FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

PROGRAM	SENATE APPROVAL DATE	PREPARED BY
Sociology	September 13, 2019	Provost and Vice-President

A. SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS & LISTING OF PROGRAMS UNDER REVIEW

SELF-STUDY REVIEW TIMELINE	DATE
1. Self-Study Presented to AQAPC	Oct. 30, 2018
2. Site Visit Conducted	Mar. 5 – 6, 2019
3. Reviewer's Report Received	Apr. 15, 2019
4. Internal Reviewers Response Received	May 7, 2019
5. Dean's Response Received	May 28, 2019

The members of the review committee were:
- Dr. Jane Barker(Internal)
- Dr. Joseph Michalski, King's University College at Western University(External)
- Dr. Heather Rollwagen, Ryerson University(External)

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

- **Four-year B.A. in Sociology**

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 17, 2013.

B. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

External Reviewers: *The department's sociology program aligns quite well with the mission, values, and priorities identified in the Nipissing's current Strategic Plan 2015-20. In particular, the sociology faculty members strive "to cultivate in students an understanding of social responsibility at both local and global levels, so that our graduates are able to take their place in society as committed, aware, socially responsible citizens." Further, the mission statement states that Nipissing University will "encourage students, faculty and staff to realize their full intellectual and personal potential to the benefit of our local, national, and international communities."*

The strategic plan lists three priorities, which include the student experience, academic and research excellence, and community engagement. The department offers students a rigorous and stimulating academic experience. Beyond this, the department augments the course offerings of other disciplines and programs, and through this service, expands the learning experience of students in these other disciplines and programs. The department is also enhancing the research potential and graduate programming of other departments through the establishment of the Nipissing Research Data Centre, which allows faculty and researchers from communities across Northern Ontario to access confidential Statistics Canada micro data.

C. OPPORTUNTIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

External Reviewers Recommendation #1: *The department should hold a working retreat to discuss their program offerings and decide upon the substantive areas in which they would like to offer electives on a regular, cyclical basis – and should hire faculty who can specifically help mount the courses selected.*

Unit's Response: This has already been started. Specifically, as of Fall 2017 the Department has been offering elective courses annually based on a 3-year cycle teaching plan to maximize the range of elective course offerings. Also, Sociology faculty members have been regularly engaged in partial curriculum reviews by deleting, adding and updating courses. However, a full-curriculum review is planned to be held soon to restructure the Sociology curriculum in line with the existing core areas of the Sociology program, and with some new streams that the department is planning to develop in order to address the timely needs of public and private sectors for trained skillful and knowledgeable Sociology graduates who can make a successful transit to job market. This is very important given the rapid changes in the Canadian society and the World. The Department will also revise existing elective courses and develop new courses to add more critical approaches to research and theory, as called for by the Reviewers (page 4). In the next stage, the Department needs to hire three tenure-track faculty members, who will replace two retired and resigned faculty members and one faculty member on long-term medical leave.

Dean's Response: The department holds regular meetings to discuss course curriculum and curriculum updates.

Provost's Response: I agree with the Dean.

External Reviewers Recommendation #2: *The department should strike a standing committee on curriculum with the mandate to add and delete courses in a systematic way, while simultaneously evaluating the critical content in line with departmental resources, program requirements, and faculty expertise.*

Unit's Response: As noted before, the department adds, removes, and banks courses on a regular basis to meet the department and university's objectives. In this end, the department plans to restructure the existing curriculum in the next departmental retreat.

Dean's Response: As noted in the departmental response to the reviewers' recommendations, the department has been very active in updating the Sociology program's curriculum. All Arts and Science curriculum proposals go through a rigorous institutional approval process. The process starts with an Arts and Science Curriculum Committee, then proceeds to the Arts and Science Executive Committee, the University Curriculum Committee, and if necessary, to the AQAP Committee. Finally, all curriculum motions are approved by Senate. In other words, the mechanism for discussion and approval of curriculum proposals is already in place.

