

Final Assessment Report

Legal Studies (BA)

March 2015

Introduction

In accordance with uWaterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a summary and synthesis of (i) the external review of the BA program in Legal Studies, (ii) the program response to the external review, and (iii) an implementation plan for improvements that list specific actions, timelines, required resources and responsibility.

St. Jerome's University (SJU) administered the Legal Studies degree program from 2005/06 to 2009/10. In November 2009, SJU and the Arts Faculty at the University of Waterloo entered into a Protocol agreement to jointly administer the Legal Studies program. The intent of the partnership agreement was to support the progress of the Legal Studies program in view of the recommendations from the 2008 program review. The new joint-program would be administered by the two universities through their respective (and newly designated) departments of Sociology and Legal Studies. A Legal Studies Academic Advisory Committee was established to provide academic oversight and direction for the Legal Studies program. The external reviewers expressed the view that the "student experience as between SJU and UW appears to be 'seamless', even if for faculty members, there remains some divide 'across the creek'."

In addition to the administrative change described by the Protocol agreement, most of the recommendations from the 2008 review have been realized completely or partially, resulting in significant curricular improvements, availability of co-op for Legal Studies students through Arts and Business and key faculty appointments. Suggestions for establishing a Legal Studies Research Centre and a new graduate area in "Law, Crime, and Security", for the Sociology graduate program, did not materialize.

Self-Study Process and Site Visit

Legal Studies submitted their self-study to the Office of the Associate Vice President, Academic on September 2, 2014. The report was prepared by the uWaterloo Associate Chair of Legal Studies in consultation with the chairs of the departments of Sociology and Legal Studies at uWaterloo, SJU, and the Academic Advisory Committee of Legal Studies. The self-study closely followed the standard template based on uWaterloo's IQAP and also included survey information on employment from alumni who have graduated since 2010.

The site visit was conducted October 30-31, 2014. The external members of review team were Dr. Susan Boyd, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia and Dr. Diana Majury, Department of Law and Legal Studies, Carleton University. The internal member was Dr. Brendon Larson from the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at University of Waterloo. During the site visit, the review team met with administrators, faculty and staff from both departments of Sociology and Legal Studies in Faculty of Arts and SJU, undergraduate students, and the Associate Vice President, Academic.

The external reviewers' report was received on November 18, 2014 and the department's response and implementation strategy, with timelines, responsibilities and resource needs assessment, was received on February 3, 2015. Endorsement of the plan was received on February 3, 2015 from the Dean of Arts and from the Vice-President, Academic and Dean (Interim) at SJU.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, verbatim in many cases, from the self-study, the reviewers' report and the program response.

Program characteristics

Legal Studies is an inter/multidisciplinary program with requirements representing an array of disciplinary contents and approaches. To achieve this, Legal Studies is delivered through a distributed model by which students are required to complete core and elective courses from a broad selection of disciplines taught by the respective departments in these areas, as well as several core courses that also include an interdisciplinary focus.

The Legal Studies Program currently offers seven academic plans:

- Four-Year General Legal Studies
- Honours Legal Studies
- Honours Legal Studies/Arts and Business Co-op (joint honours plan)
- Honours Legal Studies/Arts and Business Regular (joint-honours plan)
- Joint Honours Legal Studies
- Honours Legal Studies/Sociology, Criminology Specialization (joint honours plan – to be inactivated in 2015)
- Legal Studies Minor

The self-study identifies and differentiates, in a preliminary way, the learning outcomes unique to each Legal Studies academic plan and for each of the required courses within the Legal Studies curriculum map. The self-study indicates that more work needs to be done to integrate specific plan-level learning outcomes with the more general UDLEs developed by both OCAV and the University of Waterloo.

The Legal Studies program currently has 314 majors (2013/14), and rose steadily from an enrolment of 68 in 2005/06. The external reviewers commented that "In the current climate of declining BA enrollments, the LS figures are very impressive. The program has the potential to be a central pillar of the UW BA." The academic plans contributing to this growth are mainly the four-year General plan and the Honours Co-op plan.

Legal Studies students are overwhelmingly Canadian, though over the past 4 years (since 2010) the proportion of international students has been increasing. Legal Studies students are also predominantly female, with the proportion of female Legal Studies students averaging 65.5% over the period of self-study.

The overall average retention rate for each class of Legal Studies major over the self-study period is approximately 60%, a number that varies from a low of 45% in the Four-Year General Legal Studies program to 67% in the Honours Legal Studies program. Since 2007, Legal Studies has produced 445 graduates. About 20 percent of Legal Studies graduates from 2010 onward have found employment in the justice sector and related legal assistant work. The education sector remains the largest employer of Legal Studies graduates.

