

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1. Review Summary

Programs Reviewed:	Sociology, BA (Hons): Specialist, Major, Minor Sociology, MA Sociology, PhD
Unit Reviewed:	Department of Sociology
Commissioning Officer:	Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Neil Guppy, Professor, Department of Sociology (former Department Head, and AVP Academic Programs), University of British Columbia2. Eliza Pavalko, Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs and Professor, Department of Sociology, Indiana University3. Megan Sweeney, Chair, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles
Date of Review Visit:	November 21-22, 2019
Date Reported to AP&P:	October 27, 2020

Previous UTQAP Review

Date: November 28-29, 2011

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- High quality undergraduate programs and students

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Address undergraduate class size to enhance opportunities for discussion, analysis, and engagement with faculty and TAs

2. Graduate Programs

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- High quality graduate programs and students

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Examine possibility of expanding grad program
- Examine TA opportunities for grad students and determine ways in which they might enhance student learning

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- “Very high research and scholarly profile” of faculty

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Prepare for faculty renewal and examine the balance between types of faculty positions

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- “the top Canadian department in its discipline” and one of world’s best sociology departments

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Assess/address the Department’s space needs and staff support structure

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of reference; Self-study and Appendices; Previous review report including the administrative response(s); Access to all course descriptions; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty.

Consultation Process

Dean, Associate Dean Undergraduate Issues and Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science; Chair, Undergraduate Program, and Chair, Graduate Program; Undergraduate Associate Chair, Interim Undergraduate Associate Chair, and Undergraduate Administrative Staff; Graduate Associate Chair and Graduate Administrative Staff; Office Administrative Staff; Junior and Senior Faculty, Undergraduate Program; Tri-campus Junior Faculty, Tri-campus Senior Faculty, Graduate Program; Chairs of St. George Undergraduate and Graduate Programs and Chairs of UTM and UTSC Undergraduate Programs; Chairs of Cognate Units: Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, Centre for the Study of Korea, Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies, & Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Undergraduate and Graduate students.

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Undergraduate program is strong and improving
- Objectives
 - ▶ Program satisfies its mission to prepare students in gaining a “sequenced mastery of skills and knowledge through the in-depth study of sociology”
 - ▶ An impressive set of learning objectives have been identified for both individual courses and for the undergraduate programs
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Admissions to the minor, major and specialist are granted primarily based on a student’s success in introductory sociology courses, ensuring that only students deemed to be well-prepared are admitted to each program
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Ongoing substantial and highly successful revision of the St. George undergraduate program, which began in 2012 and is now almost fully implemented

- ▶ Effective laddering efforts have provided students with a more coherent sequence of courses, and more flexibility in selecting their upper level courses
- ▶ Department has done an excellent job articulating a systematic listing of the learning outcomes expected of BA graduates; these objectives have been integrated across the curriculum to ensure that students are gaining competencies across the full range of sociological skill sets
- ▶ Extremely impressive curriculum mapping exercises evident in the self-study
- ▶ Undergraduate enrolment is down to more manageable levels since the previous review, while the number of St. George faculty has risen modestly
- ▶ 100 level courses are attractive to students, and perform strongly in generating enrolments
- ▶ Some classes remain large, however all required courses now have a weekly workshop, tutorial or lab
- ▶ Department has gone to great efforts to ensure that upper level courses are capped, so that students (majors in particular) and faculty benefit from more intensive seminars that effectively highlight oral and written communication
- ▶ New dedicated teaching-stream faculty have been incorporated in undergraduate program delivery to “very good effect”
- ▶ Fewer than 10% of undergraduate courses are taught by sessional or contract faculty, which reviewers praise as a strong indicator of program quality
- Innovation
 - ▶ Students experience benefits from a rich array of pedagogical innovations; in particular, forms of active learning such as increased writing opportunities, and an emphasis on service learning and research training
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Student learning assessed via methods that “reflect the very best practices of the discipline”; reviewers positively note an emphasis on written work, especially in the upper years
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Student morale (as expressed in course evaluations) has improved in recent years across courses, which likely reflects the implementation of curricular improvements
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
 - ▶ Although enrolment has dipped since the early 2010s (when numbers were thought to be unmanageable given the faculty complement), all programs continue to attract large numbers of students
 - ▶ No evidence of grade inflation to attract undergraduate enrolments in recent years, and methods of evaluation appear to be strong and robust; average student grades in introductory classes hover around 68-70%
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ Alumni of the undergraduate program continue to encounter many attractive options upon graduation (direct labour force entry, and professional/graduate school admission at leading institutions)
- Quality indicators – faculty
 - ▶ Student teaching evaluations show strong satisfaction

