

Final Assessment Report

Sociology (BA, Minor, MA, PhD), Legal Studies (BA, Minor), Social and Legal Studies (MA)

July 2025

Executive Summary

External reviewers were invited to review the Sociology (BA, Minor, MA, PhD), Legal Studies (BA, Minor), and Social and Legal Studies (MA) programs delivered by the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies.

A total of five recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding the structure of the programs, inter-departmental relations, faculty composition, staff hires, as well as international graduate students and graduate student space. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2027-2028.

Enrollment: Three Year Window

	Sociology (BA - 3YG & 4YG)	Sociology (BA – Honours)	Sociology (BA – Honours Co-op)	Sociology (Minor)
2024-2025	11	62	31	157
2023-2024	9	64	28	145
2022-2023	11	63	37	145

	Legal Studies (BA - 4YG)	Legal Studies (BA – Honours)	Legal Studies (BA – Honours Co-op)	Legal Studies (Minor)
2024-2025	34	237	385	180
2023-2024	31	220	346	166
2022-2023	18	190	338	149

	Sociology (MA)	Sociology (MA – Co-op)	Sociology (PhD)	Sociology (PhD – Co-op)	Social and Legal Studies (MA)	Social and Legal Studies (MA – Co-op)
2024-2025	9	1	26	4	7	5
2023-2024	6	1	33	4	9	3
2022-2023	12	1	35	4	4	5

*Based on Active Student extract from Quest on July 31, 2025.

Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the Sociology (BA, Minor, MA, PhD), Legal Studies (BA, Minor), and Social and Legal Studies (MA) programs delivered by the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs on December 8, 2021. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm’s-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs: Professor Russel Smandych, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba; and Professor Candice Kruttschnitt, Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies, University of Toronto.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on January 16-20, 2023. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Professor Patricia Nieva, Department of Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Vice-President, Academic & Provost; Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Vice-President Academic and Dean (VPAD) of St. Jerome’s University (SJU); Faculty Associate Deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies; Chairs of the Department at UWaterloo and SJU, as well as faculty members, staff and current

undergraduate and graduate students. The Review Team also had an opportunity to meet with representatives from the library, and Co-operative Education.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. Subsequently, the program responded to each recommendation and outlined a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Finally, the Dean responded to the external reviewers' recommendations, and endorsed the plans outlined by the program.

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

Program Characteristics

The Department offers four undergraduate programs in Sociology:

- BA Honours Degree
- BA Honours Degree Co-op
- BA Four Year General Degree
- BA Three Year General Degree
- Minor in Sociology

Legal Studies is one of the most popular degree programs in the Faculty of Arts. It is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary program with requirements representing an array of disciplinary approaches. Legal Studies is delivered through a distributed model by which students are required to take core and elective courses from a broad section of disciplines as well as several core courses that also include an interdisciplinary focus. The program is jointly housed by the Departments of Sociology and Legal Studies at UW and SJU and is overseen by a Joint Legal Studies Committee (see Legal Studies Terms of Reference).

Students majoring in Legal Studies can now follow:

- BA Four Year General
- BA Honours Degree
- Minor in Legal Studies

There are three graduate programs currently offered by the Department, each of which include a Co-op option:

- MA in Sociology
- MA in Social and Legal Studies
- PhD in Sociology

Core to the graduate programs are theory and methods courses. These courses enable students to identify and utilize theoretical approaches and methodologies in sociology or sociolegal studies to analyze contemporary social institutions and undertake detailed investigations of specific sociological or sociolegal issues.

Beyond the required theory and methods courses, the Department offers graduate courses in the following thematic areas. These thematic areas also represent the Graduate Research Fields for the MA and PhD in Sociology:

- Crime, Law, and Security
- Knowledge, Education, and Digital Culture
- Migration, Borders, and Transnationalism
- Social Inequality and Public Policy

These substantive area courses enable our students to critically assess various social and sociolegal problems, research, and policy initiatives and to devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using qualitative or quantitative research methodologies. At the PhD level, this is further developed into the ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in these specialist areas and to produce original research that advances scholarship and meets the standards of peer review.

The graduate Co-op option provides our students with the opportunity to augment the qualities and transferable skills necessary for positions of employment requiring the exercise of sociological and sociolegal knowledge, initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability.

Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses based on Self-Study

Strengths

- Top-ranked in terms of academic and research productivity
- Strong growth in Legal Studies undergraduate programs
- Steady enrolments in Sociology undergraduate programs
- Strong performance in teaching, training, and mentorship in undergraduate and graduate programs
- Thematic areas fully integrated into undergraduate and graduate curricula and promoted through strong scholarship

- Integrated cooperative education options provide undergraduate and graduate students with intensive academic training and transferable skills
- Complement renewal enables substantial scholarly activity
- Departmental resources are primarily focused on supporting program majors and minors
- Strong interdisciplinary anchor linked to UW strategic plan; undergraduate programs deeply integrated with the Affiliated and Federated Institutions at Waterloo and numerous partner departments in Arts
- Flexible academic plans promote customizable degree options
- New MA in Social and Legal Studies and integration of co-op at the graduate level provides pathway to advanced academic experience and transferable skills
- Strong support for graduate level training and professional and career development
- Strong student satisfaction - high percentage of students recommend the program
- Strong student engagement - high levels of social awareness

Challenges

- Finding co-operative education placements that align with academic interests and career aspirations
- Limited faculty and staff complement at UW to keep pace with strong undergraduate growth
- Interdivisional (service) teaching limited by current resources
- Limited number of senior faculty may impact reputation, student recruitment, and research and scholarly opportunities.
- Limited programmatic and scholarly engagement with programs and departments outside Arts
- Building 360-degree alliances with reputable international academic programs
- Governance and resourcing of interdisciplinary program components
- Limited growth in graduate programs relative to undergraduate programs

Weaknesses

- Undergraduate retention (2nd to 3rd year).
- Graduate level recruitment (internal and external)
- Graduate level completion times
- Support for graduate students to lessen work-related obstacles to completion

- Limited faculty resources to support core undergraduate theory and methods components
- Limited service teaching (deficit relative to Arts Faculty)
- Governance and resourcing of interdisciplinary programming
- Integration of academic integrity learning experiences in courses
- Alignment of curricular and non-curricular elements to students' desired professional outcomes.

Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

“Overall, we were impressed with many of the faculties accomplishments and the dedication of staff. Nevertheless, we identified several weaknesses which if addressed would substantially improve the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. First, we believe that the Department programs should be restructured so that there is more balance in the number of sociology and legal studies courses offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This would ensure a clearer distinction between sociology and legal studies majors, and improve graduate education for sociology students. Secondly, the curriculum does not adequately address the current state of the broad discipline of sociology. In addition, we find it problematic that the curriculum for legal studies includes a significant number of criminology courses and fails to include a dedicated legal research methods course for legal studies students. Third, the data we have reviewed points to a number of areas in which improvements could be made to how student progress and program outcomes are measured. Finally, in our report we address the problem of the lack of collegial and cooperative relations between legal studies faculty at the University of Waterloo and St Jerome’s University, and the need to ensure that the newly proposed governance structure addresses these problems in ways that are inclusive and equitable.”

External Reviewers’ Recommendations and Program/Dean Responses

- 1. Structure of the Program:** We propose the Department re-structure the program so that there is more balance in the number of sociology and legal studies courses offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This would ensure a clearer distinction between sociology and legal studies majors and improve graduate education for sociology students.

Program Response

Since 2008, the UW Department has committed significant faculty recruitment and teaching resources to support our undergraduate Legal Studies (LS) program. The LS program accounts for about three-quarters of our department’s majors and minors with Sociology (SOC) majors and minors accounting for one-quarter. While these program enrolment demands limit efforts to balance the number of SOC and LS courses, we have begun the process of

differentiating the programs by developing more standalone SOC and LS courses and to enable SOC majors to complete their degree with SOC courses in areas other than Crime, Law, and Security. The LS studies program also developed a standalone research methods course (LS 301). LS students will engage primary legal sources (e.g., case law), and will learn how to identify legal problems and conduct comparative analyses, among other skills.

In conjunction with new SOC hires and the SOC courses that continue to be offered by the Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) (see recommendation 3), we attempted to achieve this goal of offering more standalone SOC courses by 2026. Ongoing challenges to this goal include: some standalone courses are at risk of cancelation due to course enrolment minimums, recent retirements, and a hiring freeze.

At the graduate level, there are three graduate programs: a) Master of Arts in Social and Legal Studies (coursework); b) Master of Arts in Sociology (MRP or thesis); and c) Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology. The programs are already differentiated and historically we have been able to offer a reasonable selection of LS focused (approximately 2 or 3 per year) and non-LS focused SOC courses (approximately 5 per year), in addition to SOC theory and methods classes (approximately 4 per year).

