

# UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

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## 1. Review Summary

<b>Programs Reviewed:</b>	<p>Sociology, HBA: Specialist, Major, Minor            Critical Migration Studies: Minor            Culture, Creativity, and Cities: Minor</p> <p><i>Combined Degree Programs with OISE Master of Teaching:</i>            Sociology, HBA: Specialist / MT            Sociology, HBA: Major / MT</p>
<b>Unit Reviewed:</b>	Department of Sociology
<b>Commissioning Officer:</b>	Dean, University of Toronto Scarborough
<b>Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Sara Dorow, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta</li> <li>• Professor Michael Emerson, (Head) Department of Sociology, University of Illinois, Chicago</li> <li>• Professor Terry Wotherspoon, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan</li> </ul>
<b>Date of Review Visit:</b>	February 15, 17-18, 2022 (conducted remotely)
<b>Date Reported to AP&amp;P:</b>	February 16, 2023

## Previous UTQAP Review

**Date:** October 31-November 1, 2013 (review of programs only)

### Summary of Findings and Recommendations

#### Significant Program Strengths:

- Positive morale in the Department and excellent leadership
- Strong faculty commitment to enhancing the curriculum
- Effective initiatives, such as implementation of a research day

#### Opportunities for Program Enhancement:

- Enhancing the Specialist program, providing for greater flexibility and a capstone course
- Expanding upper-year course offerings
- Increasing students' oral and written communication skills
- Increasing experiential learning opportunities
- Developing an integrated approach to faculty planning, including consideration of space and facilities
- Identifying an appropriate staffing model for the Department
- Broadening collaboration with the Cities Lab

## Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

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### Documentation Provided to Reviewers

1. About the University and UTSC: UTSC Strategic Plan, 2020-25; UTSC Academic Plan (2015-20); UTSC Admissions Viewbook (2021-22); Campus Virtual Tour; Interactive Campus Map.
2. About the Review: Terms of Reference; Review Report Template; Remote Site Visit Schedule.
3. About the Department: Previous External Review Report (2014); Final Assessment Report: Previous External Review (2014); Unit Self Study, January 2022.
4. About Programs and Courses: Description of all programs (2021-22 Academic Calendar); Description of all courses (2021-22 Academic Calendar); Self-Study Data; Curriculum Mapping: Department of Sociology Curriculum Map and Course Mapping
5. Course Syllabi (all courses).
6. Faculty CVs (all faculty).

### Consultation Process

The reviewers met with the following: the decanal group, including the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, Vice-Dean Recruitment, Enrolment and Student Success, Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning and Undergraduate Programs, Vice-Dean Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Vice-Dean Faculty Affairs, Equity and Success, Director, Office of the VP Academic and Dean, and

Academic Programs Officer; the Vice-Principal Research and Innovation; the Chair of the Department of Human Geography; Department of Human Geography faculty – tenure- and teaching-stream (all ranks); Staff, UTSC Chief Librarian and library staff; departmental administrative staff; and undergraduate students.

## Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

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### 1. Undergraduate Program(s)

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

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
  - ▶ Department offers a diverse array of programs organized around core disciplinary strengths
- Objectives
  - ▶ Clear program requirements, explicitly framed within well-articulated learning objectives
  - ▶ Program requirements are consistent with expectations and requirements for Sociology programs in comparable institutions in Canada and the United States
  - ▶ Recently completed curriculum mapping process will guide ongoing reflection and planning related to curriculum design
- Admissions requirements
  - ▶ Admission requirements are consistent with, or slightly above, standards for similar programs in comparable institutions
  - ▶ Recently increased entry and admission requirements highlight students' outstanding academic performance in Sociology programs
- Curriculum and program delivery
  - ▶ Sequencing of program requirements is appropriate for each level of degree concentration
  - ▶ Students gain solid foundations in theory, methods, and other core areas of the discipline; department offers a wide array of course focusing on more substantive themes and areas
  - ▶ Regular offerings of required courses and a range of electives supports students in meeting degree requirements for each program
- Innovation
  - ▶ Recently introduced interdisciplinary programs enable students to combine studies in Sociology with courses from several other relevant disciplines
  - ▶ Well-designed minor programs in Critical Migration Studies and in Culture, Creativity, and Cities draw on core areas of faculty strength
  - ▶ Innovative, interdisciplinary Certificate in Computational Social Science likely to appeal to majors both within and beyond social science disciplines

- ▶ Commendable innovative approaches to program offerings and teaching methods, including writing-intensive activities, applied research experiences, and a range of experiential learning opportunities
- ▶ COVID-19 Pandemic has posed challenges but has also fostered new opportunities and innovative pedagogical developments; “the redesign of core elements within Introductory Sociology stands out as a model that could be employed in some of the higher-level courses”
- Accessibility and diversity
  - ▶ Department has been a leader in developing Indigenous pedagogy and research-focused skill development
  - ▶ Department’s priorities to better serve under-represented and non-traditional students and community populations are strongly aligned with similar priorities outlined in the UTSC Strategic Plan
- Assessment of learning
  - ▶ Students are assessed in a variety of ways, oriented to course and program learning objectives established for each level
  - ▶ Department’s commitment to writing development and engaged learning enables use of a range of assessment formats and tools, “with a focus on mastery-learning that seeks to enhance students’ competencies more than on simple numerical grade scores”
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - ▶ Students have access to a diverse range of formal and informal opportunities for experiential learning; department is well-positioned to link its commitments to experiential learning and community engagement with broader institutional commitments
  - ▶ Students are exposed to a variety of relevant learning experiences and pedagogical orientations
  - ▶ Strong academic support for students through advising services, writing support, a well-equipped library, and other departmental/institutional services
  - ▶ Some students have welcomed the flexibility of remote and hybrid learning practices, particularly those with longer commutes or work/domestic responsibilities
- Quality indicators – undergraduate students
  - ▶ Most students complete their program in a timely fashion