Provost's Response: I agree with the Dean

External Reviewers Recommendation #3: *While the department ideally might consider hiring an Indigenous scholar to join their ranks, another option would be to consider cross-listing a course with the Native Studies program at Nipissing or including a course from the program as a possible elective that would count toward the sociology degree. Pathways that might lead to double majors in Sociology and Native Studies could be explored further.*

Unit's Response: The Department takes seriously the Truth and Recommendation Commission's Calls to Action and our role as a northern institution with strong relationships with Indigenous students and communities. The Department is working to incorporate Indigenous Knowledges, theories and pedagogies into the Sociology curriculum in a number of ways including: 1) two third-year Anthropology courses with substantive content related to Indigenous Knowledges (ANTR 3006: Anthropology of Development in the Canadian North, and ANTR 3027: Anthropology, Aboriginal Peoples and the Law) are counted as electives in the Sociology program; 2) the Anthropology program collaborates with Native Studies and has a number of courses that are cross-listed with Native Studies. However, the Department would like to work towards a more systemic inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges, theories, and pedagogies throughout the Sociology curriculum. We will do this by working with Nipissing University's Indigenization Steering Committee to pursue opportunities for workshops, training, and course/curriculum review and development, and to explore opportunities to invite Indigenous Knowledge Keepers into the classroom.

Dean's Response: The department is very active in integrating indigenous ways of knowing into the Sociology and Anthropology curricula. Further discussions of expanding the indigenous content in all courses offered by the Sociology program are ongoing.

Provost's Response: I agree and want to express my appreciation for the work that the dept does. Departments at NU do not have autonomy to decide on faculty positions, but may make a case for hiring through the annual academic planning process.

External Reviewers Recommendation #4: *The department should expand elective offerings to further consolidate their capacity to address diverse topics in Sociology, which would allow them to be more consistent with their learning objectives.*

Unit's Response: As called for by the Reviewers on page 4 of the review report, and as much as is practical with existing faculty resources, the Department will expand course offerings to include more critical approaches to theory and research, and to develop courses that incorporate Indigenous Knowledges, theories, pedagogies, and topical areas into the program curriculum. This may be done partially through cross-listing courses with other Departments (such as Native Studies), or through the development of Sociology courses. However, the Department currently needs to hire three new full-time faculty members (replacing retired, resigned and on long-term leave colleagues) to expand elective offerings.

Provost's Response: I agree with the Dean and encourage the Department to continue building synergies with other programmes.

Dean's Response: I agree. Further collaboration with other (cognate) disciplines would allow the department to maximize resources and provide students with broader and more interdisciplinary electives. Further discussion regarding such collaboration will be supported through the Dean's Office.

External Reviewers Recommendation #5: *The department should request further institutional support to update key courses that could be offered in a blended learning format or otherwise incorporate cutting-edge technological and pedagogical approaches.*

Unit's Response: In the past, the department has asked for staff support resources. Also, the department has a successful experience of delivering some online/distance learning courses (i.e., Introduction to Sociology, Sociology of Nursing, Globalization and Development, Sociology of Work, Minority Groups in Canada), and offering a placement period for its MA Sociology students, engaging them in experiential learnings in the community organizations. This also can be definitely workable for undergraduate Sociology students, upon the availability of a support staff member in the department. As found in several other programs on the campus, this person could assist with the outreach process to community organizations for student practicum placements. The Department also will work with the new Dean of Teaching to explore innovative pedagogical approaches that include blended and experiential learning, and to incorporate innovative technological and pedagogical approaches into the classroom.

Dean's Response: The department of Sociology and Anthropology offers numerous online courses in Sociology. The online delivery or any alternate formats are well supported through our LST team and through the Dean's Office. Further supports will be hopefully provided through the new Dean of Teaching Office.

Provost's Response: Agree with the Dean.

External Reviewers Recommendation #6: *The department should consider developing more experiential learning opportunities through an applied research course, an internship program, and/or by partnering with experiential learning specialists/supports on campus to foster community-engaged learning options that currently do not exist.*

Unit's Response: The majority of Sociology faculty members are applied researchers, so upper-level senior Sociology students have the opportunity to work with them in different research projects in the capacity of Research Assistant. The interested students can conduct their own research by taking an honours undergraduate thesis (SOCI 4096 and SOCI 4097), and then they have the opportunity to present results of their research in the annual meeting of Nipissing University Undergraduate Research Conference (NUURC) to their peers, participating from across Canada and academic and community participants. SOCI/ANTR 3036: Qualitative Research Methods also offers opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning including conducting primary research in the North Bay community, and presenting their research results at the NUURC. Another existing community-learning option for Sociology students is the fourth-level required course in SOCI 4576 Honours Seminar in Professional Development. The department is currently struggling to offer this course due to the limited number of full-time faculty members. So, the addition of any other kind of "community-engaged learning options" would require new faculty and staff resources.

Dean's Response: As noted in the departmental response, the department currently offers honours undergraduate thesis courses, including SOCI 4576: Honours Seminar in Professional Development. Further internship and experiential learning opportunities are also provided through the following course: UNIV 3006: Experiential Learning in Arts and Science.