However, the addition of SOC hires would strengthen our ability to offer a well-rounded SOC graduate program that includes a wider range of non-LS focused courses, additional theory and methods classes, and supervisory expertise.

Dean's Response (VPAD – SJU)

I should disclose that I elect to teach a fourth year Sociology seminar once per year (SOC 417- Sociology of Higher Education) and am sensitive to this program review recommendation because it echoes what I hear from students in the course about why they were drawn to the seminar.

I think the program's response here is realistic given the breakdown in Legal Studies majors to Sociology majors and the likelihood that we will be in a restricted hiring environment for at least the next several years.

St. Jerome's has a complement requirement in its Collective Agreement that, while I wouldn't have agreed to it, now means there are limits on how much the faculty here can shrink without legal complexities being introduced. It is anticipated that a senior Sociologist will enter phased retirement on January 1, 2025 and I look forward to working collaboratively with the Departments and the Dean of Arts to identify the best way to do a replacement hire devoted to areas of Sociology like Quantitative Research Methods, Sociology of Marriage and Family, or other areas identified as needs.

Dean's Response (Arts)

We will work with SJU in terms of complement planning but recognize the severe financial constraints under which we and SJU are currently operating.

- 2. Relations with St. Jerome's University Department of Legal Studies:** We have identified a lack of collegiality and professionalism accorded faculty in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at St. Jerome's University (SJU) by the faculty at Waterloo. Further, we are aware that although equity and inclusion is central to the operation of the University of Waterloo, faculty at SJU have been excluded from participating in hiring decisions, even though they teach approximately 80% of undergraduate legal studies students. Although we are aware that a new governance structure has been developed, we recommend that this governance agreement ensure that there is equal resources and responsibilities shared by the legal studies faculty at University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University.

Program Response

Organizationally, the Legal Studies program is unique in that it is jointly administered by the Departments of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University. The Legal Studies Steering Committee was recently established to better coordinate this joint administration. With the support of the managing departments, the Steering Committee has approved a new Mission Statement for the Legal Studies program, to better reflect the characteristics that differentiate Legal Studies at Waterloo from competing programs in Canada, to recognize and respect the unique blend of disciplinary and interdisciplinary contributions of the administering departments, and to recognize the partner disciplines that contribute courses unique to the UW Legal Studies curriculum.

The Departments have each expressed a commitment to work towards a more collegial and professional relationship. To help achieve this objective, the Departments have taken the following steps: a new LS governance agreement, the implementation of the LS Steering Committee, and the development of a Mission statement. These have helped resolve some of the ongoing issues (related to program identity and direction). This new governance structure fosters collaboration while granting a degree of independence to the home departments. It enables home departments to focus on further developing their unique contributions in support of the program's interdisciplinary mission, enables them to independently develop course offerings appropriate to the LS mission (with oversight by the Steering Committee), and to recruit highly qualified faculty members in support of this mission.

In terms of hiring, it should be noted that the University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University are separate legal entities, each with its own constitution and governance system. The members of the DACA are comprised of and overseen by the hiring Department. The

Chair and members of the other Department may serve in a consultative non-voting role, but the decision rests with the hiring Department (Policy 40).

It is important to note that course enrolments in the Legal Studies program (i.e., standalone LS courses and cross-listed courses where LS students registered under the LS course code) are more equally divided between main campus and the AFIW (including St. Jerome's University) than what is reflected in the UW-AFIW LS Equity Agreement Addendum (the "80/20 split" noted in the recommendation is derived from the 2007 Equity Agreement - a financial arrangement between the two institutions). This Equity Agreement only refers to specific "LS" courses rather than actual program enrolments. Currently, those courses are LS 101, LS 102, LS 401, LS 402, LS 403, LS 496 and LS 498 (see 2014 Equity Agreement). The table below shows student enrolments in courses offered in the LS program by the home departments and related partner programs:

Department	LS Course Enrolments 2022-23	Percent of Total LS Enrolments
UW SOC/LS	1,506	46%
SJU SOC/LS	1,393	43%
Other UW	195	6%
Other AFIW	180	5%
Total	3,274	100%

Dean's Response (VPAD – SJU)

New leadership on both sides of the creek appears to be making a tangible difference in this relationship and I am eager to see the initiatives noted here continue. I look forward to sustaining positive momentum that eventually leads to a governance structure where two Associate Deans do not have to sit on the committee.