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

- Curriculum and program delivery
  - ▶ Potential repetition of some material in courses may reflect a need for more effective communication among faculty who teach courses at different levels
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - ▶ Combined H.B.A./M.T. programs do not appear to have a high profile within the department
  - ▶ Declining course and program enrollment is a major challenge that will require sustained attention by the department, with related issues of academic standards and retention/progression through program levels

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Admissions requirements
  - ▶ Explore and identify ways of introducing flexibility in admission requirements and program structures
- Curriculum and program delivery
  - ▶ Consider maintaining or developing some remote or hybrid courses to accommodate a wider range of students than might otherwise be accommodated through face-to-face delivery alone
  - ▶ Ensure that effective communication among faculty within areas of sub-field expertise continues to be part of ongoing discussions of future course planning and program configuration
  - ▶ Explore the distribution of course offerings across levels, to identify opportunities to attract more students to higher-level courses
  - ▶ Explore how student interests in particular areas covered at the introductory level could open pathways into senior level courses in those areas
  - ▶ Consider necessary steps to ensure that Sociology instructors at UTSC continue to have access to appropriate TA support
- Accessibility and diversity
  - ▶ Explore opportunities to create a more comprehensive vision for flexible, attractive, and accessible learning, including “collective efforts to expand on experiential learning and to consider more inclusive prerequisite and admissions requirements”
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
  - ▶ Consider how best to consolidate and enhance departmental activities related to community engagement and experiential learning
  - ▶ Increase coordination of student recruitment between the Department and UTSC administration, with potential for faculty involvement in recruitment efforts, specific communications about Sociology programs, and more robust on-boarding and transition supports for first-in-family and other potentially excluded students
  - ▶ Support and expand the Student Experience Survey, including resources to provide for more comprehensive coverage of programs and levels of study
  - ▶ Explore opportunities to raise the profile of the combined H.B.A./M.T. programs, which may be useful as a recruitment tool
  - ▶ Explore ways to broaden appeal to students who might otherwise not take courses or pursue studies Sociology
  - ▶ Consider ways to identify and remove barriers that might unnecessarily restrict access to particular courses or program elements, including attention to the impact that course prerequisites and other requirements may have for students wishing to take specific courses
  - ▶ Continue efforts to collect data for analysis of student demographics and post-graduation pathways, for program planning and quality assessment purposes
- Quality indicators – alumni
  - ▶ Undertake surveys of program graduates on a regular basis

## 2. Graduate Programs (n/a)

## 3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
  - ▶ Faculty are highly engaged and active in producing excellent scholarship and a robust learning environment
  - ▶ Department faculty members are actively engaged in many important collaborative research ventures and research networks within and beyond North America
- Research
  - ▶ Department maintains an impressive record of scholarship and publishing in important outlets, on par with and often exceeding top sociology programs in North America
  - ▶ Faculty research is making an impact in multiple ways including through public scholarship, community engagement, and faculty participation in international conversations in their respective fields
- Faculty
  - ▶ Several faculty members hold prestigious roles nationally and internationally, and several have won significant research awards
  - ▶ Department has hired an impressive array of scholars covering several content areas while also allowing for important overlaps and synergies within and outside of the department
  - ▶ Faculty are highly committed to engagement with and mentorship of graduate students and are well situated to maintain high levels of graduate supervision and support
  - ▶ Balanced faculty complement and complement plan, including strong recent hires
  - ▶ Strong potential to nominate one or more faculty for named research chair positions
  - ▶ Potential hires of Black scholars in the area of Law & Society have potential “to bring important new expertise to research and teaching in the department, extend the diversity of scholars and scholarly perspectives, and strengthen both the tenure and teaching streams”

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

- Research
  - ▶ Reviewers note the lack of discussion regarding a collective departmental vision or plan for research goals or research support

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Research
  - ▶ Form an ad-hoc committee to propose a plan for research and research supports in the department as a whole, including key department research objectives
- Faculty
  - ▶ Development of department research and teaching strategy would be beneficial for directing ongoing strategic hiring
  - ▶ Include establishment of Research Chairs in future faculty complement planning

#### **4. Administration**

*Note: Issues that are addressed through specific University processes and therefore considered out of scope for UTQAP reviews (e.g., individual Human Resources issues, specific health and safety concerns) are routed to proper University offices to be addressed, and are therefore not included in the Review Summary component of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.*

