Anthropology
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
May 2025

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Social Science	
Degrees Offered	MA, PhD	
Date of Last Review	2016-2017	
Approved Fields	Archaeology Biological Anthropology Sociocultural Anthropology Linguistic Anthropology	
External Reviewers	Dr. Petra Rethmann Department of Anthropology McMaster University	Dr. Ariane Burke, Département d'anthropologie University of Montreal
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Elizabeth Webb, Associate Dean Graduate Faculty of Science	Kyle Dunphy, PhD Civil and Environmental Engineering Graduate Student
Date of Site Visit	December 2 & 3, 2024	
Date Review Report Received	February 19, 2025	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program – April 17, 2025 Faculty – April 17, 2025	
Evaluation	Good Quality	
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: June 23, 2025 ACA: September 9, 2025 Senate (for information): September 19, 2025	
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2032-2033	
Progress Report	June 2028	

Overview of Western's Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Anthropology Graduate Program delivered by the Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR considers the following documents:
- the program's self-study brief;
- the external reviewers' report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Dean, Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review - Graduate (SUPR-G) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western's IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Anthropology Graduate Program, Faculty of Social Science, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

Anthropology Graduate Degrees are offered in three approved Fields: (1) Sociocultural & Linguistic Anthropology (MA & PhD), (2) Archaeology and Biological Anthropology (MA & PhD), and (3) Applied Archaeology (MA only). Graduate students are trained to use a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches, drawing on and contributing to research in the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and health sciences, to investigate and understand the many ways of being human. In June 2024 there were 27 MA students and 26 PhD students enrolled in the Anthropology graduate program.

Initiated in the Fall of 2023, the self-study began with an inquiry among faculty (full-time and part-time), staff, and graduate students about the program's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats via dedicated surveys. Points raised were then resurfaced in subsequent focus groups. Additionally, as way of a pedagogical exercise, a graduate research design course conducted interviews, focus groups and thematic coding of the findings from their cohort which equally fed into the self-study. Finally, "closed-ended" surveys were administered to recent graduates and current students and all findings were discussed at a dedicated day-long retreat.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Graduate Anthropology Program. They offer six recommendations with considerations for further enhancement.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Program maintains a strong reputation with a wide network of colleagues and graduate alumni working globally, serving as a significant recruitment asset.
- Vibrant research culture is sustained through multiple initiatives: the student-edited and managed University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology (UWOJA).
- Interdisciplinary research opportunities with on-campus and off-campus partners facilitate community-based research.
    - Collaborations with Latin American and Caribbean Studies equip students with global perspectives and cultural competency.
- Student feedback highlights the program's collegial environment with supportive faculty and staff, diversity of research and interdisciplinary projects, and fair TA opportunities with reasonable workloads and competitive hourly wages.
- The Graduate Research and Development Sessions (GRaDS) provide weekly professional development, grant writing workshops, and presentation opportunities.
- Access to state-of-the-art research facilities including specialized laboratories, micro-CT scanning, stable isotope analysis, and partnerships with institutions like the Museum of Ontario Archaeology.
- Comprehensive professional development programs that prepare students for grant applications and academic careers.

- Graduates successfully secure employment across varied institutions including post-secondary, private sector, government, and NGOs, with particular strength in roles dealing with Indigenous matters.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program

- The sustainability of the program's scope and strength may be at risk as retirements go unreplaced by new hires, potentially preventing implementation of future plans like the 1-year MA in Applied Archaeology.
- Financial support for MA students remains limited, making the program less competitive. Additional funding shortfalls affect fieldwork support, especially for research requiring prolonged field stints.
- Students have identified deficiencies in career preparation and practical skill development. Focus group sessions highlighted a need for more professional skill development, interdisciplinary research opportunities, and discussion of career pathways for Anthropology graduates.
- Creation of an Ethnography Centre could address some gaps by serving as a collective space for students across subfields to learn experimental methods primarily used in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology.
- Students shared that the department's smaller size can create inherent constraints that limit the number and diversity of graduate courses offered each year.
- More systematic tracking and support for students at risk of delays, especially for PhD students.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a graduate student reviewer, were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Associate Vice-Provost, School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Acting Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Director, Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Associate Dean – Graduate Studies, Faculty of Social Science
- Department Chair
- Graduate Chair
- Graduate Committee Members
- Associate University Librarian
- Graduate Program and Department Staff

- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the graduate Anthropology Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR). The FAR is collated and submitted to the SGPS and to SUPR-G by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

External reviewers shared that *"the program has a very good reputation in Canada and beyond with a notable reputation for archaeology and synergies in teaching and research across the four fields. The Anthropology Department is recognized within the University as a strong, steady, and vibrant program with faculty who are committed teachers and productive scholars".*