St. Jerome's is prepared to work collaboratively with the Dean of Arts and both departments to navigate any updates required by the move to a Schools structure in Arts and anticipated updates to the overall Equity agreement between UW and all of the AFIW.

Dean's Response (Arts)

Arts is also impressed by the efforts by SJU and the UW department to work together on the quality and availability of this important education to our students. The Steering Committee is working well, and the shared mission statement is a significant accomplishment. While we all have difficult times ahead because of budgetary pressures, we have confidence that we will be able to do the best together that we can.

- 3. Faculty Composition:** We recommend that steps be taken to reassign or hire more faculty to teach SOC courses. This would help to revitalize the undergraduate and graduate sociology programs in Sociology. In addition, this might alleviate the need for University of Waterloo sociology majors to take courses in other Affiliated and Federated Institutions to complete their degrees.

Program Response

In recognition of the need to further support the core of our SOC UG and Graduate Programs, we were authorized to hire two additional tenure-line faculty to support the SOC program in sociological theory (2023 hires). These positions would have enabled the department to fill core/required program components at the undergraduate and graduate level with full time faculty specialized in sociological theory. Both new hires would have also contributed to new and existing areas of SOC teaching and research in support of the UG and Graduate SOC programs. One hire started July 2023. Our second hire delayed his start day until July 2024. Unfortunately, this hire decided not to come to UW. At this time, we do not have permission to hire a replacement but hope to do so when UW's financial situation improves.

Our short-term complement plan includes the addition of one full time faculty position in research methods (quantitative methods). Research methods is also a core/required component of our SOC UG and graduate programs and will contribute to building our capacity in SOC courses.

Unfortunately, our attempt to recruit an Indigenous Excellence candidate to support the SOC program failed. We will examine other alternatives to build diversity in our faculty complement and augment our SOC offerings.

Our overall approach to the recruitment of SOC faculty does not come at the expense of our relations with the AFIW. Nor is the aim "to alleviate the need for University of Waterloo sociology majors to take courses in other Affiliated and Federated Institutions." Beyond the LS Equity Agreement Addendum, the broader UW Equity Agreement outlines the minimum "equity share" of undergraduate teaching the AFIW are responsible for. For the UG SOC program, the equity share for the AFIW accounts for about 15 percent of SOC enrolments (5.43% for Conrad Grebel, 3.55% for Renison, and 6.12% for St Jerome's).

Our commitment to the UW Equity Agreement (and the 2007 LS Addendum) and the AFIW remains. They are key partners in the delivery of our undergraduate Sociology and Legal Studies programs. Both the UW and SJU Departments value the important role the AFIW plays in contributing to the success of our undergraduate Sociology and Legal Studies programs.

Dean's Response (VPAD – SJU)

The Dean supports the program response here.

Dean's Response (Arts)

The Dean of Arts also supports the program response.

- 4. Staff Hires:** Since 2014, there has been an 80% increase in undergraduate enrollment. As such, we recommend that another undergraduate advisor be hired to deal with the increased need for student advising.

Program Response

We acknowledge that the increase in enrolment has strained advising resources for the LS program. The UW department has recently added an additional Undergraduate Advisor position. The addition of another full-time UG Advisor will effectively double the UW capacity in this area and enable the UW department to reduce advising wait times in support of a positive student experience. The SJU Department also recognizes the important work done by all the programs' advisors and will continue to offer advising expertise for both the SOC and LS UG programs.

Dean's Response (VPAD – SJU)

St. Jerome's provides some advising support through two SJU advisors that serve all of our co-registered students and works collaboratively with advisors in the AUO. We look forward to working with the department and the Faculty as staffing evolves in this restricted hiring environment.

Dean's Response (Arts)

We will continue to monitor advising burdens across the faculty and within areas that we know may be over-stretched but are hampered by budgetary constraints and a hiring freeze. In the short term, the Arts Undergraduate Office may be able to help, and in the longer term the Faculty re-organization should allow for flexibility in advising within the new interdisciplinary schools.

- 5. Supplemental:** In addition, please consider the following items from the external reviewers' report: 1) denying admission to international graduate students 2) a lack of funding for international graduate students; and 3) the need for more graduate space.

