

Two Year Progress Report

Sociology (BA/MA/PhD)

July 2016

Background

A review of the undergraduate and graduate programmes in Sociology was conducted October 7-8, 2013. At the time of the 2013 Self-Study Report, the Department comprised nineteen regular faculty members and four affiliated and adjunct members. Over two days, two consultants met with the Chair, Associate Chairs of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, Administrative Assistants, 19 graduate students and 11 faculty members, in addition to several University officials.

The two External Reviewers made eight recommendations. This report outlines the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations made in that review. We have responded to all of the reviewers' recommendations. Recommendation #3 (advertising and integration of thematic areas) and #4 (the connection between thematic areas and department's strengths) are addressed in the Sociology Programme Retreat and Undergraduate Programme Review sections. Recommendation #5 (logical progression of courses) is addressed in the Undergraduate Programme Review section.

Responses to the reviewers' recommendations

Recommendation 1– Sociology Programme Retreat

We recommend that the department conduct an off-site strategic planning exercise to clarify their plans for the future. We further recommend that the exercise be conducted by a facilitator who has had experience in restructuring academic programmes. The most important issue to be addressed in the planning exercise is to identify core areas of strength and concentration for the programme and to develop strategic clusters/streams that provide a clear focus on the department's strengths. The exercise should also ensure the integration of the Sociology and Legal Studies programmes while retaining their separate identities.

The reviewers recommended an off-site strategic planning exercise. In October 2014, the Chair organized a "Sociology Programme Retreat". An experienced facilitator from the Centre for Teaching Excellence led the retreat. The Department identified four *Thematic areas* of research strength and teaching concentration. The Department's new Thematic areas are:

- Crime, law, and security
- Knowledge, education, and digital culture
- Migration, borders, and transnationalism

The Chair acknowledges the significant contributions of Dr. Janice Aurini (Associate Chair, SOC UG Affairs) and Dr. Martin Cooke (Associate Chair, Graduate Affairs) in preparing this document.

- Social inequality and public policy

These thematic areas are reflected in the new structure of the undergraduate and graduate programmes. They will inform hiring and new course offerings. The Department's website and promotional materials are updated to reflect the new Thematic areas.

Status: Completed.

Recommendation 2– Undergraduate and Graduate Curricula Review

We recommend that the department's areas of specialization be reviewed during the curriculum review to ensure they reflect the department's current priorities and interests.

The department conducted a thorough review of its undergraduate and graduate programmes and made substantial changes.

The Department has identified new core streams/clusters and has rationalized its course offerings accordingly. The Department solicited teaching preferences from the faculty and organized our courses into the Thematic areas by 100, 200, 300 and 400 levels. We identified where the Thematic areas could be strengthened, developed courses to fill in these gaps (e.g., SOC/LS 387 to build on SOC/LS 228), and cross-listed one course with PSCI to strengthen our Social Inequality and Public Policy Thematic area.

We have further plans to articulate the progression of courses by Thematic area. In the Fall of 2016, the Undergraduate Committee will consider assigning existing or new 4th year courses to each Thematic area to ensure that each Thematic area will have at least one 4th year course taught per calendar year. The emphasis of each course will vary depending by the expertise of the course instructor, but each course will serve as a capstone experience for students specializing in the Thematic area.

Undergraduate courses that are no longer taught have been de-activated. We also reviewed and made changes to our undergraduate pre-requisites to ensure that course requirements are consistent and show clear, year-over-year progression.

To help undergraduate students progress successfully through our programme, the Department created academic sequencing sheets and academic checklists. The sequencing sheets provide students with information about what courses they should take each term. The academic checklists provide students with an easy way to manage their courses and ensure that they successfully fulfill programme requirements. We use these sheets when advising students. They are also made available to students on our website.

The Department has made substantial changes to our website. A few of these improvements include the creation or enhancement of three "Find out More" buttons on our homepage that direct students to Sociology, Legal Studies, and Joint-Majors options. We created a "teaching" link that includes profiled courses reflecting the four Thematic areas. We also feature student testimonials from several of our former undergraduate and graduate students. Our Sociology Society is now prominently displayed on the main menu to encourage greater student participation.

We have developed an Undergraduate Handbook for Sociology. The Handbook will be given to all incoming and current undergraduate students and will be posted on our webpage in January 2017. This comprehensive Handbook includes a summary of our Thematic areas, contact information, programme requirements, course selection advice, and drop/add information.

The Department canceled all specializations to conform to undergraduate “plan standardization” requirements. The Community Research Methodology specialization has also been removed from the graduate calendar.

The Department has focused its graduate programmes on the core areas of departmental strength. The MA and PhD programmes are now aligned with the four new Thematic areas. PhD comprehensive exams are now taken within the four Thematic areas. We have removed more than a dozen graduate courses from the calendar (pending Senate approval). The Graduate Committee has also proposed a new course sequencing to ensure clearer progressions for graduate students in each Thematic area (pending Department approval).

Status: Completed/Ongoing: We have completed a full review of our undergraduate and graduate curricula/ Progression sequencing for graduate students is ongoing.

