



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

May 1, 2025

Professor Nick Rule
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

RE: Interim Monitoring Report on UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Science

Dear Prof. Rule,

I write in response to your letter of July 10, 2024, requesting an Interim Monitoring Report on November 21-22, 2019, UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Sociology and its undergraduate and graduate programs.

The UTQAP cyclical review process is an invaluable exercise that affords us the opportunity to take stock of our academic units and programs, to recognize achievement, and identify areas for improvement. As you note, under section 6.9.1.4 of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process, a brief status report on the implementation of plans outlined in the Dean's administrative response is due midway between the year of the last and next UTQAP review site visits.

I am pleased to send you this status report in the attached Table, where each of the Implementation Plan recommendations have been addressed with updates from the unit and from the Dean's office on progress made to date.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to prepare this Interim Monitoring Report. The reviewers' comments and recommendations continue to help inform the future priorities of the Department of Sociology and its undergraduate and graduate programs.

Sincerely,

Stephen Wright
Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

cc.

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

Shyon Baumann, Chair, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Science

Gillian Hamilton, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science

Caitlin Burton, Senior Manager, Governance, Academic Planning & Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science

Lachmi Singh, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Planning & Review Officer, Faculty of Arts and Science

UTQAP Cyclical Review Interim Monitoring Report

As required under [UTQAP section 6.9.1.4](#), the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs (VPAP) will request the Interim Monitoring Report from the Dean midway between the review and year of the next site visit.

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Science

UTQAP Cyclical Review: November 21-22, 2019

Review Reported to Governance: October 27, 2020

Interim Monitoring Report: May 1, 2025

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Dean’s Implementation Plan Update	Program Innovation Fund (PIF) Y/N
<i>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.</i>	<p>Since the last UTQAP review, enrolments have increased 30% between the 2020-2021 and the 2024-2025 academic years. The department reports annual increases of 5%, 4%, 16%, and 3% over the last four years since the UTQAP review. The department estimates that some of this can be attributed to introductory courses drawing more students than ever, leading to a bigger pool of potential students that can pursue further sociology courses at the 200 and 300 level, as well as more sociology program students overall; and to significant increase to faculty complement over the past five years, with almost a third of the department’s faculty joining during this time. This has also led to a significant renewal of course offerings, with many courses in cutting edge fields that may resonate with students.</p> <p>Immediately following the last UTQAP review, the department enhanced upper-year course offerings in line with the concerns in the review report, which was reflected in the Implementation Plan. That initial action has been followed by further enhancements in more recent years. The department now has increased the number of upper year advanced offerings (twenty 300 level courses specifically designed for sociology majors and specialists were offered in 2024-2025, and twenty 400 level seminars). These additional courses have included more options for further advanced training in qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> <p>The department has more experiential learning opportunities. The department joined the Arts and Science Internship Program (ASIP) in Fall 2023, where students can receive specialized professional development training as well as completing 12 to 20 months of paid work experience. The department also now offers three new experiential learning courses that offer community engaged learning, connecting with community stakeholders, and allowing students opportunities to work on meaningful partner projects that are responsive to community needs. There are 23 sociology students currently enrolled in ASIP.</p>	N