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
  - ▶ Reviewers report “universal praise for collegiality and leadership” and overall high morale and mutual respect in the department
  - ▶ Learning environment is enhanced by a strong sense of community and welcoming
  - ▶ Department’s people are “dedicated to the betterment of the local area, the Toronto metro, the province, and the nation”
  - ▶ Department is “clearly committed to indigenous issues, migration complexities, problems of inequality, urban development, educational quality, and cultural enrichment”
  - ▶ Department leadership takes a collegial and inclusive approach to decisions around programming, departmental life, etc.
  - ▶ Universal praise for the competency and dedication of staff members
  - ▶ Staff members report strong team relationships
- Organizational and financial structure
  - ▶ Recent addition of a research communications support person will help with development of a departmental research and support strategy
  - ▶ Department has shown noteworthy growth and adjustment in ten years since departmentalization
  - ▶ “Experiences with remote work during the COVID pandemic have opened up new ways of thinking about shared space and hybrid work schedules”
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
  - ▶ Strong and vibrant unit has developed unique and well-structured undergraduate programming rooted in academic rigor, research intensity, and innovative options that link to department research strengths and UTSC campus priorities

- ▶ Department contributes in multiple and laudable ways to the five UTSC priority areas outlined in the UTSC Strategic Plan
- ▶ Department has been a leader in developing courses and learning opportunities that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- International comparators
  - ▶ U of T Sociology (across the Tri-Campus) is recognized as the top program in Canada and is regularly in the very top tier on most international ranking systems
  - ▶ Teaching and research at UTSC compare favorably to other sociology departments in Canada and globally.

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

- Relationships
  - ▶ Unclear how much the Department pursues opportunities to be cross-program research leaders at the University
- Organizational and financial structure
  - ▶ Providing adequate space for graduate students is a major issue requiring attention
  - ▶ Staff expressed concern about growing time and workload pressures and the potential for new inefficiencies with increased program growth and complexity
  - ▶ Reviewers note challenges of having staff serve multiple departments simultaneously and observe that departments in similarly-sized divisions traditionally have dedicated staff
  - ▶ Reviewers report comments regarding unwieldy workloads (particularly during demanding periods in the academic and fiscal cycle), confusion about staff roles and responsibilities, and other difficulties and constraints posed by structure of sharing staff across departments
  - ▶ Space arrangements in which administrative staff members work throughout different buildings create challenges in communication and development of a team atmosphere
  - ▶ Additional space concerns arising from the need to house new faculty hires and graduate assistants
  - ▶ Reviewers note little discussion of opportunities for revenue generation in the department
  - ▶ Demands on department leadership may become unsustainable in light of increasingly complex administrative growth; reviewers note that it is common for similarly sized departments to have course release funding in place for multiple associate chair positions
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
  - ▶ Reviewers note that it is not clear how the Department of Sociology understands its role in UTSC's strategy to sustain and bolster an inclusive and robust enrolment plan



The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
  - ▶ Imperative that faculty establish and maintain strong relationships across the campuses given the unique tri-campus structure of the University
  - ▶ Continue to identify and extend opportunities to engage and integrate community partners and perspectives
  - ▶ Consider synergies between community-engaged learning and research
- Organizational and financial structure
  - ▶ Explore ways to enable more dedicated departmental staff and services
  - ▶ Begin conversations about “a more collectively efficacious use of space,” with consideration for anticipated schedules and use of remote and on-campus work
  - ▶ Prioritize keeping staff together within reasonable proximity of the units they serve
  - ▶ Ensure that graduate students have adequate space for confidential meetings with students and for regular engagement with faculty members
  - ▶ Provide sustained funding, via course release coverage, for two Associate Chair positions in the department
  - ▶ Continue with institutional support and resourcing for new, innovative, and successful programs and initiatives
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
  - ▶ Continue exploring modifications in programming streams, including whether or not to maintain the Specialist option, converting minors into majors, and possibilities for developing a stand-alone graduate program; such decisions should be considered in relation to each other and to their implications for longer-term planning
  - ▶ Monitor impact of program developments on enrollments and student pathways in Sociology, with consideration of the implications these trends may have for longer-term planning and program development
  - ▶ Explore ways to integrate and directly connect faculty research expertise with specific courses, as well as with broader program and curriculum objectives, in order to enhance the department’s ability to define and communicate its curriculum, programming, and areas of research strength, focus, or specialization
  - ▶ Explore systematically what factors are contributing to declining enrollments, and what steps can be taken to reverse the trend
  - ▶ In relation to the three established and emerging areas identified in the UTSC Strategic Plan (global cultures, connectivities, identities, and livelihoods; environment, conservation, and sustainability; health, wellbeing, and resilient communities):
    - Continue to develop research strengths in these areas, with integrations in departmental curricula
    - Actively pursue research chair nominations for faculty in these and other areas
    - Consider new faculty hires with related expertise
  - ▶ Continue to expand on strong foundations of inclusion and relational accountability, including by exploring admissions requirements, experiential learning, and other strategies for expanding inclusive pathways and programming

- ▶ Work with the UTSC Development office to identify programs or projects that might be of interest to external donors



## 2. Administrative Response & Implementation Plan

UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
SCARBOROUGH

Office of the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean

December 19, 2022

Dr. Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
Office of the Vice-President and Provost  
University of Toronto

### **Dean's Administrative Response: External Review of the Department of Sociology, University of Toronto Scarborough**

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your letter of July 20, 2022 requesting my administrative response to the external review of the Department of Sociology. I want to thank the review team – Professor Sara Dorow, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta; Professor Michael Emerson, (Head) Department of Sociology, University of Illinois, Chicago; and Professor Terry Wotherspoon, Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan – for their consultation with us during the remote site-visit, held from February 15-18, 2022, and for their report, which was finalized on March 28, 2022.