In 2012, the Legal Studies Academic Advisory Committee initiated an extensive curriculum review of the Legal Studies program. In 2014, the Academic Advisory Committee approved significant changes to the Legal Studies plans and courses in order to: reduce the overall complexity of the Legal Studies plans; enhance the logical progression of students through the program; increase the range of courses available especially at 3rd and 4th year; increase the identity of legal studies courses through cross-listing agreements with partner programs and departments; and redesign program requirements in accordance with plan standardization initiatives in the Arts.

The departments of Sociology and Legal Studies at uWaterloo (with 17 regular faculty) and SJU (with 3 regular faculty) supply almost 60% of the teaching resources for Legal Studies majors each year. The remaining 40% of the teaching is done by faculty from 15 other departments and programs at uWaterloo and its affiliated institutions.

Summary of Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- The wide-ranging curriculum offers a variety of lenses through which to learn about law's role in society.
- Significant curricular improvements will roll out in 2015 involving both streamlined program structure (consistent with the current Arts Faculty plan standardization initiative) as well as course offerings.
- The program has attracted engaged, committed and active students.
- Research active faculty are a significant asset – in 2014, the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at uWaterloo ranked among the top 101 to 150 Sociology programs in the world (of 700 programs according to QS).
- Teaching evaluations are above the Faculty of Arts average.

Challenges/Weaknesses

- Specific plan-level learning outcomes have only been identified in a preliminary way – more work is needed to map these to UDLEs to better describe the learning indicators for the program.

- The external reviewers found the “learning outcomes and objectives either somewhat generic, lacking a specific LS focus, or seeming to focus on a somewhat narrow approach to law/legal studies.”
- Course availability is identified as an issue, including offerings in the Spring term.
- The reviewers suggested that the “requirement to take Statistics alongside two other research methods courses in Sociology is onerous and perhaps excessive.”
- The nature of available TA assistance (senior undergraduate students) discourages a broader range of types of assessments in LS courses.
- For some key courses (namely LS 101, LS 401, LS 402), there is a lack of consistency between different sections of the same course, prompting the reviewers to state that students “will emerge with a different knowledge base depending on which section of the course they are enrolled in.”
- The reviewers commented on the absence of a Legal Studies community of scholars at uWaterloo and SJU that would naturally “foster an active research culture” that would, besides benefiting researchers, “enhance the intellectual quality of the student experience and would provide a solid foundation for building a strong graduate program in LS.”

External Reviewers Recommendations for Program Improvement and Program Response

Overall, the external reviewers were impressed with the quality of the program, its students and its faculty who were seen as strongly qualified and productive. They saw the Legal Studies program as being “a clear success for the university and a definite draw for students as well as for LS scholars”; and as being innovative in that “the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to legal subjects provided in this program brings new questions, new analyses, and new responses to the study of law, regulation, and legal issues.” They noted “the program is strongly rooted in a sociological approach” and recognized that this should not be surprising given that the program’s departmental homes. The reviewers suggested that “the program faculty would want to ensure that this influence reflects a conscious decision and a chosen focus for the program rather than largely being a function of its location.”

The departments provided a detailed implementation plan that responds to each of the reviewers’ recommendations and lists specific actions, timelines, required resources and responsibility.

Action Items	Who is Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Source
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1. Enhance the experiential learning opportunities for LS students through the expansion of LS focused co-op opportunities, community based learning opportunities, and exchange opportunities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New LS plans facilitate access to SOC co-op opportunities in addition to existing ARBUS opportunities 	UW Chair	F15		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Co-op Officer integrated with UG committee and designated to act as liaison with Cooperative Education and Career Action 	UW Chair	Done		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourth-year seminar (LS 434 Sociology of at-Risk Youth) includes experiential learning component. 	UW Chair	Done		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchange opportunities explored with Warwick University UK 	UW Chair	Ongoing negotiations for F16 implementation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-curricular programs offered via SJU (Beyond Borders) 	SJU Chair	Done		