<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>Student engagement has been improved through strengthening student advising services in several ways: an Academic Advising Booking Service, featured on the departmental website and social media, provides students with a streamlined and efficient way to schedule appointments with academic advisors. The program assistant has also been visiting every sociology course to provide a general overview of all the services and resources provided by the undergraduate team.</p> <p>The department launched a redesigned website in July 2022, encompassing both the tri-campus graduate program and the St. George undergraduate program. The new site offers substantial improvements: it provides a wealth of information and resources, is more intuitive and user-friendly, features a modern design, and is easier to maintain and update.</p> <p>The department's social media presence has been expanded through sharing relevant updates, announcements, events, and resources across multiple platforms, including Instagram, LinkedIn, X, and BlueSky. This strategic approach is designed to boost student engagement and deliver timely, accessible information, especially in the case of academic deadlines. Other enhancements to social media include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborations with graduate students and faculty members to share valuable content, ranging from exam advice to email formatting tips. ▪ Interactive posts that incorporate polls and question submission boxes to foster engagement, gain insights into students' interests, and guide the direction of content. ▪ Partnerships with several University of Toronto departments, including the Registrar's Office, School of Cities, Data Sciences, and Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy programs such as the Asian Institute, Center for European and Eurasian Studies, Harney Program in Ethnic, Immigration and Pluralism Studies, and the Center for the Study of the United States, to promote events and share news. <p>A new initiative, the "Sociology of..." weekly event series, allows students to meet their peers and chat with staff and faculty. An academic advisor is available at each event. The Alumni Event was integrated into this series, fostering meaningful connections between current undergraduate students and alumni. These events are actively promoted through the Undergraduate Sociology Instagram account, ensuring broad visibility among students. In addition, all students receive invitations and reminders via listserv emails and Outlook Calendar notifications, facilitating maximum participation.</p> <p>The department launched a Mentorship Program, which connects upper-year students with second-year students, allowing students to network and seek guidance. The department also hosts regular Chair Roundtable discussions and Town Hall events, offering students the opportunity to engage directly with department leadership and faculty. These events provide a platform for students to share feedback, ask questions, and stay informed about departmental developments. Additionally, a Graduate Information Session was held this past October in collaboration with the Graduate Department Staff and Faculty, providing valuable information on</p>	<p>N</p>
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	<p>graduate school opportunities. Other initiatives such as the Graduate Student Research Talk series, aimed at undergraduate students, Faculty Meet-and-Greet Sessions focusing on faculty research areas, and Professional Development Workshops, are currently in planning stages for the forthcoming year.</p> <p>A survey of student engagement was designed and administered by the department, with the intention of conducting it yearly to measure success of current initiatives and identify new areas of potential engagement with students and to improve the student experience in the department.</p>	
<p><i>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."</i></p>	<p>The department has established a committee for Academic Progress which has met with advanced students and/or supervisors to provide guidance for those who are struggling to finish and/or has advised the Grad Office regarding individual students with delayed progress.</p> <p>The departmental website and graduate handbook have been updated to guide progress and clearly share resources available for meeting milestones in the program.</p> <p>The department has updated graduate student progress forms to be clearer and more detailed about the information gathered, such as leaves taken, and seeks to identify problem areas surrounding progress. The department has also increased oversight of and communication about progress. The Associate Grad chair has been more regularly using progress reports to identify students early on who may be falling behind. Leadership proactively meets with and follows-up with students who are struggling to meet milestones. These meetings and communications include clear guidance to the students and their supervisors for moving forward to achieve their next milestone.</p> <p>As well, four Sociology PhD students have participated in the new PhD Professional Development Cohort Program, hosted by the Arts & Science Office of Graduate Professional Development and Student Success, which helps students plan for their next steps after graduation. This program launched in Winter 2024, and the department is now in the middle of the second cohort. The plan is to offer the program every winter/spring to senior A&S PhD students. The goal of the program is to improve student confidence in their job search journey, provide peer support and motivation, and hopefully help to decrease time to completion.</p> <p>Graduate students frequently take on a great deal of TA and other work to meet costs of living. As the University has moved to its higher funding package for PhD students, the need for students to take on excessive work hours, which impedes progress, will hopefully be alleviated.</p>	N
<p><i>The reviewers noted the "critical integrative role" of the Graduate Chair in the success of the large tri-campus</i></p>	<p>FAS and SGS have expanded supports for the Graduate Chair position, including contracts for Graduate Chair Positions which include research supports and additional course release during the years of service; moreover, the package of supports has been systematized and clarified across departments and campuses.</p>	N

<p><i>graduate program, and recommended increased support for this position.</i></p>	<p>The SGS Dean has provided “excellent” forums each term for separate Graduate Chairs, who are vital for their integrative function across the tri-campus graduate departments. These meetings have helped to build community across this group and to provide guidance for common issues and concerns.</p> <p>FAS Graduate leaders have instituted leadership meetings specifically aimed at Graduate Chairs, which has been an important source of support and guidance. Arts and Science runs a regular series of meetings called the Graduate Leadership Forum (GLF). Intended as an analogue to CPAD, our meeting for budgetary chairs, the GLF brings all the Arts and Science graduate leaders together to talk about issues pertinent to the flourishing of our graduate programs. In addition, there is regular programming focused on graduate funding. The introduction of the new budget model is going to make it more important than ever that Budgetary and Graduate chairs are coordinating regularly; we propose to introduce a new Graduate Budget Forum which will institutionalise those discussions at a faculty-wide level.</p>	
<p><i>The reviewers recommended finding strategies to increase coordination and cohesion among departmental staff members.</i></p>	<p>The Department underwent significant changes of its administrative staff and made the following key hires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Department Manager responsible for Strategy, Finance, IT, HR, and Process Improvement. ○ A Finance Administrative Assistant to manage payroll, invoices, and expense claims (2024) ○ An Executive Assistant and a Communications Coordinator to support academic HR and social media efforts (2024). <p>Operationally, the department also opted to replace the front desk reception with a virtual front desk, allowing that staff member to reallocate their focus to processing/procurement, undergraduate TA support, IT support, and operational support.</p> <p>The administrative staff now hold weekly staff meetings to foster a transparent and fair work environment. Social events to support morale and cohesion (e.g., staff birthday celebrations and annual staff appreciation event) were successfully implemented.</p> <p>Significant investments have been made in new technologies to enhance operational efficiency and work by faculty, staff, and graduate students. Notably, the department developed over 15 Microsoft Power Automate flows to streamline processes and migrated the local data backup to MS SharePoint for centralized access control.</p>	<p>N</p>
<p><i>The reviewers noted that the amount, quality and location of the department’s available tricampus space were reported as barriers to productivity and student/faculty interaction for both the graduate and undergraduate programs.</i></p>	<p>The Sociology department has moved to a new space since the external review was completed. The UTM and UTSC faculty do not have the kind of space they had in the prior location, nor is it of the same type and/or location as St. George faculty currently has, which the department notes affected morale in the transition. However, opportunities for informal graduate student interaction with St George faculty have increased significantly. A new program of departmental initiatives with regular activities tailored for undergraduates is generating an undergraduate presence noticeably greater than before.</p>	<p>N</p>