I appreciate the consideration with which the reviewers approached the external review, and I am very pleased with the overall positive review of the Department. The reviewers describe the Department of Sociology as a “strong and vibrant” unit with unique and well-structured undergraduate programming and innovative approaches to teaching. They highlighted the well-designed new Minors in Critical Migration Studies and in Culture, Creativity, and Cities, and the new Certificate in Computational Social Science, all of which draw on the strengths of the Department. They noted that faculty are highly engaged and active in producing excellent scholarship, creating a robust learning environment, and mentoring graduate students. The reviewers observed universal praise for Departmental leadership and the highly competent and dedicated staff, noting that morale and sustained innovation in the pandemic context exceeded expectations. Finally, they highlighted the Department’s clear commitment to addressing issues related to EDI, and their impressive leadership in developing Indigenous pedagogy and research-focused skill development.

The external review report was sent to the Chair of Sociology, Dr. Joseph Hermer, on March 28, 2022, with a request to share it widely among the faculty, staff and students. On September 29, 2022, the decanal group, including myself, the Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning and Undergraduate Programs (VDTLUP), Associate Dean Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum (ADUPC), Associate Dean Experiential and Global Learning (ADEGL), and the Academic Programs Officer, met with the Chair of Sociology to discuss the external review report and administrative response; I am pleased with the depth of the discussion that took place.

My administrative response to the points raised in your letter is given below. This response has been developed in close consultation with the Chair of Sociology and reflects the key elements of the unit

response letter, dated November 28, 2022. It also includes responses to points raised in the Request for Administrative Response that are outside Departmental control.

- 1) *The reviewers recommended that the Department continue to explore modifications in programming streams, including whether or not to maintain the Specialist option and to explore how the Department can connect with existing combined programs more fully; they encouraged the Department to monitor the impacts of program developments on enrollments and student pathways, and that these impacts be considered in the Department's longer-term planning and program development strategy.*

The Chair has noted in his response, that the Department will launch a period of review of all their programs, with a particular mention of the Specialist in Sociology and the Combined Degree Program with the Master of Teaching, both of which have experienced very low enrolments over the last several years. This is attributed to a decline in interest in Specialist programs more broadly, and a lack of connection between the Master of Teaching and the Department's experiential learning goals. To this end, I am supportive of the Department's plans to close both programs in order to focus resources on other curriculum reforms.

The Department has expanded its programs very thoughtfully in recent years, with the addition of two Minors (Critical Migration Studies and in Culture, Creativity, and Cities), and the Certificate in Computational Social Science. Following this, I agree that a period of curriculum review will be beneficial in identifying the best directions for new program options to support student interests. My office will support the Department and offer guidance on potential new program offerings to enable students to more easily combine their interests across disciplines. This visioning will benefit from the expanded capacity of their three new faculty hires. The program pathway analysis proposed by the Department Curriculum Committee will be complemented and supported by the consolidation of a strategic enrolment management framework at the campus level. This will increase the ability of the Department to evaluate programming aspirations.

- 2) *The reviewers noted that potential repetition of course material at different levels, as identified in the self-study, may reflect a need for more effective communication among faculty teaching courses, especially within areas of sub-field expertise.*

The Chair notes that the Department does not perceive any acute problems with communication between faculty with respect to repetition of material, and that the Department is monitoring scaffolding of course material across different levels as part of their curriculum mapping exercise. In addition to these Departmental efforts, the Dean's Office is also working in partnership with UTSC's Marketing and Communications Office on enhancing communications platforms for our academic programs, which play a critical role in supporting students' course selection and progress through program levels.

- 3) *The reviewers recommended maintaining or developing remote or hybrid courses, to accommodate a wider range of students than might otherwise be accommodated through face-to-face delivery alone.*

With respect to mode of course delivery, the Department welcomes opportunities to accommodate a wider range of students using remote or hybrid courses, and will determine best possibilities for this through a review in the Department Curriculum Committee. While in-person delivery continues to be the valued mode of course delivery for Sociology courses and programs, the Department will examine the most ideal pathway points in the program for online or hybrid mode of delivery against wider curriculum planning. These will be proposed for introduction in Fall 2024 or Fall 2025. I am supportive of these efforts to make these changes with consideration for the student experience, drawing on learnings from the pandemic. My office is working actively with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and with Departments at UTSC to plan for long-term online and hybrid course offerings that will best complement in-person delivery, including an emphasis on summer programming to enhance flexibility for students.

4) *The reviewers recommended that the Department consider how best to consolidate and enhance community engagement and experiential learning activities in its programs, and suggested potential strategies for expanding these in relation to institutional priorities and student interests.*

I am gratified that the reviewers recognized experiential and community-engaged learning as a strength of the curriculum in this Department. The Department's priority for the next year will be to establish a Land Based Learning Lab (LBL<sup>2</sup>) to play a coordinating role in the Department, act as a public-facing resource for land-based learning at UTSC and the wider UofT community, and drive innovations in experiential and community-engaged learning to ensure they are visible, accessible, and relevant to students.

