Western UNIVERSITY · CANADA

Sociology & Criminology
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan

Faculty / Affiliated University College	King's University College
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Honours Specialization in Sociology Honours Specialization in Criminology Major in Sociology Major in Criminology
External Reviewers	Dr. Erin Steuter, Department of Sociology, Mount Allison University Dr. Randle Hart, Department of Sociology, Saint Mary's University
Internal Reviewers	Dr. John Mitchell, Brescia University College (member of SUPR-U committee) Ziyana Kotadia, USC Vice-President of University Affairs (member of SUPR-U committee)
Date of Site Visit	Feb 10-11, 2022
Evaluation	Good Quality with Report in Three Years
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: April 27, 2022 SCAPA: May 4, 2022 Senate (for information only): May 13, 2022
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2029-2030

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 undergraduate modules delivered by the Sociology and Criminology Programs at King's University College.

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 Academic Dean.

The FAR identifies the strengths of the program, 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 are 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 SUPR-U and SCAPA, 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 resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program/School/Faculty and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

The Sociology department offers three and four year Majors in Sociology and Criminology, as well as a four-year Honours Specialization in Sociology and in Criminology. There are also Minors available, as well as the opportunity to combine a Sociology or Criminology degree with other related disciplines, such as Psychology or History. Students in their first year at King's will take Sociology in order to gain entry into either a Sociology or a Criminology module starting in their second year.

While the number of students registered in the Criminology and Sociology majors are relatively balanced (352 in Criminology and 289 in Sociology in 2020/2021), the Department of Sociology is one of the largest programs at King's with 755 modular enrolments.

To inform the self-study for this program review, input was collected from students via focus groups along with dedicated surveys to current students (n=271) and recent alumni (n=93). Among the roster of questions, students were asked about program satisfaction, skills acquired, staff support, extra-curricular events, program strengths and challenges experienced. Equally informing the composition of the self-study brief was a SOAR analysis with faculty members and a focus group conducted with members of the Academic Dean's Office to help understand the key themes that academic counsellors experience when working with the program's students.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of King's Sociology and Criminology Programs. They offer constructive considerations for further program enhancement and conclude their report with 13 recommendations.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Strong critical sociological identity.
- Small class sizes (especially for 3rd and 4th year seminars, capped at 25 and 20, respectively). Class sizes have facilitated professional relationships between students and faculty members and encouraged mentorship and research collaboration.
- Off-campus travel courses, such as fieldtrips to the Mohawk Institute, a Decolonization trip to Winnipeg, and the American Borders and Borderlands fieldtrip.
- Vibrant Work Study Program.
- Breadth of faculty expertise and related course offerings at 3rd/4th year levels.
- Full-time faculty with strong research programmes.
- Annual King's Undergraduate Research Conference or the Sociology Research Day.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified by the Program

- Difficulty creating/maintaining a sense of community among students within the program.
- Student requests for more courses relating to Indigenous issues and feminist Criminology as well as beyond-the-classroom learning opportunities, such as co-ops and internships.
- Content overlap between some courses and Sociology/Criminology modules.
- Tutorial support for the Introductory Sociology class and writing support across all degree modules is limited.
- Difficulty navigating course registration, including lack of course options, courses filling up quickly, and module courses not being offered every year.

- Highest student to faculty ratios at King's by both full-course equivalent registrations and modular registrations.
- 54% full-course equivalent sections taught by part-time instructors in 2020/21.
- Unsustainable workload for both the Department Chair and Coordinator.

Review Process

The review committee (comprised of the two external reviewers and two internal reviewers) was provided with Volumes I and II in advance of their visit and then (due to pandemic restrictions) met virtually with the following over the course of the two days.

- Acting Vice-Provost of Academic Programs
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- Academic Dean
- Associate Academic Dean
- President, King's University College
- Chair of Sociology Department
- Director of Enrolment Services & Registrar
- Director of Libraries, Cardinal Carter Library, King's University College
- Head: Research and Information Services, Cardinal Carter Library, King's University College
- Manager, Academic Planning and Analysis
- Academic Program Advisor
- Academic Counsellor
- Administrative Assistant to Academic Departments/Chairs
- Program Faculty
- Program Students

Following the formal review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Academic Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this final assessment report of King's Sociology and Criminology programs.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers' Report

Strengths of the Program

- Sociology faculty members have taken a leading role in founding a Call-to-Action committee to help build and grow collaborative relations with local indigenous communities.