Recommendation 3–Publicizing Thematic areas

We recommend that the departmental specializations be more widely publicized so that students could select them in advance rather than after they have completed their degree requirements. Further, these specializations should be reviewed as part of the overall curriculum review suggested below.

These changes are described above, in the response to Recommendations 1 and 2.

Status: Completed.

Recommendation 4– Connecting Thematic areas to Department’s strengths and interests

We recommend that the department’s areas of specialization be reviewed during the curriculum review to ensure they reflect the department’s current priorities and interests.

These changes are described above, in the response to Recommendations 1 and 2.

Status: Completed.

Recommendation 5– Logical progression of courses

We recommend that part of the curriculum rationalization process include the development of a logical progression of courses with 3rd and 4th year courses having prerequisites to ensure that students have sufficient preparation for their upper- level courses.

These changes are described above, in the response to Recommendations 1 and 2.

Status: Completed.

Recommendation 6– The Creation of a targeted Sociology 101

To address the issues arising from the heavy service teaching commitment, the department might consider offering sections of the first year course that are directed to students interested in social sciences and likely to major in sociology. A second strategy to increase the number of majors would be to increase the number of joint majors. In particular, a joint major programme with Legal Studies would build synergies within the department.

Since 2014 the Department offers a small, specialized section of SOC 101. This section of SOC 101 enrolls students who, upon application to the University, indicated an interest in Sociology. This section of SOC 101 is capped at 70 students and is taught by a regular faculty member with high teaching evaluations with the purpose of attracting majors and engaging students. The course provides students with more substantive depth and writing assignments. Students are also trained to collect and analyze primary data and apply sociological concepts in written assignments. Faculty members from each of the Department's thematic areas are invited to guest lecture and to discuss their current research projects during an information session provided during class time.

The Department is also encouraging students to consider a joint-major in Sociology and Legal Studies. Since the Programme Review, the number of Sociology/Legal Studies Joint-Majors has increased from 26 (2013) to 46 (2016). Since 2015-2016 we have actively promoted this option and we anticipate a steady growth in joint majors. In addition to promoting the Sociology/Legal Studies Joint-Major in SOC 101, we also promote this option on the Department's website and provide student support (e.g., joint-major advising sheets).

Status: Completed.

Recommendation 7– Co-op Placements

While recognizing the difficulties in obtaining placements, we encourage the department to keep working on the co-op programme and to also consider other options such as unpaid placements or experiential learning courses in order to provide students with experience in the world of work.

The Department supports a Departmental Co-op option for Sociology and Joint-Sociology majors. The lack of placements and low Departmental Co-op enrolment before the 2013 review has been redressed through promotional activities and enhanced coordination with the Co-op Office. The Department website now includes the contact information of our co-op officer and detailed information about co-op work reports and guidelines. We have created academic sequencing and academic checklists for all of our degree options including co-op. Since 2015-16, all regular and co-op academic plans and requirements are clearly laid out on our website. Department Advisors and Associate Chairs promote the Departmental Co-op option to students at information sessions, through our promotional materials, and at the Fall Open House. The Departmental Co-op option is now clearly displayed on the 2016-17 Undergraduate Studies Calendar Academic Plans, Sociology honours, webpage. Since the 2013 Programme Review, we have made significant progress in this area, increasing the number of Departmental Co-op students from 16 (2013) to 27 (2016).

The Graduate Committee has also worked to re-vitalize the Departmental Graduate Co-op option, particularly for the SOC Master's Programme, and has worked with the Co-op Office to clarify the progression sequences for thesis, research paper, and coursework MAs. Prior to 2016, only one student registered for the Department's Graduate Co-op option. In 2016, the Department admitted three students to the Graduate Co-op option.

Status: Completed/Ongoing: The visibility and viability of the Departmental Co-op option at the UG and Graduate levels has been enhanced. The Department will continue to evaluate and improve the Departmental Co-op option for students.

Recommendation 8– new faculty positions

While recognizing budgetary restraints, we recommend that Sociology continue to be given new faculty positions to replace retiring faculty and that these hires be consistent with the department's strategic plan.

Since the 2013 Self-Study Report, the Department has replaced all but one of the regular faculty positions needed to maintain its full complement of nineteen members. Of seven retirements since 2013, five replacement positions have been secured and one replacement in process. The replacements include a new Canada Research Chair position in Law and Society, two Digital Media specialists cross-appointed with the Stratford campus, one Migration specialist, one Methodology specialist, and a Lecturer position in Legal Studies. The Department is currently in the process of hiring one additional replacement position in Contemporary Social Theory and Law (effective date July 1, 2017) to support the core of the Department's SOC programmes at the UG and Graduate levels and contribute to the thematic area of Crime, Law, and Security. When filled, the Department will return to its full 2013 complement of nineteen regular faculty members.

Status: Completed/Ongoing (one hire in progress, expect completion July 1, 2017).

Date of next programme review: _____
Date

Signatures of Approval:


Chair/Director

December 11, 2016
Date

Faculty or Administrative Dean _____ Date

Associate Vice-President, Academic _____ Date
(For undergraduate and augmented programmes)

Associate Provost, Graduate Studies _____ Date