The Land Based Learning Lab that Sociology is developing is exemplary, and will contribute significantly toward the Department's goal of ensuring that all Sociology students engage in experiential learning during their program. As well, LBL<sup>2</sup> will further the commitments of embedding principles of Indigeneity and responding to the recommendations of the UTSC [Campus Curriculum Review](#), the UTSC Strategic Plan [Inspiring Inclusive Excellence](#), and the University of Toronto's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, [Wecheehetowin](#). My office is in the process of creating more coordinated infrastructure to support Department experiential learning initiatives. This has been led by the Associate Dean, Experiential and Global Learning, Lynn Tucker. Funding from the Provost's Office and University Fund over the next two years is enabling additional pilot staffing in experiential learning. My office is also engaged in ongoing conversations on governance and stewardship of the Campus Farm, which will support the important role that Sociology plays in guiding work on that site through the Indigenous Garden, in particular.

5) *The reviewers made a number of suggestions aimed at introducing flexibility in program structures and admission requirements, in order to enhance equity, inclusivity, and students' experience.*

The Chair notes that the Department agrees that this is an important area that can be strengthened in the Department, and prioritizes academic rigour through quality of course offerings and requirements for course entry. I am supportive of the Department's plans to introduce more flexibility into the programs, by: 1) amending admission requirements to align them with programs in other social science disciplines, 2) making curriculum changes that make it easier for second- and third-year students to enter Sociology programs, and 3) replacing the 'gateway' course SOCA03Y3 with two new half year (H)

courses, potentially offered as hybrid offerings or through online mode of delivery. As noted above, the Department is mindful that improving flexibility in program structures will be closely tied to considered changes to delivery modes.

- 6) *The reviewers recommended increased coordination of recruitment efforts between the Department and UTSC's divisional administration, with a number of potential strategies for attracting students to enrol in Sociology programs.*

In his response, the Chair notes that the Department has revised its website to better reach current and prospective students, and that Faculty are also keen to learn from the Campus Curriculum Review Working Circle on how to better coordinate efforts across units. At the Divisional level, UTSC is developing a Strategic Enrolment Management framework under the leadership of Interim Vice-Dean Recruitment, Enrolment & Student Success, David Zweig. These efforts will undoubtedly support the Department in its effort to attract students to Sociology at UTSC, and assist them with their data analysis needs, which I respond to below. My office is also working with UTSC's Marketing and Communications Office to address needs in this area.

- 7) *Noting the limited data available to analyze student demographics and post-graduation pathways, the reviewers recommended that the Student Experience Survey be expanded, and that periodic surveys of program graduates be conducted.*

The Department has confirmed plans to resume its Student Experience Survey in 2023-24, in collaboration with the Registrar's office. To support these efforts, my office will facilitate connections with the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) who can enhance outreach with alumni. As well, the Academic Advising and Career Centre has an active program with recent UTSC graduates that will aid Sociology in these efforts. The Strategic Enrolment Management Framework led by my office will also support these efforts with data about pathways for graduates of the program.

- 8) *The reviewers recommended that the Department continue to develop faculty research strengths in established and emerging areas, and to explore ways to integrate faculty research expertise within curriculum objectives and specific courses.*

In the Chair's administrative response, he indicates that the Department will focus efforts to integrate faculty interests and research in the Computational Social Science Certificate, the Minor in Sociology and Minor in Critical Migration Studies, and the research-intensive D level courses. While I am supportive of the Department's plans to strengthen these efforts, we will also work with the Department to consider further opportunities for program development, particularly if the Specialist is closed. The Land-Based Learning Lab will become a unique hub both within the Department and for the campus as a whole, where faculty can bring research activities to students outside of a traditional classroom. The Department is also undergoing three new faculty searches in 2022-23 which will enable them to further align curriculum development with research strengths.

- 9) *The reviewers recommended the establishment of a committee to develop a Departmental research plan, to include a collective vision, key objectives, hiring strategy, and other supports.*

The Department Chair has noted that the breadth of faculty research areas is a strength for Sociology and has indicated they aim to develop a research vision that embraces the diversity of ideas and approaches reflected in the Department. This will be reflected in a more focused effort to support and facilitate faculty research, in particular for junior faculty. I am supportive of the plans they have identified to prepare a research climate plan for faculty discussion and acceptance early in the new year, and agree that this will further a more supportive climate to attract post-doc researchers, exploring funding opportunities, internal and external recognition of research accomplishments, and knowledge translation and public dissemination opportunities. This work also dovetails productively with the development of a campus-wide strategic research plan coordinated by the Office of the Vice-Principal Research.

*10) Noting widespread concern regarding the viability of having staff members supporting multiple Departments, the reviewers recommended that UTSC explore ways to enable more dedicated Departmental staff and services.*

I thank the reviewers for their attention and recommendation in this area. The Dean's Office is committed to a review of the administrative support of all Social Science departments.

*11) Noting a number of challenges regarding Departmental space for administrative and academic staff, the reviewers recommended careful planning to ensure a collectively efficacious use of available space.*

As the Chair has noted in his response, the physical limitations the Department within Highland Hall has resulted in the loss of some common space for faculty and common and workspace for staff. The Dean's Office is working with departments to identify both short- and long-term solutions, including consideration, where appropriate, of more flexible working arrangements that the pandemic has helped to facilitate.