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Undergraduate enrolment has declined by approximately one third between 2011 and 2018
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Curriculum revisions have made great improvements in the undergraduate experience, however several undergraduates expressed that they would like to have more quantitative course offerings
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ The large number of students (despite declining enrolments) and program revisions in recent years have led to difficulties in communication with undergraduates
 - ▶ Students interviewed expressed some dissatisfaction with the level of undergraduate advising, possibly due to remote location of department offices and large class sizes
 - ▶ Students also described departmental web information and available course listings as lacking sufficient detail; in particular students reported the undifferentiated listing of 75+ course offerings as overwhelming
 - ▶ Students also report disconnect between receiving approval from the professor to register in a course and their actual ability to enrol
 - ▶ Limited training time for and class attendance by TAs may be exacerbating communication issues with undergraduate students

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ While the drop in undergraduate enrolment appears to be in response to rapid growth in the previous several years, and consistent with overall trends in the Faculty of Arts and Science, it may warrant further attention
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Expand quantitative course offerings for undergraduate majors/specialists, or consider opening graduate courses to qualified undergraduate students
 - ▶ As part of the ongoing undergraduate curriculum revisions:
 - ▶ Assess how many/which courses should be required (especially at the lower level)
 - ▶ Assess the balance of allowing students flexibility in pursuing specific interests throughout the program, while ensuring that they have similarly fulsome levels of background preparation in the discipline for upper level courses
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Provide undergraduates with timely information tailored to their year level, such as specialist/major/minor opportunities, course suggestions based on their interests, and potential post-graduate pathways
 - ▶ Invest in improved web resources and increased social media communication with undergraduates, either by hiring a dedicated staff person, or shifting some current staffing responsibilities

- ▶ Consider providing students with course listings organized by core themes that reflect the strengths of the department
- ▶ Address rigidity of course registration process to provide faculty with more discretionary power to allow students to register in their courses
- ▶ Prioritize improved TA training and integration

2. Graduate Program

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ The Tri-Campus Graduate Department of Sociology continues to be one of the world's premier sociology research and doctoral training programs
 - ▶ Reviewers praise the doctoral program as unique in size, breadth and quality of faculty
 - ▶ Though some refinements could improve the PhD program, it is overall extremely strong
 - ▶ MA program is overall strong and improving
- Objectives
 - ▶ PhD program satisfies its objective to prepare students (as per the self-study) "to conduct theoretically informed and methodologically sophisticated state-of-the-art sociological research"
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ PhD program is highly selective: each year 12-17 students are typically admitted from a pool of 100+ applicants; admissions process is consistent with similar Sociology graduate departments worldwide
 - ▶ MA admissions are also highly selective: 15 students admitted from a pool of ~150 applicants, and processes again are consistent with similar sociology departments globally
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Curriculum enables PhD students to acquire deep knowledge in the substance and methods of sociology, with the option of specializing in a large number of potential subfields
 - ▶ The structure and content of both MA and PhD program requirements are appropriate to the programs' objectives
- Innovation
 - ▶ A number of innovations have recently been made to enhance PhD student experience (which likely also benefit students in the MA program): new pro-seminars; an elective course on teaching sociology; multiple sections of required graduate courses annually; options for faculty to co-teach courses; and efforts to highlight the achievements of grad students and their mentors
 - ▶ Plans are also underway to further enhance the MA student experience, such as reviewing coursework assessment methods, improving student connections with prior graduates to grow awareness of career opportunities available after graduation, and the

upcoming launch of a research training program for MA students to work with faculty members as funded research assistants

- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Modes of PhD assessment vary appropriately from course to course, and are mirrored by MA assessment modes
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ PhD students report relatively high satisfaction with quality of teaching, support from dissertation advisors, and overall academic experience
 - ▶ Many graduate students generally satisfied with faculty mentoring they receive
 - ▶ Graduate Chair has engaged in significant overhaul of the grad program website to good effect
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Highly selective PhD program, accepting ~17% of applicants in 2017-18; 65% of successful applicants chose to enrol, reflecting the attractiveness of the program
 - ▶ Similarly, approximately 14% of applicants to the MA program were accepted in 2017-18, and more than 60% chose to enrol
 - ▶ Strong record of Sociology graduate students holding external fellowships/scholarships, when compared to the University's Social Sciences division as a whole
- Quality indicators – alumni
 - ▶ Graduate program boasts impressive PhD graduate placement record; nearly 75% hold tenure-track positions in an academic setting
 - ▶ Every Canadian university with a Sociology PhD program has at least one U of T graduate on faculty
- Quality indicators – faculty
 - ▶ A majority of faculty serve on at least one graduate supervisory committee, indicating that students are benefiting from the breadth of the tri-campus structure
- Student funding
 - ▶ TA positions available to Sociology PhD students pay relatively well, especially compared to other disciplines such as English, Political science and Computer Science

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Concerns raised regarding the duration and pacing of the PhD program
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ PhD students appear to be somewhat less satisfied than peers in cognate units with research training, career orientation, student life experience, and quality of overall experience
 - ▶ Students report some unevenness in quality of faculty mentorship across subfields
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Reviewers noted time to completion for the 2017-18 PhD cohort as high (7.4 years), compared to the 2010-11 cohort (6.3 years), as well as the social sciences division as a whole (6.4 years)

- ▶ Graduate students spend significant time in TA positions during their programs, which likely contributes to slowing their progress
- Student funding
 - ▶ Relatively high pay and demand for Sociology TAs combined with Toronto's high cost of living contributes to a situation where graduate students might spend excessive time working as TAs, thus slowing their progress
 - ▶ Concerns raised by students and faculty regarding a potentially excessive reliance on funding from TA work

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Students report that official progress milestones in the initial years of the PhD program would benefit from reconsideration, to better align with program demands and student experiences
 - ▶ Consider an additional milestone in years 4-6 of the PhD, to ensure that students continue to progress through the program in a timely manner
 - ▶ Work with SGS on enforcement of milestones when students fall behind
 - ▶ Consider involving full tri-campus graduate faculty in annual review of student progress
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Pursue current plans to better differentiate learning assessments for MA and PhD students in the same courses, as MA students typically have less background preparation
- Quality indicators – graduate students
 - ▶ Explore and address factors impacting time to completion in the PhD program, perhaps via a committee comprised of both graduate students and faculty; in particular, assess ways in which the department diverges from cognate units
- Student funding
 - ▶ Provide students with more transparency in the TA position allocation process
 - ▶ Assess graduate funding as it compares to other similar units and explore alternative avenues for student financial support, such as incentivising research assistance work, and providing students with paid fellowship time where they are exempt from outside work requirements, as is the norm in top ranked US peer institutions

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Faculty were observed to be collaborative and supportive of one another
 - ▶ The department enjoys extraordinary breadth of expertise (11 core specialization areas, and five additional areas of expertise), and offers students an exceptional breadth of training