2. In the revision of plan and course learning outcomes attention should be paid to the articulation and inclusion of components that are specific to the field of Legal Studies.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum sub-committee to review learning outcomes, consult with LS faculty, and integrate LS courses with learning outcomes. 	LS Curriculum Committee	S16 - Learning outcomes to be included in year-two follow-up report.		
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3. Institute a mechanism for regular and formal review of all Legal Studies course offerings with the aim of deleting courses that have no expectation of being offered in the next three years. Consult further with partner departments to ensure that Legal Studies cross-listed courses have sufficient legal content and that sufficient places in courses are available and guaranteed for Legal Studies students. Make some Legal Studies courses, especially required courses, available during the summer term.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New UW Legal Studies DTL position scheduled to teach two Legal Studies courses in the spring semester. 	UW Chair	S16		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum sub-committee constituted to review LS curriculum and provide annual report to LS Committee 	LS Curriculum Committee	Done		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey LS students to identify program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. 	LS Curriculum Committee	W16		

4. Plan a Legal Studies faculty retreat devoted to discussing the focus and direction of the program.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retreat Planned for Spring 2016 once proposed LS plans and new budget model implemented. 	LS Committee Chair	S16	Meeting facilities and facilitator	Arts Dean; CTE
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5. Consider removal of the statistical methods course as a program requirement and make it an optional course in the program. (wml:d -- done)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LS 280 (Social Statistics) removed from 2016/17 academic plans (maintained as option for LS degree) 	LS Committee, UW and SJU Departments	Done (UGAG approval pending)		
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6. Develop a plan to ensure that TAs who are adequately qualified and trained to grade a full range of types of assessments are available as needed to the Legal Studies program. (wml: e)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop TA coordination plan to ensure Legal Studies 101 receives sufficient TA resources 	Chairs (SJU and UW)	F15	Additional TA resources	VPAD SJU / Arts Dean
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7. The Legal Studies program faculty members should develop a policy on the issue of consistency among the different sections of Legal Studies 101 and of Legal Studies 401 and Legal Studies 402 and guidance as to basic course expectations. (wml:f)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate content of LS 101 and LS 401/402 	SJU Chair	F15		
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8. New tenure track positions in Legal Studies should be made a funding priority for SJU. Every effort should be made to create two new tenure track positions in Legal Studies over the next two years.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed two new LS TT hires; one in 2015; one in 2016 	SJU Chair	LS TT appointment approved for F15	TT appointment	VPAD SJU
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9. To the extent possible, make Legal Studies as an area of expertise a priority in filling any new tenure track positions in the Sociology Department at UW, with a goal of at least two new hires with expertise in Legal Studies in the near future. Ensure that all future faculty advertisements for positions in Sociology note that scholars with expertise in Legal Studies are encouraged to apply.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize Legal Studies for new hires at UW 	UW Chair	2 TT positions in process with LS as possible secondary area; 1 DTL in process with LS as primary area.	2 TT and 1 DTL appointments approved for 2015	Arts Dean
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10. Take steps to build a stronger Legal Studies research community and to enhance communication between the SJU and UW faculty who teach and research in the field of Legal Studies. This communication would ensure that the curriculum is coordinated. It would also importantly enhance a sense of research community, which is particularly crucial for the smaller number of Legal Studies faculty at SJU, in order that they not feel isolated. (wml: g)

• Develop Legal Studies Speaker Series and/or brown-bag workshops.	LS Committee	F15		
• Retreat will also serve as a mechanism for this.	LS Committee Chair	S16	See #4 above	

11. Develop and implement a marketing strategy for the Legal Studies program.

• Participate March Break open house	LS Advisors (UW and SJU)	Done		
• Participate in “declare your major” event	LS Advisors (UW and SJU)	Done		
• Develop LS 102 in-class speaker series	LS 102 Instructors	Done in W15 and ongoing		SJU Chair
• Promote co-op opportunities through joint majors	LS Committee Chair	F15		
• LEARN site developed to communicate opportunities and events to existing LS students	LS Advisor	Done		

12. Conduct a comprehensive survey of Legal Studies students, with one of the goals being to improve retention rates.

• In conjunction with curriculum review, develop survey questions to identify program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.	LS Curriculum Committee	W16		
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13. The Legal Studies program should work with the Alumni Office to develop a better tracking system for its graduates and work with the Development office to develop fund raising opportunities.

• Establish Departmental Alumni Officer to liaise with Development Office, coordinate Alumni Affairs, and communicate with Alumni.	UW Chair	S15		
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14. Develop a graduate program for Legal Studies students, which would attract students and also ensure retention of Legal Studies faculty. Consider a graduate program or stream that does not require them to complete all of the Sociology requirements.

• Develop “Socio-legal” specialization for SOC MA program with MRP and Co-op option.	UW SOC Grad Affairs Committee	F16		
• Promote Crime, Law, and Security stream within SOC MA.	UW SOC Grad Affairs Committee	F15		