Once again, I thank the review team for their insightful and valuable review of the Department. I look forward to supporting the Department in implementing their recommendations.

The Dean's Office will monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair of the Department of Sociology. An interim report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs will be prepared for 2025-26. The next external review of the Department has been scheduled for 2029-30.

Regards,



William Gough  
Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean

## Implementation Plan

Action	Timeline	Lead
Undertake review of current programs to explore options and develop proposals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential program closures (including the Specialist in Sociology and the Combined Degree Program with the Master of Teaching)</li> <li>• New program offerings which may include a New Certificate, New Minor, and New Major</li> </ul>	Short to medium term	Chair
Undertake program pathway analysis to develop method for tracking enrolment annually.	Short term	Sociology faculty (R. Salem/ K. Liddle)
Undertake review of current courses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options for potential hybrid or online course delivery and propose changes to mode of delivery</li> <li>• Proposed revised structure to SOCA03Y3 and replace with two half-credit (H) courses</li> </ul>	Short term	Chair, Sociology faculty (K. Liddle)
Resume Student Experience Survey in partnership with the UTSC Registrar's Office.	Short term to long term (ongoing)	Sociology faculty (D. Kwan-Lafond/Hermer)
Establish a Land Based Learning Lab (LBL <sup>2</sup> ) to coordinate experiential and land-based learning within the Department and promote to University community.	Short to long term	Sociology faculty (D. Kwan-Lafond/Hermer)
Complete review of support available for faculty research, to develop Department research climate plan.	Short term	Sociology faculty (J. Hannigan)
Planning for appropriate staffing support	Medium term	Dean's Office
Coordination with UTSC Strategic Enrolment Management framework	Medium term	Dean's Office



## 2021-22 UTQAP Review of UTSC Sociology - Review Recommendations

Please do the following for each recommendation in the table:

- If you **intend** to act on a recommendation, please provide an **Implementation Plan** identifying actions to be taken, the time frame (short, medium, long term) for each, and who will take the lead in each area. If appropriate, please identify any necessary changes in organization, policy or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them.
- If you **do not** intend to act on a recommendation, please briefly explain why the actions recommended have not been prioritized.
- In accordance with the UTQAP and Ontario's Quality Assurance Framework, "it is important to note that, while the external reviewers' report may include **commentary** on issues such as faculty complement and/or space requirements when related to the quality of the program under review, **recommendations** on these or any other elements that are within the purview of the university's internal budgetary decision-making processes must be tied directly to issues of program quality or sustainability" (emphasis added)
- You may wish to refer to the [sample table](#) provided by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Rec. #	Recommendations from Review Report <i>verbatim from the review report</i>	Program Response	Dean's Response
The reviewers recommended that the department continue to explore modifications in programming streams, including whether or not to maintain the Specialist option and to explore how the department can connect with existing combined programs more fully; they encouraged the department to monitor the impacts of program developments on enrollments and student pathways, and that these impacts be considered in the department's longer-term planning and program development strategy.	1	"We encourage department members to continue to explore modifications in programming streams, including decisions about whether or not to maintain the Specialist option; which, if any, minors to convert into majors; and possibilities for developing a stand-alone graduate program. We encourage the department to consider these decisions in relation to each other and to their implications for longer-term planning within the department."	The modification in programming streams is an important set of innovations that the department is now actively investigating. The department curriculum committee will examine options. This will involve a new certificate program, a new minor and a new major.  Under the current tri-campus system, the establishment of a stand-alone graduate department at UTSC is not feasible.	Dean's office will support the Department and offer guidance on potential new program offerings to enable students to more easily combine their interests across disciplines.
	2	"It will be important for department members to monitor the impact of program developments on enrollments and student pathways in Sociology, and to consider what implications these trends may have for longer-term planning and program development."	The Curriculum Committee will be carrying out a pathway analysis that includes developing a methodology for tracking enrollment and other baseline data on a yearly basis.	The Department's plans to carry out a pathway analysis in the Curriculum Committee will be complemented and supported by the consolidation of a strategic enrolment management framework at the campus level.
	3	"The department also lists two programs that combine Sociology Specialist and Major	The specialist option will be closed.	The Dean's Office is supportive of the Department's plans to close both programs in