- The Department has created an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) statement and, in support of the strategic plan, faculty are working to ensure that the principles outlined in the statement are practiced within the department, especially in hiring, course content, and student and community relations.
- The theoretical and methodological course offerings in sociology are very strong and the department's commitment to providing support for students in their learning of social statistics and research tools provide a significant advantage to the students graduating from this program.
- Clear commitment by Faculty members to active scholarship in classical and contemporary areas of the discipline.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- The non criminology-oriented parts of the sociology curriculum are underdeveloped and have left the program unrepresentative of the discipline as a whole.
- There is a need to re-balance the sociology curriculum to include a broader range of sociological courses and themes.
- Need for a first year Introductory criminology course and consideration regarding restricting criminology students to the criminology courses.
- The absence of a consistent and required writing component in the Introductory Sociology course does a disservice to the students who do not receive training in this skill from the outset of their degree.
- Reliance on approximately 15 part-time faculty to conduct close to 50% of the teaching.

Summary of the Reviewers' Key Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

Reviewers' Recommendations Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).	**Program / Faculty Response**
1. The department develop a certificate made up of the department's social research methods and statistics courses to be awarded to students who complete these courses with the potential addition of an applied student research project. *	**Program:** A majority of our members are in favor of introducing a certificate module in social research methods and statistics with the potential addition of an applied student research project. As recommended by the consultants, this certificate module can be built on our existing second and third year research method courses. This certificate module could also showcase the qualitative and quantitative research skills that our students are acquiring as part of their undergraduate degree at King's and this could provide them advantage in today's competitive labour market. However, the idea of developing an applied student research project requires further deliberation at the departmental level. One possibility is that the applied research project could be operationalized through a qualitative or quantitative research focused independent study. But it is to be noted that this operationalization will have to rely upon the voluntary academic labour of members and therefore it requires adequate institutional support and resources to cover this labour in terms of remuneration, stipend and recognition. At present, in our program faculty members are not compensated in any form if they supervise honors theses or independent studies. We look forward to having more conversation surrounding the idea of a student research project as part of the certificate module. The curriculum committee in consultation with the IQAP committee will deliberate on this recommendation and they will jointly come up with an implementation plan. The outcome of these discussions would also require support from the department. **Faculty:** Research method and statistics courses require compelling marketing and well supported applied learning experiences. King's Experiential Learning Coordinator should be consulted. There is no evidence provided by the reviewers that such a program would be warranted, and the creation of such a program was not suggested by the Department. It is unclear from the reviewers' comments how such a program development would further support Western's/King's undergraduate degree learning outcomes beyond the current levels.
2. Students who take a Minor or a Major in sociology should be required to take more methods courses: one course for Minors; two courses for Majors	**Program:** We are not sure whether the number of enrolments in our Minor module will make this recommendation viable. More importantly, perhaps the question is why our Minors would require a compulsory methods course but no equivalent theory course. It is widely recognized that a solid undergraduate training in Sociology is predicated on immersion in both theory and methodology courses. At present, our Sociology and Criminology Majors are required to take Soc2205 and Soc2206. In our view this is sufficient and altering this requirement would mean they would also have to take Soc3306 and Soc3310, both of which are designed for advanced students intending to further their studies in graduate or professional programs. Secondly, increasing enrollment in the third year seminar courses would imply opening up more sections, which would be taught by contract faculty of precarious employment status.