Program Response

Current funding formulae, faculty-level budgetary constraints, and limited and intermittent SSHRC research funding all limit the Department's ability to recruit and financially support high-quality international students. However, for a number of years, the issue was that international graduate students did not result in the university receiving provincial funding

the way domestic students did. That made it cost-prohibitive to accept more than a nominal number (approximately one MA student every one to two years and no PhD students).

There are reasons to expect that the bulk of allocations will go to the more lucrative professional programs. One possible avenue that had been discussed recently would be to allow self-funded international students, though they are also subject to international student restrictions. Until those restrictions are loosened and until we are allowed to accept self-funded international graduate students, we are unlikely to grow enrollments.

While we continue to be successful in attracting, training, and graduating high-quality domestic students in our MA and PhD programs, the ability to recruit on an international scale would augment both the overall character and status of the program and, at the same time, enhance the graduate experience by increasing exposure to ideas and networks from around the world. We are willing to work with the Faculty, GSPA, and the University to find a solution. As we continue to grow our programs at the UG level, we also recognize that our graduate level enrolments need to keep pace. The ability to recruit internationally would greatly augment the pool of potential recruits. Our graduate students are important members of the teaching team in their role as teaching assistants. They also support our research programs as research assistants while at the same time augmenting their own research training.

Relatedly, current graduate student spaces are less than adequate to support the graduate students in their own research projects, to support their training as faculty research assistants, and to support their role as teaching assistants. We endeavor to redress this shortcoming by making more efficient use of our existing space allocation. Under this process, we will triage space requests and assign spaces based on need (for those in coursework, for research, and to support RA and TA duties).

Dean's Response (VPAD – SJU)

As St. Jerome's currently plays very little role in the graduate program we defer to the Dean of Arts on this matter.

Dean's Response (Arts)

I think everyone is in agreement about the value that international students provide to our graduate classrooms and communities. We provide MA funding packages to about 20 international MA students each year who are enrolled in research-based programs. We also accept additional international MA students who are able to self-fund and/or who are primarily enrolled in co-op based graduate programs so that they have the opportunity to earn wages during either four or eight month work terms. And while it is true that we have not accepted international PhD students over the past five years, some opportunities are on the horizon that could help with the budgetary constraints. For example, the Tri-Council has

recently announced that their major student grants (SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR) will now be open to international students. In the near future, I foresee the ability in ARTS to potentially accept a small handful of outstanding international students who are well positioned to secure a Tri-Council grant. In this scenario, the Faculty might fund two years of a PhD program and the student funds the last two years with a SSHRC doctoral grant.

Recommendations Not Selected for Implementation

N/A

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Structure of the program	Continue to develop more standalone SOC courses and unique LS courses to differentiate the SOC and LS programs.	Associate Chair SOC Associate Chair LS Associate Chair equivalent at SJU LS Steering Committee	Ongoing - July 2026
2.	Relations with St. Jerome's University Department of Legal Studies	Fully implement new governance model and LS Steering Committee. Develop Misson Statement to identify the unique and character of the LS Program and recognize the unique disciplinary and interdisciplinary contributions of the program stakeholders.	Legal Studies Steering Committee	Complete - September 2023
3.	Faculty Composition	Hire three new faculty in support of mainstream SOC courses (two in SOC theory, one in research methods).	UW Department Chair	One UW SOC Theory hire complete July 2023. Second UW SOC theory hire on hold due to hiring freeze. Winter 2026 two hiring requests were made: 1) Quantitative Research Methods; and 2) Computational Social Sciences. These align with Department needs and emerging strategic priorities within Arts. pending approval.



4.	Staff Hires	Convert Support Services Coordinator position into UG Advisor role to support UG enrolment growth.	Admin Manager	Complete - July 2023
5.	International Graduate Students	Work with Faculty and GPSA to determine feasibility.	UW Department Chair, Dean, GPSA	Ongoing

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review _____

2027-2028

Date

Signatures of Approval



Please keep this document in Word version. We do require you to sign it or demonstrate your approval. If you have issues with signing a Word document, please confirm your approval by adding the following wording when you send back the document by email "I hereby approve the attached document." We will collect formal signatures at a later stage on a pdf version.


Chair/Director

June 24, 2026

Date



February 20, 2026

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (*For AFIW programs only*)

Date



February 4, 2026

Faculty Dean

Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.



August 8, 2025

Associate Vice-President, Academic

Date

(For undergraduate and augmented programs)



On Behalf of the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