		Honours program streams, respectively, with a Master of Teaching program housed at OISE/UofT... there may be opportunities to explore how the department can connect with these combined programs more fully.”	The OISE Master of teaching will be closed.	order to focus resources on other curriculum reforms.
The reviewers noted that potential repetition of course material at different levels, as identified in the self-study, may reflect a need for more effective communication among faculty teaching courses, especially within areas of sub-field expertise.	4	“[Potential repetition of some material in courses]... may also reflect a need for more effective communication among faculty who teach courses at different levels, especially within areas of sub-field expertise. It is hoped that this issue will continue to be part of the ongoing discussion as the Department moves forward in future course planning and program configuration.”	We interpret this comment as a tentative observation in the specific context of the curriculum mapping exercise, and the Department is attentive to the scaffolding of course material across levels as part of the curriculum discussions.	The Dean agrees the Department is attentive to communication among faculty, and supports the planned curriculum mapping exercise.
The reviewers recommended maintaining or developing remote or hybrid courses, to accommodate a wider range of students than might otherwise be accommodated through face-to-face delivery alone.	5	“The department is encouraged to consider maintaining or developing some remote or hybrid courses to accommodate a wider range of students than might otherwise be accommodated through face-to-face delivery alone.”	While in person delivery will remain the standard mode of course delivery, the curriculum committee will examine remote and hybrid possibilities within programming streams. Consideration might be given to offering these options at crucial pathway points that enable improved program entry for second and third year students.	The Dean supports the Department’s efforts to make mode of delivery changes with consideration for the student experience, drawing on learnings from the pandemic.
The reviewers recommended that the department consider how best to consolidate and enhance community engagement and experiential learning activities in its programs, and suggested potential strategies for expanding these in relation to institutional priorities and student interests.	6	“Sociology department members should consider how they might best be able to consolidate and enhance departmental activities related to community engagement and experiential learning. Consideration should be given to potential strategies to develop a more focused orientation on what the department is currently doing, and how it could expand its activities in these aspects of its programming, in relation to institutional priorities and student interests.”	Over the next year, both short and long term changes will take place across a number of department activities to support this focus. To this end the department will establish a Land Based Learning Lab (LBL <sup>2</sup> ) to drive these innovations.	Led by the Associate Dean, Experiential and Global Learning, Lynn Tucker, the Dean’s office will coordinate infrastructure to support Department experiential learning initiatives, including two years of pilot staffing enabled by funding from the Provost’s Office and University Fund.  The Dean’s Office also engaged in ongoing conversations on governance and stewardship of the Campus Farm, which will support the role that Sociology plays in guiding work on that site.
The reviewers made a number of suggestions aimed at introducing flexibility in program	7	“The department of Sociology is encouraged to explore and identify (in conjunction with	Admission requirements will be adjusted to bring them in line with other social science	The Dean supports the Department’s plans to amend program admission requirements and

structures and admission requirements, in order to enhance equity, inclusivity, and students' experience.		the Dean's office and other departments, as appropriate) ways in which it may be able to introduce flexibility in its admission requirements and program structure. This may include, for instance, making cases to enable recognition of prior knowledge and experiences, or other non-GPA criteria that may situate some students well to take particular department courses."	disciplines. In addition, the pathways into our programs for second- and third- year students in limited; this situation will be remedied with changes that make is easier for students to enrol in our programs beyond the first year. The first-year course SOCA03Y3 will also be replaced with two new half-year courses.	program requirements to introduce flexibility.
The reviewers recommended increased coordination of recruitment efforts between the department and UTSC's divisional administration, with a number of potential strategies for attracting students to enrol in Sociology programs.	8	"Increase coordination around student recruitment between the Department and UTSC administration. This could lead to more faculty involved in direct contact with prospective students, to the development of more specific and exciting communications about Sociology's strengths (including possible career trajectories, double majors, unique features of its program streams, and potential ties to Master of Teaching Programs), and to more robust on-boarding and transition supports for first-in-family and other potentially excluded students, while attracting interest among students who may not currently be aware, or think, of Sociology as a program option."	The Department has made reforms to its website in an attempt to reach both currently enrolled and prospective students. A more systematic recruitment effort will require an accessible infrastructure in the form of a strategic enrollment plan for the Department to participate in.	UTSC is developing a Strategic Enrolment Management framework under the leadership of Interim Vice-Dean Recruitment, Enrolment & Student Success, David Zweig. These efforts will support the Department in its effort to attract students to Sociology at UTSC, and assist them with their data analysis needs.
Noting the limited data available to analyze student demographics and post-graduation pathways, the reviewers recommended that the Student Experience Survey be expanded, and that periodic surveys of program graduates be conducted.	9	We encourage the Dean's office to work with the department to support and expand the Student Experience Survey, including resources to provide for more comprehensive coverage of programs and levels of study.	The student experience survey is expected to resume in 23/24 with the co-operation of the Registrar's office.  Additional resources (co-ordinated with the Registrar) would be required to extend the methodological reach of the survey to graduates who are no longer taking classes within course programs.	The Dean's office will facilitate connections with the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) who can enhance outreach with alumni. The Strategic Enrolment Management Framework will also support these efforts with data about pathways for graduates of the program.
	10	We further encourage the institution to support Sociology and other departments to undertake surveys of graduates on a regular basis, at least in conjunction with upcoming program reviews.		