- ▶ Faculty have excelled at establishing culture and practices that reinforce and build on the strengths of a unified tri-campus system; many emphasized that they cluster according to areas of research interest, rather than home campus
 - ▶ The department “takes full advantage of the strengths offered by a large and intellectually diverse faculty”
 - ▶ Several faculty members have earned awards and prizes for teaching excellence
 - ▶ Department faculty have written some of the leading undergraduate sociology textbooks used throughout Canada, and contribute to the growing research literature in the scholarship of teaching
- Research
 - ▶ Faculty are prolific and widely cited, publishing both articles and monographs (over 1000 publications between 2011 and 2019)
 - ▶ Faculty have enjoyed great success at obtaining grants; and as junior faculty begin applying for grants and all faculty explore new funding opportunities, the potential for increased grant funding is high
 - ▶ Department has excellent mentoring structures in place to acclimate new faculty to research and funding opportunities
 - Faculty
 - ▶ Department has grown significantly since the last review, and now includes 75 tenure-stream faculty, seven teaching-stream and three with cross-appointments in other units

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Research
 - ▶ Demography notably absent from the department’s stated areas of expertise
- Faculty
 - ▶ Much of the recent complement growth has been at UTSC and UTM, with only modest growth at UTSG
 - ▶ Recent retirements in the field of crime and deviance, an area that is noted as a strong draw for undergraduate enrolments, have weakened St. George undergraduate offerings in this field

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ Factor UTSG undergraduate enrolments into complement planning, in particular prioritizing hiring the areas of crime and deviance

4. Administration

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Staff are experienced and capable, and do excellent work in their fields of responsibility

- ▶ Faculty morale is generally strong; despite the large complement size, members are unified and collaborative across the tri-campus system, respectful of different perspectives, and committed to the well-being of the department
- ▶ Relationships with interdisciplinary cognate units seem to be functioning well and mutually beneficial, and the department continues to explore new collaborations
- ▶ Department houses the Refugee Integration, Stress, and Equity (RISE) research team, focusing on the well-being of Syrian refugees in Toronto, and trainees have won numerous awards for their work with this group
- ▶ Faculty and students also closely involved with national and international disciplinary societies
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Department and Graduate department are very effective and creative with their available resources
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Reviewers describe a very strong department in one of the premiere public universities in the world, and were highly impressed by U of T's Sociology programs
 - ▶ The department boasts "a large and highly accomplished faculty, tremendous breadth and depth of graduate training, an impressive PhD placement record, a strong group of staff members, and a recently reorganized undergraduate program that is strong and improving"
 - ▶ Reviewers also praised the department's renewed emphasis on both undergraduate and graduate curriculum and program delivery since the last review
 - ▶ Several UTSG rooms have been renovated in recent years to be used as flexible space for meetings or classes; this has alleviated some but not all of the spatial pressures faced by the department
- International comparators
 - ▶ Graduate program is unique in size, breadth and high quality of faculty
 - ▶ The doctoral program is consistently top-ranked in Canada, and among the best in the world

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Problems with cohesion and coordination among department staff; reviewers note that staff appear to have little working knowledge of one another's roles, leaving gaps in basic department functions if someone is absent
 - ▶ Particular gap in staff coverage related to communication with undergraduate students
 - ▶ Lack of a dedicated staff manager increases the burden on the Department Chair, and impacts the effective functioning of administrative support for the department
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ The graduate program has grown significantly since the last review, both with respect to PhD students and faculty, creating structural challenges for the Graduate Chair: a heavy burden of providing mentorship for a primarily junior level faculty; coping with shifting expertise due to faculty departures; and a growing representation of graduate faculty