Provost's Response: Good EL practice is that students have the opportunity to engage with research in every year of their study.

External Reviewers Recommendation #7: *The departmental faculty members might consider balancing formal tests with other types of assignments, such as oral presentations or group projects, which allow students to demonstrate their range of skills and abilities and would further benefit the students in terms of real-world applications.*

Unit's Review: Given the nature of courses and faculty and staff resources, the evaluation methods of students' learning can be affected. Some courses, like SOCI 2016 and SOCI 2017 are theory courses, with a large number of students in the class. So, it is hard and impossible to try the method of students' presentation. In the past, when there were enough faculty resources, these two courses were offered in multiple sections, with small class sizes each section, so students had the opportunity to develop their writing and speaking skills through writing essays and presenting in class. However, due to the limited number of faculty resources, the department had to merge multiple sections of these courses. Furthermore, it is ideal to have two sections of both SOC 2016 and 2017 so that undergraduate Sociology students get a chance to conduct, in consultation with the professor, 60-30 min tutorial/workshops that demonstrate the application and evaluation of theoretical models and conceptual frameworks to areas of the empirical social world that they experience in everyday life or within the context of potential future employment. However, students in other courses are usually evaluated by different methods, including assignments and projects, presentations and tests, as documented in the course outlines attached to the Self-study.

Dean's Response: I agree that further opportunities for innovative assessment should be explored.

Provost's Response: I disagree with the internal response, and encourage the faculty to explore the many existing approaches to interactive pedagogies for large classes.

External Reviewers Recommendation #8: *The department should introduce a capstone thesis seminar where students develop their individual projects in an area of the student's personal interest rather than continuing to offer a number of independent studies with limited financial compensation for faculty members. The capstone course should be offered under the guidance and mentorship of a talented faculty member with the capacity to help nurture a diverse array of student interests, rather than orienting the course to the instructor's research interests and expertise.*

Unit's Response: Offering a new "capstone thesis seminar" requires additional faculty resources, which are not currently in the Department. However, as noted, currently students who want to pursue their own research interest, are encouraged to take SOCI4096 and SOCI4097 thesis courses, working with a full-time faculty member. Moreover, SOCI3226 Survey Research is a required course for Sociology students, where the students learn and practice through developing two major projects how to write their own research proposal on a research topic of their own interest, and how to analyze data collected for their research project.

Dean's Response: As noted in the departmental response, the current suite of thesis and survey research courses are already in place. These courses serve the same function as the course/seminar proposed above: to allow students to pursue individual research interests with a faculty member of their choice.

Provost's Response: It is possible to offer interdisciplinary capstone courses that draw students more broadly from social sciences or liberal arts. This may be a good alternative for the Faculty.

External Reviewers Recommendation #9: *The department should liaise with other departments to assess the potential for double-major degrees, particularly with the Criminal Justice program.*

Unit's Response: This can be possible, if the limited faculty resources are resolved. Currently, Sociology students can count up to six-credits of upper-year Anthropology courses towards their Sociology degree. Given that the Sociology and Anthropology programs share courses in Classical and Contemporary Theory, and Qualitative Research Methods, the potential for double-major degrees in Sociology and Anthropology are high. However, one limitation for students pursuing a double-degree in Sociology and Anthropology is the relatively small number of elective courses available to students due to limited faculty resources. The potential to develop double-major degrees would be greatly enhanced by hiring new faculty resources in both Sociology and Anthropology to ensure that students can attain enough credits to fulfil their degree requirements. Moreover, Sociology and Criminology programs are currently collaborating at the graduate level, offering the collaborative Master program in Sociology. Undergraduate Criminology students also take several Sociology courses, including core required courses on Introductory Sociology, Research Methods, Social Statistics and Theory. Therefore, there is a great potential to coordinate a double major between the two programs at the undergraduate level.

Dean's Response: I agree that a double-major should be pursued in the future, once adequate resources have been allocated to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology to expand its programming. Currently, the program liaises with multiple departments, providing service courses to Nursing, Education, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice programs**.**

Provost's Response: If the degree architecture aligns with the adopted architecture the institution, it should be possible for a student to combine Sociology major modules with major modules of virtually every other discipline.

External Reviewers Recommendation #10: *The department should expand the list of preapproved courses that could be counted toward another degree. They should also increase the number of credits earned in other departments that can be counted toward the Sociology degree.*

Unit's Response: Sociology students already have the option to take a certain number of elective courses from other programs, and they indeed do so. However, there are certain Sociology substantive core elective courses that are only offered by the Sociology program, however due to limited faculty resources, the department cannot offer them on a timely manner.