<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>The department notes that, to blend faculty involvement with long-range planning around the needs of the undergraduate and graduate programs, the complement planning process has several steps. The department notes that all faculty members are invited to meet for a general discussion of complement planning, followed by their submission of priorities. These are collated and discussed, with the goal to form a long list of priorities for the department. During the discussions, faculty members speak to the needs of the sub-areas of the graduate program to which they belong. This long list guides discussions between the chair and associate chair, undergraduate studies, around hiring requests that could be taken forward to the yearly A&S Faculty Appointments Committee.</p>	
<p>Other recommendations or implementation plans not prioritized in the Request for Administrative Response</p>	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>Findings of assessments of program effectiveness, conducted as outlined in the self-study (<i>see section 3.4 of the self-study template for more information</i>)</p>	<p>The ASDO is satisfied with the department’s explanation and summary of its thorough and careful monitoring of program effectiveness between reviews:</p> <p>For the Undergrad program:</p> <p>“We have four layers to our curricular development processes inside the department. The first layer is made up of the Chair and the Associate Chair who review our offerings every year. We review program enrollment data and course enrollment data and identify emerging patterns. We plan for the subsequent academic year, which areas will require additional course offerings, which areas can afford to have fewer, and which of those changes will necessitate changes to the calendar.</p> <p>“The second layer is made up of a four-person executive committee that engages in broader curricular planning. This is where any and all discussions about changes to our substantive areas (including new areas) that impact the curriculum and hiring, changes to our program admissions requirements, changes to our program completion requirements, and other bigger picture decisions such as changes to class size or TA support for courses. Finally, this is the committee that articulates program learning outcomes upon which our curricular map is based and other curricular decisions flow from.</p> <p>“The third layer is made up of the entire faculty and our meetings take place several times per semester. This is the meeting where new issues or initiatives are brought forward by individual faculty members, and it is where departmental-led curricular changes are discussed and decided upon.</p> <p>“A fourth and new layer has been recently added to our curricular process. Faculty members teaching in the qualitative methods stream of courses have been meeting with each other and the Associate Chair to map out a series of scaffolded learning outcomes for the qualitative methods courses. This is being pursued to bring the content of the courses taught by numerous faculty members closer in line with one another. Some of this was done all along, but over time, with significant faculty turnover, the gaps between various</p>	

	<p>sections of the same course grew more significant. Among the benefits identified with greater rapprochement, is that it would allow for greater scaffolding than is currently possible given the range of content taught in the first course of the sequence. Once this group will have come to a decision about how to organize the qualitative methods teaching, this will be brought to the other layers identified above for feedback and adoption.”</p> <p>For the Graduate Program: The department notes that, “similar to the undergraduate program, there are four key ways in which program effectiveness is regularly assessed. First, the Graduate Chair and Associate Chair review course offerings and program timelines for supporting students through the coursework and for PhD students, comprehensive exams and candidacy. The Graduate office team, including the Administrative staff and Grad Chair and Associate Grad Chair regularly examine data provided by the university regarding time to candidacy and degree. We have several professionalization supports, and it examines these, as well as career placements of the PhD graduates.</p> <p>“Additionally, each year, the Program & Curriculum committee meets several times, reviewing key aspects of the graduate program and curriculum at the Master’s and PhD levels. The committee membership typically includes faculty from across the tri-campus and two graduate student representatives. New initiatives may be brought up from the Graduate Chair, from faculty or from students, and are considered carefully and thoroughly within this committee, which may conduct research and execute internal surveys regarding any proposed changes. Moreover, any concerns with the effectiveness of aspects of the program, such as comprehensive exams, are considered within this group.</p> <p>“Additionally, within our 12 specialty areas of research expertise, faculty leaders review comprehensive exam reading lists and update these regularly, about every 2-3 years, to ensure the latest expertise in the field is reflected.</p> <p>“Finally, all new initiatives receive input from graduate students and faculty through forums and meetings. Faculty meetings for the tri-campus graduate program take place twice per semester. This is where new issues or initiatives can be brought forward by individual faculty members, and it is where departmental-led curricular changes are discussed and decided upon.”</p>	
The status of any additional items discussed at the AP&P meeting as captured in the FAR/IP	N/A	
Consultation in developing this brief report and (where applicable) a statement of how the Faculty has monitored the	The ASDO produced this report in consultation with (and the active involvement of) the department’s Tri-campus Graduate Chair and Associate Graduate Chair; the Acting Chair, St George campus; the Associate Chair, Undergraduate; the department’s business officer; and the department’s communications officer.	

implementation of review recommendations	<p>As well, the ASDO consulted with members of its own senior leadership and administrative leadership on various aspects of this report as relevant.</p> <p>The ASDO monitors implementation of review recommendations through period meetings with Chairs, Directors, and Principals and through regular governance and curricular oversight.</p>	
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