- with primary appointments at UTM and UTSC, while the program's core graduate teaching and mentorship activities take place on the St. George campus
- ▶ Despite the heavy workload, the Graduate chair receives “minimal compensation and minimal teaching relief”, even compared to the associate chair of the St. George undergraduate program.
 - ▶ Space constraints are an ongoing challenge for faculty and students, impacting faculty morale, the undergraduate and graduate programs, and “the strength of a world-class department”
 - ▶ Both graduate and undergraduate students noted the poor quality and remote location of the available UTSG space
 - ▶ Faculty with primary appointments at UTM and UTSC cite difficulties in working with graduate students based on the St. George campus
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ Reviewers note some issues with governance and decision making in the graduate program, in particular related to faculty hiring: hiring priority areas are currently decided by campus, driven largely by undergraduate course demand at that campus, however ultimately impact the direction of the graduate department

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Staff morale could be strengthened by introduction of a staff manager who could increase cohesion
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Increase support for the Graduate Chair, in particular providing them with course release which matches that receive by the UTSG undergraduate Associate Chair
 - ▶ Prioritize the hiring of a department manager to address overburdening of graduate chair, communication issues with undergraduate students, and issues of coordination among department staff; once in place, consider having manager work with HR to review staff job descriptions and build cohesion among staff members
 - ▶ Address space concerns at UTSG, which serves as a hub for the graduate department; adequate, flexible and central space for faculty and graduate student meetings and informal interactions is “central to the success of the tri-campus system”
 - ▶ Explore approaches for the department to be incorporated more centrally on the St. George campus
 - ▶ Increase UTSG office space for faculty with appointments on other campuses, with at most two people per shared office
 - ▶ Prioritize graduate student office space for increased TA/undergraduate interactions
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ In complement planning, develop mechanism for balancing needs of the graduate department with undergraduate demand, and engage in department-wide strategic planning for future hires

- International comparators
 - ▶ Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the one year MA program (vs. two year programs at many peer institutions in Canada and the US), and the extent to which the program offers career preparation for students who do not intend to move on to the PhD

2. Administrative Response & Implementation Plan



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

September 21, 2020

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

Re: UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Sociology

Dear Professor McCahan,

Along with the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Sociology, I am pleased with the external reviewers' assessment of the undergraduate and graduate departments and their programs: Sociology, B.A., Hons., Specialist, Major, Minor; Sociology, M.A., Ph.D. The reviewers noted that "*University of Toronto Sociology is a very strong department in one of the premiere public universities in the world.*"

The quality of this program notwithstanding, as per your letter dated July 14, 2020, the review report raises a number of issues and challenges. I am writing to address the areas of the review report that you identify as key. The responses to these items and implementation plan are separated into immediate- (six months), medium- (one to two years), and longer- (three to five years) term, where appropriate, along with who (unit, Dean) will take the lead in each area. The Dean's office has discussed the reviewers' comments through consultation with the Chair and Tri-Campus Graduate Chair of the Department of Sociology to develop the following implementation plan incorporating the reviewers' recommendations.

Implementation Plan

The reviewers noted declining undergraduate enrolments in recent years, and recommended refinements aimed at stabilizing enrolment numbers and improving opportunities for students to take more advanced courses in general, and more quantitative courses in particular.

Immediate-term response: The Department of Sociology has taken a number of recent steps to improve opportunities for students to take more advanced courses, particularly those involving quantitative approaches. It has added two new 400-level Special Topics courses - Advanced Quantitative Methods and Advanced Qualitative Methods to its 2020-21 offerings. These courses will improve student access to more advanced courses generally and quantitative courses in particular. The Department also joined the School of Cities' multidisciplinary urban capstone project, which provides students another avenue for advanced, experiential learning as part of a larger interdisciplinary team of students. Finally, the Department has increased the number of 300-level program-only courses by 60 percent and doubled the number of 400-level seminar courses students are allowed to take.