The reviewers recommended that the department continue to develop faculty research strengths in established and emerging areas, and to explore ways to integrate faculty research expertise within curriculum objectives and specific courses.	11	“The challenge for the department... will be to ensure that it solidifies and builds on the distinct identity that it has been working to craft over the previous decade. One way this might be accomplished is for department members to explore, in their ongoing planning processes, some of the ways that they may be able to integrate and directly connect faculty research expertise... with specific courses as well as with broader program and curriculum objectives.”	These efforts will be buttressed in the next year by an additional Certificate, and the introduction of at least one new minor. The land-based learning lab will become a department hub where faculty can bring research activities to students outside of a traditional classroom.	The Dean’s office is supportive of Department plans.
	12	“We encourage the Department to continue to develop these research strengths in its curriculum (e.g., by turning Minors-into-Majors, pursuing collaborative interdisciplinary programming with cognate programs such as DHS, and exploring a new MA program)”	The Curriculum Committee will be examining these possibilities in its overall work.	The Dean’s office will work with the Department to consider further opportunities for program development, particularly if the Specialist is closed.
	13	“We encourage the Department to... actively pursue research chair nominations for faculty in these and other areas”	The Associate Chair, faculty and research will be implementing a research support plan.	The Department is also undergoing three new faculty searches in 2022-23 which will enable them to further align curriculum development with research strengths.
	14	“We encourage the Department to... consider new faculty hires with related expertise (e.g., in environmental law or energy humanities).	An expected faculty hire this year will involve the sub area of environmental law and society.	
The reviewers recommended the establishment of a committee to develop a departmental research plan, to include a collective vision, key objectives, hiring strategy, and other supports.	15	“Form an ad-hoc committee to propose to the full department a plan for research and research supports in the department as a whole.”	The Associate Chair, faculty and research will be implementing a research support plan.	The Dean supports the Department’s plans to prepare a research climate plan for faculty discussion and acceptance early in the new year.
Noting widespread concern regarding the viability of having staff members supporting multiple departments, the reviewers recommended that UTSC explore ways to	16	“UTSC should prioritize re-structuring of Social Science administrative staff to enable more dedicated departmental people and services. Leadership should work closely with staff to determine this structure and study	The current workload of the office manager and business officer -who support three expanding departments- will become untenable.	Planning is underway to ensure appropriate staffing support is available to the Department.

enable more dedicated departmental staff and services.		how other units on campus (e.g., Humanities, Management) have done so.”		
Noting a number of challenges regarding departmental space for administrative and academic staff, the reviewers recommended careful planning to ensure a collectively efficacious use of available space.	17	“The department should begin conversations now about what a more collectively efficacious use of space might look like beginning in the 2022-23 year as staff return to campus.”	These conversations will be ongoing with continued consultation with staff and faculty.	The Dean’s Office is working with departments to identify both short- and long-term solutions, including consideration, where appropriate, of more flexible working arrangements that the pandemic has helped to facilitate.
Other recommendations not prioritized in the Request for Administrative Response	18	“While the current system for allocating and working with TAs at UTSC seems to be working relatively well, it may be worth exploring possible modifications, as necessary, to ensure that Sociology instructors at UTSC are assured that they will have access to appropriate TA support on a regular and timely fashion.”	Agreed.	
	19	“Provide sustained funding (via course release coverage) for two Associate Chair positions in the department.”	The funding of two Associate Chairs is essential to administering a fully engaged department.	

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

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the reviewers' comments were overall positive. They felt the review summary accurately reflected the full review. The Reading Group identified two points on which they requested clarification beyond what was covered in the Dean's response. This included concerns around administrative staffing levels and opportunities to consolidate and enhance community engagement and experiential learning.

Professor Bill Gough, Vice-Principal Academic & Dean, UTSC responded that HR was providing guidance in considering the appropriate levels of administrative support for departments that had historically been supported through shared resources. Katie Larson Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs mentioned that they would expand on experiential learning opportunities, faculty research projects and additional staffing.

No follow-up report was requested.

### **4. Institutional Executive Summary**

The reviewers praised the Department of Sociology as a "strong and vibrant" unit that has developed unique and well-structured undergraduate programming, noting that it has recently introduced a number of commendable and innovative approaches to program offerings and teaching methods. They highlighted the well-designed new Minors in Critical Migration Studies and in Culture, Creativity, and Cities that draw on core areas of faculty strength, and the innovative and broadly appealing new Certificate in Computational Social Science. They praised the highly engaged faculty, noting that they are active in producing excellent scholarship, creating a robust learning environment, and engaging with and mentoring graduate students. The reviewers observed universal praise for departmental leadership and the highly competent and dedicated staff; they noted that overall morale and sustained innovation in the pandemic context exceeded expectations. Finally, they highlighted the department's clear commitment to addressing issues related to EDI, and their impressive leadership in developing Indigenous pedagogy and research-focused skill development.

The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: continuing to explore modifications in programming streams, monitoring the impacts of program developments on enrollments and student pathways, and considering those impacts in longer-term planning and program development strategy; ensuring effective communication among faculty teaching courses; maintaining or developing remote or hybrid courses to accommodate a wider range of students; considering how best to consolidate and enhance community engagement and experiential learning activities; introducing flexibility in program structures and admission requirements to enhance equity, inclusivity, and student experience; increasing coordination of recruitment efforts between the department and UTSC's divisional administration; expanding the Student Experience Survey and conducting periodic surveys of program graduates; continuing to develop faculty research strengths in established and emerging areas; exploring

ways to integrate faculty research expertise within curriculum objectives and specific courses; establishing a committee to develop a departmental research plan; exploring ways to enable more dedicated departmental staff and services; and undertaking careful planning to ensure a collectively efficacious use of available space. The Dean's Administrative Response describes the Faculty and unit's 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 of the Department of Sociology.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs no later than December 1, 2025 on the status of the implementation plans.

The next review will be commissioned in 2027-28 to take place in the 2028-29 academic year.

## **6. Distribution**

On June 30, 2023, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Vice Principal Academic & Dean of UTSC, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to unit/program leadership.