would be appropriate.	**Faculty:** See response to Recommendation #1. The Department is encouraged to consider new research methods areas based on new faculty hires.
3. Instructors receive a course release if they develop and offer a course with a significant experiential learning component. *	**Program:** We support course release for instructors developing labor intensive community based experiential learning courses, though this policy would need be adopted and implemented at the institutional level, lest this results in inequity across various programs at King's. In the words of one our members: having taught experiential learning without a TA or any additional support, I fully agree with this recommendation. We need to have a King's wide broader conversation around what constitutes labor intensive experiential learning courses and what will be the long-term implications of providing course release. The caveats are unless we add more fulltime faculty members, we would have to rely on the precarious labor of contract faculty to teach the 'released' courses. Thus, we need to think through the recommendation and its program wide implications. **Faculty:** Definition of "significant experiential learning component" is not provided by the reviewers. King's recently hired an Experiential Learning Coordinator who can provide development support and expertise. The Department is encouraged to work with the EL Coordinator.
4. The sociology program take active steps, and be provided with sufficient resources, to re-balance its curriculum to include a broader range of sociological courses and themes. *	**Program:** Over the years, our sociology faculty have diligently developed new courses reflecting the emerging areas in the field of sociology (e.g., Decolonization, Migration & Borders, Health & Mental Health, Neoliberalism, Technology, Surveillance & Society and so on). However, we wholeheartedly agree with the consultants that we need to forge an effectively structured and integrated identity for the numerous substantive area courses that are offered within the Sociology curriculum. As a necessary first step, in 2021 we mapped four broad areas under which the various sociology courses could be housed: Social Inequality; Health, Environment & Society; Media & Culture; and Global Issues (Sociology Self Study 2021, Appendix VII). We are testing out this pilot approach in the 2022-23 student registration process. Moving forward, we need to discuss how to revitalize our Sociology curriculum based on our faculty members' core strengths. The consultants have recommended two broad concentration areas: a) structural social inequalities and b) social problem solving through transformative action, social movements and social policies. Our survey of course syllabi shows that the themes of structural social inequalities and social problem solving, although to a lesser extent, are embedded in almost all of our courses and faculty research interests. Given the diversity of faculty strengths in teaching and research that exist in our program, we could come up with a democratically decided formal plan to reorganize our Sociology curriculum on the basis of the following four concentration areas: Inequality, Diversity & Inclusion; Health, Environment & Community; Globalization, Migration & Global Justice; and Culture, Knowledge & Media. The curriculum committee in consultation with the IQAP committee will deliberate on the recommendation and they will jointly come up with an implementation plan. The outcome of these discussions would also require support from the department.

	Faculty: Currently there are thematic areas identified by the program; these themes could be more clearly articulated through program design changes. Program design to scaffold course offerings will better align students to their year of study (not delaying taking methods courses in their 3rd or 4th year). Also, it is not clear that collectively bargained issues of compensation fall within the purview of a review of program integrity and quality of student experience. It is unclear what the reviewers mean by active steps. It will be difficult to demonstrate how the department/college would fulfill this mandate.
5. The department set up a defined sociology module (the number of required courses for Honours, Major, Minor would be specified). *	**Program:** In the context of revitalizing our Sociology curriculum, we agree that the existing second year courses on Social Inequality and Social Problems could be converted into required courses to enter the HSP and Major modules in Sociology. These second year courses would also serve well if we decide to streamline courses in the four core areas of concentration in Sociology i.e. Inequality, Diversity & Inclusion; Health, Environment & Community; Globalization, Migration & Global Justice; and Culture, Knowledge & Media. Given Criminology modules require the second year required course Crime & Society, it looks academically sound that our Sociology modules would require a second year core course such as Social Inequality or Social Problems. However, we have to consider how many sections need to be offered each year and whether we have enough full-time members who can teach these courses. Therefore, the recommendation to hire five full-time members gains further significance. **Faculty:** See Faculty response to recommendation #11 below. Also, the check lists provided to the reviewers clearly outline the defined sociology module, as distinct from the Criminology module.
6. If the department cannot find a way to re-vitalize the sociology curriculum offerings, the reviewers strongly recommend a "conscious uncoupling" of the department into separate criminology and sociology departments, each with their own Chair, curricula, student culture, and identity.	**Program:** An overwhelming majority of our members, with the exception of one are not in favor of a 'conscious uncoupling' of the department into two separate independent units. Such a separation would also result in lack of adequate faculty, administrative and staff support for the two units. In addition, all our members value the critical orientation espoused by the two programs. Hence, based on this common ground the recommended uncoupling is unnecessary. With the required academic will, we can revitalize our Sociology curriculum within the current departmental structure. **Faculty:** The rationale for such a significant structural change is not clear. I agree with the Department that this restructuring is not necessary. Rather, Sociology should be supported in refocusing its program design. Sociology is the basis of the criminology program at King's both in terms of the program design and the scholarly orientation of the program.
7. Requiring a writing course from another department or mandating a writing	**Program:** We enthusiastically agree with the recommendation of introducing a required writing course in our modules. We would be advocating strongly for the required resources, such as teaching and tutorial assistant