Dean's Response: I agree that exploring electives outside the discipline might be beneficial to students in the Sociology programs. The increasing emphasis on cross-disciplinary literacy suggests that broadening electives can enhance students' transferable skills.

Provost's Response: See above in 9.

External Reviewers Recommendation #11: *The department should explore opportunities to base entire courses on the use and manipulation of important data sources from the RDC, especially with respect to faculty expertise in selected areas of health, aging, gerontology, education, and family.*

Unit's Response: The department is moving in this direction. Currently, Sociology undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to conduct their thesis research and course projects based on the micro-data of Canadian surveys and censuses in Nipissing University's Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (RDC). Running courses within the RDC is an option defined by Statistics Canada's RDC, but it requires the addition of extra computers in the Nipissing University RDC (currently, it has only two researcher workstations). However, the Nipissing's RDC in collaboration with the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) has successfully secured a nation-wide CFI – Innovation Fund grant ($2.7M from CFI; $10.1M from all sources) to convert all RDC's to thin-client models by 2021. For Nipissing's RDC, this funding will allow us to increase operating hours substantially as well as expand the number of researcher workstations to six, thereby further enhancing access and facilitating the introduction of entire courses within the RDC. Since the opening of Nipissing University RDC branch in Spring 2017, several undergraduate and graduate Sociology students have already used Nipissing University RDC data to analyze data for their research thesis or doing their course projects. It has also afforded opportunities for three post-doctoral researchers to collaborate with faculty in the department and produce peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations.

Dean's Response: As noted in the departmental response, this initiative is already in progress.

Provost's Response: I agree with the Dean.

External Reviewers Recommendation #12: *The department should actively build upon their relationships with other institutions in order to create sustained partnerships that might expand the learning opportunities for students.*

Unit's Response: Currently, Sociology faculty members have sustained relationships with other institutions both inside and outside of Canada. Several Sociology graduates could enter into graduate programs in other Canadian universities and institutions because of advanced theoretical knowledge and research skills they acquired throughout their involvement in research projects of Sociology faculty members, conducted in collaboration with other universities and institutions. In addition, part of our work to more systematically include Indigenous Knowledges, theories and worldviews into the Sociology curriculum will involve establishing relationships with regional Indigenous institutions and organizations that will facilitate experiential learning opportunities, and opportunities to invite Indigenous Knowledge Keepers into the classroom.

Dean's Response: The department is active in fostering relationships with other institutions and community partners. In fact, the departmental community outreach ranks among the most engaged departments in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Provost's Response: I have no concerns in this area.

Student Support and Alumni Engagement:

External Reviewers Recommendation #13: *The department should have a designated specialist or "expert" who participates in the monitoring the content and success of the Foundations program, especially in relation to proper supports and academic advising.*

Unit's Response: This is an initiative proposed and organized by the Faculty of Arts and Science, therefore it is out of the jurisdiction of the department of Sociology and Anthropology to monitor it. However, the Sociology program has contributed to this Foundations program by sending two faculty members to sit in the planning committee for this Foundations program.

Dean's Response: Not applicable. The Foundations program is an Arts and Science initiative. Participating departments and disciplines serve on a committee that oversees the program in consultation and collaboration with the Dean's Office, Student Services, Academic Advising, the First Year Foundations Coordinator, Recruitment and the Registrar Office.

Provost's Response: I agree with the above.

External Reviewers Recommendation #14: *The department should investigate further the backgrounds of incoming 105 students and how the Sociology program might leverage these unique experiences and incorporate selected aspects into the program.*

Unit's Response: The recommended investigation falls in the jurisdiction of Nipissing University Institutional Planning Office (IPO), holding admission data. However, at the time of writing the Sociology Self-study, the department asked the Nipissing University Institutional Planning Office for detailed data regarding the backgrounds of students who enter into the Sociology program, either directly from high school or indirectly from other post-secondary programs. Upon having such data and hiring a new supporting staff, this investigation can be conducted in collaboration with IPO.

Dean's Response: This investigation is ongoing and is the purview of the Office of the Institutional Planning and Design.

Provost's Response: The Registrar's Office through its recruitment team is continuously monitoring this information on potential and actual applicants. This is not within departmental jurisdiction.

External Reviewers Recommendation #15: *The department should conduct a survey of students who are in the program and who have dropped out to determine their main reasons either for continuing or the factors that have deterred their progression.*

Unit's Response: The recommended investigation falls in the jurisdiction of Nipissing University Institutional Planning Office and other administrative offices that conduct the student surveys. However, upon hiring a new supporting staff, the department and Nipissing administration can work together to develop and conduct such a specific survey. It should also be noted that such qualitative information are usually acquired by Sociology faculty members when they interact with students.