Strengths of the Program

- Highly qualified, research-active faculty with strong national and international reputations with global networks.
- Well-regarded within the university as a strong and dynamic department with dedicated faculty and a reputation for being responsive to evolving student interests and academic priorities.
- Strong emphasis on experiential learning through research and community engagement, with students gaining hands-on experience in areas like public archaeology and museum conservation through strong ties to Indigenous communities and the Museum of Archaeology.
- Multiple well- equipped laboratories support bioarchaeology, general analysis, digital media, and advanced archaeological research.
- Development of a new Ethnography Centre will support student research in ethnography and linguistic anthropology, while faculty have secured external funding for labs and specialized equipment.
- Students have a strong track record of attaining scholarships.
- Students and alumni report high satisfaction with the quality of supervision, which results in strong completion rates.

Prospective Areas of Improvement for the Program to Consider

- Enhance the experiential learning components, particularly in sociocultural anthropology. (*Associated with Recommendation #2*)
- Consider how a 1-year MA programme could be added to the existing programmes, serving as a gateway to a 2-year degree. (*Associated with Recommendation #3*)
- Reduced MA funding could negatively impact recruitment and equity. (*Associated with Recommendation #4*)
- Several retirements result in increasing faculty teaching loads, relying on Emeritus Professors and Adjuncts, and incorporating faculty from other programs through interdisciplinary teaching. While these efforts have sustained the program, further retirements could place unsustainable pressure on the department. (*Associated with Recommendation #6*)
    - Teaching and supervisory responsibilities are unevenly distributed with bioanthropology/archaeology faculty carrying a heavier load.
- Broader institutional support for fieldwork is lacking.
- Growing number of students with registered learning accommodations makes designing and delivering assessments more challenging and time-consuming, requiring additional faculty resources and expertise.

While not all areas of improvement noted by the external reviewers were explicitly expanded on as stand-alone recommendations, several are embedded in the recommendations offered, as outlined in the section below. The points above remain suggestions for consideration by the Program.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers' Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
Recommendation 1: Create a student handbook that clearly lays out timelines and milestones for each degree.	**Program:** The department agrees with the suggestion to create a student handbook to improve access to key information. A new Graduate Program Assistant will lead its development, with input from the Graduate and Department Chairs. The handbook will include directories, timelines, funding opportunities, and useful links, and will be designed for easy annual updates. **Faculty:** The program has outlined plans to develop a student handbook over the summer and early fall; the Faculty supports these plans and will be available for consultation if the program needs assistance. The handbook will be a useful resource for cataloging funding opportunities available for conference travel.
Recommendation 2: Explore ways to amplify the experiential learning elements of sociocultural anthropology graduate courses to provide hands-on experiences. This may also increase access to students with financial constraints to undertake fieldwork.	**Program:** The Sociocultural/Linguistic Anthropology Research Design course includes applied research projects with external organizations, offering students hands-on experience. This component will continue as faculty capacity allows. Additionally, the new WE-Collab ethnography lab may provide further applied research opportunities on campus, depending on student and faculty interest. **Faculty:** As noted by the program, their Sociocultural/Linguistic Anthropology Research Design course and new ethnography lab, WE-Collab, will offer outstanding opportunities for graduate student experiential learning. This, alongside plans to leverage the university campus as a venue for applied research projects, are exciting and the Dean's Office supports the program's efforts.
Recommendation 3: Pursue the creation of a 1-yr MA and consider how it might be a "gateway" programme to the 2-yr MA. Continue conversations about the goals of the graduate curriculum and think through the intersections of sub-disciplines.	**Program:** The department supports developing a 1-year MA program alongside the existing 2-year option, with the shorter program featuring a Major Research Paper instead of a thesis. Faculty discussions are ongoing, with further planning at an upcoming retreat. Graduate student feedback has been collected, and the Graduate Chair is consulting with other departments and SGPS to guide implementation. **Faculty:** The program is working on developing a one-year MA option in consultation with the SGPS. The Dean's Office supports this and will be available to work with the graduate program staff in Anthropology to see this initiative through.