	element within the first year sociology course with appropriate tutorial and teaching assistant support would help address this problem. *	support and a creative collaboration with the revamped Writing Program at King's, which at present has more faculty and administrative resources than in the past. **Faculty:** King's has a robust set of writing courses. The department could look to having a writing module for the Social Sciences, embedded in their first year.
8.	The department also requires a full-time administrative assistant to support its operations. *	**Program:** We are one of the largest programs at King's with very high enrollment figures. Yet over the years, our program has suffered from the lack of a dedicated fulltime administrative personnel. We wholeheartedly agree with the reviewers that it is high time that we should have a departmental administrator, akin to the position that has been created in another large program at King's. This position should not be an entry level one. The role of the administrator should encompass more responsibilities and hence better remuneration than an administrative assistant, who strenuously support our program as well as the department of Political Science. **Faculty:** The College has budgeted for an increased (doubling) of departmental administrative support. It is unclear from the reviewers report how administrative support will impact on course design and student attainment of learning outcomes.
9.	The department may want to consider limiting experiential learning to students above a certain GPA. *	**Program:** We also support that enrollment in experiential learning courses needs to be altered. It has been observed by our members that our students are most often unaware of the high level of participation and engagement that experiential learning courses require, leaving the instructor to deal with unenthusiastic participants. These factors are detrimental to the classroom environment and the quality of pedagogy in experiential learning courses. We need to have a King's wide broader conversation around what will be the long term implications of restricting these courses to students with higher GPAs. The caveat is restricting students on the basis of GPA might result in unintended social injustice to students with relevant lived experience. **Faculty:** I suggest there are more inclusive and robust measures of student potential academic success beyond GPA.
10.	Creation of five tenure-track positions to replace the work done by at least half of the contract academic staff. *	**Program:** One key item in King's strategic plan is the institution's commitment to keep the class sizes small so that faculty can teach and mentor our students in a more involved way. In order to align with this plan and to curb the overreliance on precarious work done by our talented contract faculty, there is a clear need to hire more full-time faculty in our program. We wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation that we should hire five new full-time members over the next five years. We recognize our urgent need to hire at least two full-time faculty members whose research and teaching focus on social problem solving through social movements, interventions and social policy making. Similarly, in order to remain a dynamic undergraduate program, we should hire three more faculty in various emerging areas in Sociology and Criminology.

	Faculty: Program design is a key strategy for addressing course section management and CUPE allocations. Sociology is encouraged to work with the Dean's office (Academic Planning and Information Manager) to implement already proposed scaffolding changes. Enrolments at 3000 and 4000 level are declining suggesting HSP program needs restructuring before faculty are hired. Finally, perhaps a more nuanced recommendation that speaks to a ratio of part-time to full-time faculty would be helpful.
11. The department promote its sociology HSP module more and actively recruit promising students, especially in their second year in the program. *	**Program:** The reviewers noted that our (four year) HSP numbers, especially in Sociology have dwindled over the years. The current enrollment trends across North American campuses (e.g., a report published by Emma Whitford in Inside Higher Education in Nov. 2021) show that three year Majors might become more popular due to financial, labor market and temporal pressures. Therefore, compared to our Majors the low HSP enrollment figures are not unusual. However, to mitigate the situation we are planning to promote our Sociology HSP module among our second year students. The chair with support from the department promotion committee, Academic Program Advisor and King's Communications would organize an annual session on promoting our Sociology HSP module among our second year students. This plan would require support from the department. **Faculty:** HSPs are seeing declining enrolments across King's; program design initiatives could open up 4th year HSP courses to 3rd year students. This would reduce course section demand at 3rd year and increase enrolment in 4th year.
12. The implementation of additional prerequisites to ensure that students proceed through the curriculum in sociology (and to a lesser extent criminology) in a more meaningful manner by accessing foundational courses before enrolling in specialized ones.	**Program:** With regard to introducing more pre-requisites in our modules, we would beg to differ since this year onwards Sociology at main campus has removed pre-requisites in a wide range of their sociology courses. We would prefer to wait and watch the fallout of this measure from a distance before we introduce or remove pre-requisites from our modules. **Faculty:** Program design pilot has been discussed (see response to recommendation #11 above). Additional pre-requisites are necessary to scaffold students through their appropriate year of study.
13. Honours Seminar course size and cancelations needs to be addressed and a more viable solution found. *	**Program:** We acknowledge the existence of this problem and we offer a suggestion here. A viable option could be to allow our better performing (based on GPA score) Majors and Double Majors to register in our fourth year seminar courses from the academic year 2023-24. **Faculty:** See Faculty response to recommendation #11 above.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Affiliated University College will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