Dean's Response: See above.

Provost's Response: See above

External Reviewers Recommendation #16: *An online, post-graduation survey should be developed through a social media platform, perhaps in conjunction with the university's development team, to track student's employment.*

Unit's Response: The recommended investigation falls out of the jurisdiction of the department. Such surveys are regularly conducted by the Nipissing University administration, which can be developed efficiently in consultation with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Dean's Response: See above.

Provost's Response: See above

Faculty Resources and Research

External Reviewers Recommendation #17: *The department requires at least two additional full-time tenure-track appointments to help manage current demand, reduce the necessity of overload teaching, and ensure that faculty members can continue to engage in their research at a reduced risk of burnout. Additional opportunities or incentives should be offered to allow faculty to reduce their teaching loads to pursue research, in line with institutional resources.*

Unit's Response: The department has been requesting for three tenure-track replacement faculty positions over the past few years. Currently, only those faculty members who hold a tri-council research grant receive one teaching release, but there are other faculty members who have external research grants and projects from other external public and private national and international agencies that are not counted towards granting teaching release. Or, a faculty who is actively publishing and presenting in conferences, without having an active research grant, are not usually granted a teaching release, which all would discourage faculty research.

Dean's Response: Agreed. Due to budgetary constraints, the two full-time tenure-track appointment requests will have to be allocated in stages. Nonetheless, both have been included in the Provost's academic plan

Provost's Response: Departments have no autonomy over faculty hiring but are invited to make a case for hiring in their academic plan.

External Reviewers Recommendation #18: *The department should prioritize the hiring of qualified women to help balance their gender complement, especially in view of the high proportion of female majors and the mentorship opportunities that would help advance NU's mission.*

Unit's Response: The department will consider faculty gender balance in hiring new qualified faculty members.

Dean's Response: Agreed. Any future hiring has to be in alignment with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion mandate.

Provost's Response: See above

External Reviewers Recommendation #19: *The department needs at least one full-time faculty member dedicated to the specialty area of health studies and gerontology, even if that means hiring a replacement for the member currently on long-term medical leave.*

Unit's Response: The department has been requesting for three replacement tenure-track faculty positions over the past few years. One of these requested positions is to replace the member currently on long-term medical leave. If sufficient faculty resources are allocated to the Department, we will hire in the area of health studies and gerontology.

Dean's Response: Agreed. One of the tenure-track position requests includes such a specialization.

Provost's Response: Departments have no autonomy over faculty hiring but are invited to make a case for hiring in their academic plan.

External Reviewers Recommendation #20: *The department should have an academic coordinator position with a reduced teaching load (one three-hour course release) to shoulder some of the administrative responsibilities, such as around curriculum planning and course assignments, helping to manage community-engaged learning initiatives, monitoring the proposed surveys, and/or providing appropriate student counseling.*

Unit's Response: Currently, the department Chair is largely engaged in regular administrative works of the department. Therefore, there is a need for the recommended academic coordinator position in the department to perform other departmental administrative responsibilities, including curriculum planning and course assignments, helping to manage community-engaged learning initiatives, monitoring the proposed surveys, and/or providing appropriate student counseling. The much-needed addition of a full-time departmental administrative support staff position could also help considerably in this area as well.

Dean's Response: Not applicable. The duties listed above pertain to the role of the Departmental Chair. Chairs are awarded six credits of course release/or a stipend/or a combination thereof to perform duties including course planning, budgeting, and student counselling.

Provost's Response: Agree with Dean.

D.   IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or unit identified as the being responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	PROJECTED COMPLETION
#3 - Address faculty renewal through academic planning	Department with Dean	annually
#4 - Map opportunities for curricula collaboration at NU	Department with Dean	May 2020
#5 - Identify institutionally shared resources for expanding blended and other formats	Department with the Dean of Teaching	May 2020
#6 - Examine best practices for EL in sociology in Canada	Department may consult Teaching Chair in experiential learning.	May 2020
#7 - Develop a resource document for teaching large classes	Department with the Dean of Teaching	March 2020
#8 - Explore the possibility of interdisciplinary capstone courses	Dean of Arts and Science	March 2020
#9, 10 - Review of degree architecture	Registrar	December 2019
#1, 19 - Review needs for faculty	Department with Dean	Annually with academic planning
#18 - When next hiring, the department should clearly identify their strategy for fulfilling EDI expectations	Department with Dean	When hiring