The Faculty recognizes the challenges of declining enrolments in some programs alongside the expansion of enrolment in others, such as Statistical Sciences and Computer Science. To respond to the growing demand for quantitative skills, the Faculty has prioritized the importance of access to quantitative training for all students. FAS appointed a Special Advisor to the Dean on Computational and Data Science. The Special Advisor will work collaboratively with Units, and with a newly established Working Group on Computational and Data Science Education, to develop teaching supports in quantitative education for instructors in courses across the Faculty. The Faculty is also planning to increase its offering of introductory-level data-intensive courses for students within each sector. These innovations will ensure that students' quantitative aspirations and training are embedded and supported across the Faculty's departments, including the Department of Sociology. These changes should improve enrolments in programs that were traditionally less quantitative.

In addition, the Faculty is planning to introduce through curricular governance innovative new programs that will combine traditional areas of study, such as Sociology, with new programs that leverage quantitative, applied skills. For example, FAS is exploring a potential Bachelor of Arts *and* Science degree that will enable students to study both a Science and an Arts program. In another proposal, the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources is developing an option for students to learn about labour and organizations in the context of their other programs of study. This may be of particular interest to students in Sociology, where the study of networks, community, culture, and work stratification are central themes. These program innovations should also stimulate interest in many programs of study, such as Sociology.

Medium and Longer-term response: The Department of Sociology has created a virtual MS Teams group for its undergraduate students as a platform for new opportunities to engage students with faculty through 'meet-and-greet' sessions arranged by areas of research, and learn about opportunities for students after graduation, through both a graduate-student speaker series and professional skill development workshops. These initiatives will promote student engagement, which may serve to increase interest in Sociology programs among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

The Faculty and the Department will continue to monitor enrolments and course offerings. If the new offerings in Advanced Quantitative and Qualitative Sociology are successful, for example, these courses will be brought through the curricular governance process to convert them to permanent course offerings in 2021-22.

With the longer-term in mind, the Faculty has established a Data Science Committee charged with strategic planning. The Committee has a broad mandate to reflect, consider, and recommend a strategy to best leverage and elevate quantitative education and research within the Faculty. This initiative dovetails well with the Department's future plans, as it is especially interested in building capacity in data science and computational social science, such as social network analysis, casual inference, and analysis of new forms of digital data (e.g. wearables) to explore foundational questions for sociologists. Various aspects are being explored including a computational social science network that would span the three campuses.

The reviewers recommended that the department improve its communications with undergraduate students by enhancing web resources, increasing social media presence, and ensuring that students are well-informed about advisory services and availability.

Immediate-term response: The Department has taken several steps to improve communication with students within the past six months. It has:

- (1) Increased the frequency of student correspondence to flag important dates, explain program requirements, highlight learning and research opportunities.
- (2) Held virtual town halls with students during the Spring and Summer, to disseminate information regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Summer and Fall course offerings and allow students to ask questions and voice any concerns.
- (3) launched an MS Teams page for Sociology program students. The Department is using this platform to post information, answer questions, and provide resources, including a FAQ.

Medium-term response: The Department plans to continue to hold Town Halls with students. In addition, the Department plans to utilize its student MS Teams group to host various forms of programming in the coming year. For example, the Department is planning several meet-and-greet sessions with faculty members; a graduate-student speaker series; and professional skills development workshops. These initiatives will not only improve communication flows with students, but also promote student engagement.

Longer-term response: The Department acknowledges that their website requires a modernizing effort. While the Department has begun this process, a complete overhaul will take several years to complete.

The reviewers recommended that the department undertake a careful analysis of graduate students' progress in their programs and the issue of relatively high time-to-completion rates for Ph.D. students, noting that "students' perceptions of these causes generally differ from the faculty."

Immediate-term response: With support from the Faculty, the Department has been planning to hold a retreat. It was scheduled for the Fall of 2020, but it will now occur when the Pandemic is over. One of the topics of discussion will be graduate student progress and, in particular, the optimal structure of the comprehensive exams, which may affect students' timely progress.

The Department of Sociology has also just created an Academic Progress committee consisting of the Graduate Coordinator, and three other graduate faculty, to review student progress more systematically.

The Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) acknowledges that increasing time-to-completion is an issue of serious concern for many Units across the Faculty. Recognizing that the pandemic has had an adverse impact on some students' dissertation research, the Faculty of Arts & Science, in conjunction with the School of Graduate Studies, marshalled a suite of programs to respond to immediate and longer-term student needs. For instance, the Graduate Student Emergency Bursary, established in March of 2020, provided short term financial assistance to meet urgent needs. The Research Pivot Award is aimed at students whose research was derailed by COVID-

19. This award helps students with expenses students incurred if they had to resume or change their research agenda. Recognizing that COVID-19 will delay dissertation completion, Arts and Science instituted a Program Completion Award, which provides direct income support to students who need extra time. This Award complements the School of Graduate Studies Tuition Fee Exemption, a program that provides one session of tuition relief to graduate students outside of the funded cohort whose progress is impeded by COVID-19.

Medium to Longer-term response: Beyond responding to the immediate impact of COVID-19, the Dean has just appointed a Special Advisor on Graduate Student Pathways. The Special Advisor will work collaboratively across the Faculty with the Vice-Dean Graduate and Units within FAS to review the Pathways component of the current Milestones and Pathways program and advise on modifications to improve this already successful program.

The Faculty is also strengthening its professional development support for graduate students with the creation of a new coordinator role. The Professional Development coordinator will consult with faculty, departments and graduate students to assess and expand our ability to address the professional development needs of A&S graduate students. Providing more professional development opportunities will better prepare our graduate students for both academic and non-academic career pathways and may spark improvements in time-to-completion.

The Department of Sociology instituted two new required credit/no-credit seminar courses over the past few years (a first-year course in 2017 and a third-year course in 2019). Together these courses seek to build students' professional skills as effective and efficient communicators, which will in turn propel them more successfully towards thesis completion. The impact of this initiative should be evident in a few years as the first cohort to receive both courses entered the program in 2017. The Faculty and the Department will continue to track PhD time-to-completion to review the influence of the relatively new seminar series and the new Academic Progress committee.

The reviewers noted the “critical integrative role” of the Graduate Chair in the success of the large tri-campus graduate program, and recommended increased support for this position.

Immediate-term response: The administrative stipend support for Graduate Chairs is determined by the School of Graduate Studies and is uniform across Units. To effect a change in compensation for this role across the Faculty requires consultation with SGS and leadership representation from the three campuses. Recommendations for change should also align with the recommendations of the Tri-Campus Review spearheaded by the Provost this past year. Consideration should also be given to other elements necessary to support the Graduate Chair role. The Faculty can help facilitate such consultation.

The reviewers recommended finding strategies to increase coordination and cohesion among departmental staff members.

Immediate-term response: The Department has increased the frequency of staff meetings and are consulting with staff to develop strategies to ensure clear and transparent communication between staff.

Medium to Longer term response: The Department of Sociology will work with the Faculty of Arts & Science to address staffing issues. The Department, with guidance from the Faculty's Human Resources liaison, will create a staffing needs assessment. This exercise will provide an assessment of short, medium, and long-term staffing needs.

The reviewers noted that the amount, quality and location of the department's available tri-campus space were reported as barriers to productivity and student/faculty interaction for both the graduate and undergraduate programs.

Immediate-Term Response: Space is a key priority for the Faculty of Arts and Science, as it is with the larger university. The Faculty is committed to improving space conditions, both through the acquisition of new space and renovation and re-use of existing spaces. For instance, the Faculty recently subleased the 4th floor (over 55,000 square feet) of 700 University Avenue (the Ontario Hydro building). The Department of Statistical Science and its professional Masters programs are expected to relocate to this space later this year, a move that will free up considerable space in the central areas of campus. While plans to reallocate the soon-to-be released space have not been finalized, Sociology is one unit under consideration.