Reviewers' recommendations related to faculty hiring are not typically prioritized in the implementation plan as they are outside the scope of the IQAP driven review. As such, the recommendation and responses related to faculty hiring have not been added to the table below.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1 Develop a certificate made up of the department's social research methods and statistics courses to be awarded to students who complete these courses with the potential addition of an applied student research project.	The curriculum committee in consultation with the IQAP committee will deliberate on this recommendation and will jointly come up with an implementation plan, as needed.	Curriculum committee IQAP committee Department Chair	By December 2022
Recommendations #4 and 5 The sociology program take active steps, and be provided with sufficient resources, to re-balance its curriculum to include a broader range of sociological courses and themes.	The curriculum committee in consultation with the IQAP committee will initiate discussion and deliberation regarding the reorganization of the Sociology curriculum. As a formal plan is established, proposed changes will be submitted through Western's internal approval processes.	Curriculum committee IQAP committee Department Chair	Discussion & deliberation by December 2022 Submissions to approval bodies by June 2023
Recommendation #7 Requiring a writing course from another department or mandating a writing element within the first year sociology course.	The curriculum and IQAP committees and a representative from the Writing Program at King's will meet to examine the possibility of a writing module to be embedded in the program and/or other feasible solutions.	Curriculum committee IQAP committee King's Writing Program	Discussion & deliberation by December 2022 Submissions to approval bodies by June 2023

Recommendation #8 Ensure adequate departmental administrative support for the operations of the program.	Consider the recruitment of a dedicated administrative support position for Sociology and Criminology or identify opportunities for sharing of additional administrative support across other units.	Department Chair Academic Dean's Office	By December 2022
Recommendations #9 and 3 Consider appropriate mechanisms to support instructors in the development of experiential learning course components, to ensure appropriate placements into experiential learning courses, and to support student success when engaged in experiential learning opportunities.	The Department will meet with the newly hired Experiential Learning (EL) Coordinator to determine feasible and actionable strategies to ensure clear and intentional enrollment in EL intensive courses, and to better support instructors developing EL courses.	Curriculum committee IQAP committee Department Chair Experiential Learning Coordinator	By December 2022
Recommendation #10 Ensure sufficient faculty resources for Sociology and Criminology.	Consider additional faculty hires with a teaching focus on social problem solving through social movements, interventions and social policy making to maintain the institution's commitment to small class sizes and student mentorship and to reduce the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty as resources permit.	Vice-President and Academic Dean Department Chair	By September 2025
Recommendation #11 The department promote its sociology HSP module more and actively recruit promising students, especially in their second year in the program.	The Chair with support from the department promotion committee, Academic Program Advisor and King's Communications will organize a communication plan with various strategies to promote the Sociology HSP module among our second year students.	Department Chair, Promotion committee, Academic Program Advisor, and King's Communications	For September 2023
Recommendation #13 Honours Seminar course size and cancelations needs to be addressed.	Determine the parameters for a feasible pilot initiative that could open up 4th year HSP courses to 3rd year students or select students from Majors and Double Majors to register in the fourth year seminar courses.	Curriculum committee IQAP committee Department Chair	For September 2023