Recommendation 4: Allocate funding to Masters students in the 2nd year when the financial burden of pursuing a graduate degree is higher. Explore the possibility of shared teaching responsibility to provide funding and teaching experience to more graduate students.	**Program:** There is agreement that the new 1-year MA will be unfunded, which may allow more flexibility in distributing funding across both years of the 2-year MA. Graduate teaching opportunities are limited by the collective agreement, but the department aims to maximize teaching roles for senior PhD students to support their development and funding. **Faculty:** The Faculty is currently experiencing significant financial constraints but remains committed to supporting graduate studies in Anthropology. The Dean's Office has been working closely with the Anthropology Department to preserve funding to PhD students and to develop an unfunded, one-year MA option for students who are not interested in pursuing a PhD. Teaching opportunities for PhD students will continue to be supported (i.e., within the constraints of the Collective Agreement).
Recommendation 5: All primary members should consider designing research programmes that incorporate student projects, thus providing additional sources of graduate student funding.	**Program:** This recommendation aligns with the Dean's ongoing message: faculty should prioritize including graduate student funding in their grant applications. However, this may require a cultural shift, as some faculty either do not involve graduate students in their research or don't need large grants. Others who do apply for substantial funding often use it entirely for costly fieldwork and lab expenses, leaving little for student support. Despite these challenges, the department acknowledges the importance of diversifying funding sources and will encourage faculty members to include graduate student funding when feasible. **Faculty: T**he Faculty of Social Science is working closely with all its graduate programs, including Anthropology, to find ways to more actively encourage faculty members to budget graduate student support as part of their grant applications. For example, the Dean's Office is planning on directly asking faculty members whether student support is a component of their grants' budgets and developing "norms" so faculty members know appropriate amounts for student support to include in their grant applications.
Recommendation 6: Prioritize a new position to offset upcoming retirements. This position could, for example, be designated for an indigenous scholar, contributing to the department's efforts to increase diversity and increasing synergies with the Indigenous Studies department.	**Program:** The department appreciates the reviewers' support for new hires but notes that hiring decisions are largely beyond their control. There are ongoing discussions with the Dean about the need for more faculty. A new half-time sociocultural anthropologist will join in Fall 2025 through a joint appointment. **Faculty:** The Department of Anthropology is a valued department within the Faculty and the Dean's Office will engage with the department to discuss faculty renewal as financial circumstances permit. The Dean's Office is aware of the particular need for faculty renewal in the domains of biological anthropology/archaeology and will be mindful of this need as the Faculty seeks support for renewal in future years.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Graduate Program Chair, in consultation with the SGPS and the Dean of the Faculty are responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan. Of note, recommendations specific to hiring and graduate student funding are outside the scope of this review process – proposed actions below are in support of prioritizing and planning.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation 1: Create a student handbook that clearly lays out timelines and milestones for each degree.	• Create a student handbook using a format that allows easy annual updating, to improve access to key information (e.g., directories, timelines, funding opportunities, and useful links).	Graduate Chair	By December 2025
Recommendation 2: Explore ways to amplify the experiential learning elements of sociocultural anthropology graduate courses to provide hands-on experiences. This may also increase access to students with financial constraints to undertake fieldwork.	• Continue including the applied research project in the Sociocultural/Linguistic Anthropology Research Design course as faculty capacity allows. • Explore how the new WE-Collab ethnography lab may provide further applied research opportunities on campus.	Graduate Chair	Follow-up as part of progress report in June 2028
Recommendation 3: Pursue the creation of a 1-yr MA and consider how it might be a “gateway” programme to the 2-yr MA. Continue conversations about the goals of the graduate curriculum and think through the intersections of sub-disciplines.	Deliberate on a prospective plan for the development of a 1-year (non-thesis) MA program alongside the existing 2-year option. • Evaluate related feedback from the program’s graduate student society. • Consult with other departments and the SGPS to guide prospective development and implementation.	Graduate Chair Department Chair	By September 2026

Recommendation 4: Allocate funding to Masters students in the 2nd year. Explore the possibility of shared teaching responsibility to provide funding and teaching experience to more graduate students.	• Continue funding second year Masters students and leave funding open to first- or second-year MA students whenever the finances allow. • Seek to have senior PhD students teach to the maximum extent allowed by the collective agreement in order to provide them with an alternative source of funding and gain valuable teaching experience.	Department Chair Dean's Office	Follow-up as part of progress report in June 2028
Recommendation 5: All primary members should consider designing research programmes that incorporate student projects, thus providing additional sources of graduate student funding.	• Encourage faculty members to budget graduate student support as part of their grant applications • Develop "norms" so faculty members know appropriate amounts for student support to include in their grant applications, when this is an option.	Graduate Chair Department Chair Dean's Office	Follow-up as part of progress report in June 2028
Recommendation 6 Prioritize a new position to offset upcoming retirements.	• Prioritize faculty renewal in the area of biological anthropology/archaeology as part of future budget cycles.	Department Chair Dean's Office	Follow-up as part of progress report in June 2028