Longer term response: The Faculty has prepared a project planning report for a Sidney Smith Hall that would add significant capacity to this site. While this is a long-term plan, when realized it will greatly enhance and expand the teaching and research space within Sidney Smith. While the extra space will have both direct and indirect benefits for many Units within Arts and Science, the Department of Sociology is one of the Units that will benefit directly, as they are part of the complement slated to relocate to the new Sidney Smith.

The reviewers recommended the development of a cohesive strategy for faculty complement planning, which takes into account the needs of both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Immediate-term Response: The Department will undertake planning this year in their executive committee, which consists of the four chairs representing membership across the three campuses, in order to develop a cohesive strategy for faculty complement planning.

Medium-term Response: For the first time this year, units will be developing an academic plan, a process that begins when the UTQAP process ends. The plan will articulate the unit's key academic plans over the next 5-year period, including complement planning. In addition, departments with a tri-campus graduate program, such as Sociology, must discuss how consultations for complement planning have taken place across the three campuses and explain how complement plans will address needs at the graduate level. Senior academic and administrative leadership within the Dean's Office will meet with the leadership of Sociology to discuss the plan and provide feedback on its content.

The Dean's office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S unit-level planning process. A brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the November 21-22, 2019 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared.

The year of the next review will be the **2027-28** review cycle.

To conclude, we appreciate that the external reviewers identified the undergraduate and graduate programs' strengths and noted a few areas for development. The Department has already begun to move forward with plans to address the recommendations as presented by the reviewers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Woodin". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent "M" and a long, sweeping "i" at the end.

Melanie Woodin
Dean and Professor of Cell and Systems Biology

cc.

Scott Schieman, Chair, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Science

Melissa Milkie, Tri-Campus Graduate Chair, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Science

Virginia Maclaren, Acting Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science

Gillian Hamilton, Associate Dean, Unit-Level Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

Daniella Mallinck, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

3. Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings

The spokesperson for the Reading Group reported that the summary covered the full Review, and commented on the very strong positive review of the Department. While the administrative response covered most pertinent issues, the group requested greater explanation of the issues of support for the Graduate Chair to ensure the success of this large tri-campus graduate program, including the recommendation to hire a Departmental manager.

Dean Woodin responded that the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies was aware of the issue of workload pertaining to the Graduate Chair and would be examining increased course-release for the Graduate Chair and would also be conducting a Human Resources review with respect to hiring a Departmental manager. Professor Melissa Milkie, Tri-Campus Graduate Chair, Department of Sociology confirmed that the Department would work to reduce the teaching load for the Graduate Chair.

No follow-up report was requested.

4. Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers praised the ongoing substantial and successful revision of the undergraduate program, including improvements to course sequencing, class sizes, student experience and pedagogical innovations; the highly selective graduate program, with the PhD consistently ranked the top program in Canada and among the best in the world; the prolific, widely cited faculty with excellent records of grant success; and the faculty culture and practices that reinforce and build on strengths of the University's tri-campus system. The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: implementing enhancements aimed at stabilizing enrolment numbers and improving opportunities for students to take more advanced courses; improving communications with undergraduate students, ensuring that they are well-informed about advisory services and availability; undertaking a careful analysis of graduate students' progress in their programs and the issue of relatively high time-to-completion rates for Ph.D. students; increasing support for the Graduate Chair; finding strategies to increase coordination and cohesion among departmental staff members; addressing issues around the quality and location of the department's available tri-campus space; and developing a cohesive strategy for faculty complement planning that takes into account the needs of both the undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Dean's Administrative Response describes the Faculty, unit and programs' responses to the reviewers' recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

5. Monitoring and Date of Next Review

The Dean's office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair, as well as the A&S unit-level planning process.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs midway between the November 21-22, 2019 site visit and the year of the next site visit on the status of the implementation plans.

The next review will be commissioned in 2027-28.

6. Distribution

On June 30, 2021, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to the Chair of the Department.