. | 2017 | 2020 |
| Action #4 Development and launch of alumni outreach campaign | 2017 | Ongoing |

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

While the department has not changed its name as initially recommended, it has taken strong steps towards foregrounding and enhancing its long-standing commitment to student, societal and community engagement. Since its Year 3 report, it has launched an Honours Co-Op in Sociology that will offer another pathway for students to engage experientially with the Niagara community and beyond. It has also introduced a minor in Africana Studies - a transdisciplinary minor that will offer students course based and community learning experiences focused on Africa and the worldwide African Diaspora. It has developed two new courses in the Critical Criminology degree stream focused on community engagement in the criminal justice system. Finally, the department has been undergoing an alumni outreach campaign over the last year, compiling over 40 testimonials from sociology alumni. Many of these testimonials reflect the activist and socially engaged mindset of our alumni and how they incorporate this thinking into their current lives and careers. Such materials are presented at annual recruitment events and through the department's social media platforms.

Recommendation #5

Support the development of the Critical (and Engaged) Criminology initiative on the model of a double-major with Sociology. Consider some modifications to the course offerings which would enrich the Criminology content to include a half course at the first year, two credits at the second year, two credits at the third year and 1.5 credits at the fourth year for a total of 5.0 criminology credits. Consider including some psychology electives within the offerings.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be advice to the Department as it prepares the proposal for the new Critical Criminology degree program. ARC believes the Department is best-positioned to determine how to incorporate this advice in developing the new program.

Implementation Plan

No further action required.

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Beyond confirming the recent launch of our new degree in Critical Criminology, we assume that no actions need to be listed here and no explanation provided.

Recommendation #6

We recommend the University increase the teaching opportunities for Post-doctoral fellows. Brock is fortunate to have attracted five current post-docs in Sociology. It is a mutual benefit. Key to their career prospects is to teach in their areas of expertise and enhance their experience for the job market. It is also a significant opportunity for Brock to inject fresh perspectives into its teaching, especially in Sociology where there have been few new appointments. This may involve making this possibility a priority in collective bargaining. PDFs is a sign of scholarly maturity for the university and their presence should be encouraged and supported.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted. The Committee acknowledges the intent of the recommendation; however this issue lies outside of the Committee’s jurisdiction and is a matter of labour relations between the University and its various labour groups.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Given that this recommendation was not accepted on the grounds that it sits outside of the committee’s jurisdiction, we assume that no actions need to be listed here and no explanation provided.

Recommendation #7

We recommend that Brock University consider reducing the number of committee members on MA theses from 3 to 2; and consider allowing a course-work only option MA, as a default for a select number of students identified by the Graduate program Director as being able to benefit from that limited option.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be in two parts.

a. The Committee considers the recommendation to reduce “the number of Committee members on MA theses from 3 to 2” to be not accepted at this time as it is not in line with existing University regulations. However, the Department may wish to review the results of the survey which was suggested by the Dean of Graduate Studies, “to ascertain the approach(es) being used for MA thesis committees” across the province.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

b. The Committee considers the recommendation to “consider a course-work only option MA” to be accepted in principle and understands that the idea is under review by the Department. The Committee believes the Department is best-positioned to determine strategies to move forward with this issue.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Responsible for approving: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of the academic year 2017/18 |

| Actions Taken | Year Action Started | Year Action Completed |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Action #1 Informal survey of graduate students and 4 th year undergraduate honours students to gauge interest in a coursework-only 'terminal' MA pathway. | 2017 | 2018 |
| Action #2 Informal research by departmental chair and departmental advisor on coursework-only MA pathways at other institutions, and on rules and regulations governing such models at Brock. | 2017 | 2018 |
| Action #3 Ongoing discussion of the possibility a coursework-only MA stream at the MACs Program Committee, ultimately leading to the decision to reject this option for the time being. | 2017 | 2019 |

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

As noted in previous reports, the recommendation to reduce the number of committee members on MA theses from 3 to 2 was not accepted because it was not in line with existing University regulations. Also noted was the department's provisional rejection of a proposed coursework-only "terminal" MA pathway, on the grounds that students in such a stream would not be eligible for university funding during their studies and that sufficient student demand did not seem to be present.

C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation

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

Even in cases where the reviewers' recommendations were deemed out of line with existing University regulations or with the committee's jurisdiction, the department has succeeded in responding in spirit to all of the improvements suggested by the reviewers. It has engaged in an ongoing process of curriculum review and revision with a view to enhancing course and program outcomes. It has engaged in consistent reflection on the soundness and balance of its core theory and methods offerings, and has used this as the foundation for developing new courses, concentrations, minors and degree programs. It has more clearly differentiated SOCI 5P02 and 5N00, and has taken practical steps (eg. through scheduling changes) to facilitate student confidence and success over the fall and winter terms. It has engaged in a number of curricular changes and promotional efforts pertaining to experiential learning and community engagement. In these and other ways, the department has striven to achieve the

improvements suggested by reviewers in the process of revitalizing and renewing its own programs.

2. What overall impact has it had on the Unit's programs?

The Sociology Department was pleased with the reviewers' overall positive impression of our unit, and with many of the recommendations they offered. Such recommendations, in combination with all of the self reflective work entailed by a cyclical review, have done much to refresh and bolster our ongoing commitment to offer a diverse curriculum, enhance student learning and produce competitive career-ready graduates. The years since the cyclical review have been very productive for the department, which has overseen the development of new degree programs, concentrations, minors, outreach and retention efforts, and much else.

3. Is the Unit adopting a process of continuous quality improvement for its programs?

The department is more committed than ever to seeking out ways to improve the quality, reach and appeal of its programs. This commitment is reflected in many of its recent innovations - for instance, in the development of an undergraduate and graduate co-op stream, the launching of a stand-alone degree in Critical Criminology, the implementation of an Applied Social Research and Data Analysis concentration, the creation of an Africana Studies minor, not to mention other ongoing efforts in curriculum development (eg. the development of courses in timely and topical areas, the development of a number of new online courses, etc), student outreach, and so on. Recognizing the general overall pattern of declining enrolments over the past decade, the department has taken (and will continue to take) strong steps to renew itself, attract additional enrolments, establish new community connections, enhance the career prospects of graduates, and foster a dynamic culture of intellectual debate and social engagement.

4. How well do the programs now align with Brock University strategic priorities?

Most, if not all of the innovations listed above align quite clearly with Brock's strategic emphasis upon offering a transformational and accessible academic and university experience, enhancing the life and vitality of the local region and beyond, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and accessibility. The department has had a longstanding and pronounced commitment to innovation and transdisciplinarity, the generation and mobilization of knowledge, to freedom of thought and expression coupled with academic responsibility, and to the institutional fostering of inclusivity, accessibility, diversity and reconciliation.

5. How does this review and its results position the programs as the Unit moves into the next review cycle?

We believe that the preceding years of innovation and recalibration, in combination with our strong commitment to continually enhance and improve our programs, have positioned us very well for the future. In particular, the new degree in Critical Criminology has already attracted a great deal of attention (including a surprising number of initial applicants) and

promises to significantly increase enrolments, drive faculty recruitment and raise our profile in coming years. Innovations such as these bear much promise for reinvigorating our department, spurring growth in enrolments and faculty complement, and enabling us to further our mission as creative, socially engaged educators and researchers with much to contribute to Brock, Niagara and the world at large.

D. ARC Final Summary

In final summary of the 2015/16 cyclical academic review of the programs offered by the Department of Sociology, ARC has determined the following:

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