

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Social Psychology Program

Date of Review: March 3 - 4, 2020

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by the **Social Psychology Program**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

The Social Psychology Program submitted a self-study in January 2020 to the Vice-Provost, Faculty to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate program. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each member in the program.

Two arm's length external reviewers, both from Ontario and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, and selected by the Vice-Provost, Faculty. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 3 – 4, 2020. The visit included meetings with the Provost, Vice-Provost, Faculty, Dean of Social Sciences, Director, faculty, staff and, students.

The Director of the Social Psychology program and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (August 2020). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

Strengths

The program furnishes a richly interdisciplinary, innovative, and intellectually rewarding experience. Students learn about a variety of methodologies and receive hands-on research experience in the capstone course. Satisfaction with the program is high amongst both current students and alumni; they strongly identify with the program and feel that it has prepared them well for launching their careers. Program faculty are committed and have made the most of the resources they have been allocated. Return on investment in the program has been high.

Areas for Improvement

The curriculum needs to be indigenized and decolonized. Students require further academic skills training in writing, reviewing literature, and research methods. The program relies too heavily on sessional instructors and CLAs and would benefit from hiring tenure-stream or tenured faculty who can contribute expertise both in sociological and psychological social psychology.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1. PROGRAM			
(a) Indigenization			
1.1 Address issues of Indigenization and decolonialization throughout the discussions arising from this report. 3.2. The program hold a retreat to develop ideas about how to work toward Indigenizing and decolonizing the social psychology curriculum.	We will hold a faculty retreat to discuss changes to the social psychology curriculum, including issues of Indigenization and decolonization.	Program faculty	2020-21
3.11. Program members jointly undertake a curricular review to ensure that the broader considerations	We will discuss these issues at our faculty retreat (see section 1.1).	Program faculty	2020-21

captured by “diversity” are addressed throughout the curriculum.			
3.1. The institutional template for the IQAP self-study and review report be revised to foreground Indigenization and decolonization.	We will make these recommendations to the MacPherson Institute.	Tara Marshall	Fall 2020
1. PROGRAM			
(b) Program vs Department			
1.3. Develop a multi-year plan to either strengthen social psychology as an undergraduate program or develop an academic plan for the departmentalization of the program.	The program faculty will discuss the possibility of departmentalization at a faculty retreat. The faculty will continue to work on strengthening the program and will discuss next steps with the Dean.	Program faculty	Fall 2020
1.4. Rather than undertaking an undergraduate journal initiative, enhance the dissemination of undergraduate research by highlighting and archiving student poster presentations on the program’s website	<p>We have archived the poster presentations on our website and plan to do so every year from now on.</p> <p>Our undergraduate journal is modest in scope and facilitated by the library, so there is little additional labour required by the faculty to implement the journal. We have posted guidelines on the journal website (hosted by the library) that indicate that (a) only capstone projects that receive a mark of at least 85% will be considered for publication; (b) there will be no additional peer review for submissions, since final capstone papers already go</p>	Sarah Clancy	<p>Poster presentations: achieved</p> <p>Undergraduate journal: first issue will be published in summer 2020</p>

	through multiple stages of review by the instructor. This type of student journal is consistent with those developed in other departments at McMaster.		
3. CURRICULUM			
(a) Course offerings			
1.2. Explore future practicum/placement opportunities to enhance community engagement.	We will meet with representatives of Experiential Education and explore ways to augment our experiential provision. We currently do not have the capacity to include a practicum/placement course but remain highly interested if given an opportunity to allocate the necessary resources to such a course.	Tara Marshall	2020-2021
3.3. A mechanism be provided for students to apply to have courses not presently on the multidisciplinary list be counted toward their multidisciplinary course requirement. This mechanism should be made prominent in the calendar and on the program website.	Currently, students who take a course not on the multidisciplinary list can have it counted towards their multidisciplinary course requirement after discussing it with the Academic Advising office and then obtaining permission from the Social Psychology Program Director. We can make this process more transparent on our program website and ask for it to be added to the calendar when we present program changes at the Undergraduate Curriculum meeting in the fall.	Emma Pechmann	Fall 2020
3.4. The multidisciplinary course list be reviewed with the goal of reducing the number	Our Program Administrator will review the course list and identify courses with prerequisites. The Program Director will then review	Emma Pechmann, Tara Marshall, and the Social Psychology faculty	Fall 2020

<p>of courses with prerequisites.</p>	<p>these courses, flag any that might be removed, and present these removals to the rest of the Social Psychology faculty for feedback. If we agree on courses to be removed from the multidisciplinary list, we will present the changes at the Undergraduate Curriculum meeting in the fall.</p>		
<p>3.7. The methods/statistics requirements be increased by one 3-credit course, at Level III. The SOCPHY 3L03 course to be introduced in 2020/2021 would be one course that could fulfill this requirement.</p>	<p>SOCPHY 3L03 is being introduced as an optional course in 2020-21. This course is cross-listed with Health, Aging & Society, so it is not possible to offer it as a requirement for Social Psychology students (HAS feels that making it a required course for Social Psychology would dramatically increase the class size, thereby detracting from the quality of learning for HAS students). We anticipate that Social Psychology students who wish to pursue research-based graduate studies may take this course. Nonetheless, we may work towards offering a required Level III course in methods/statistics solely for Social Psychology students within the coming years, provided we have the teaching staff to do so.</p>	<p>Tara Marshall</p>	<p>2020-2025</p>
<p>8. A qualitative methods course that could fulfill a new Level III methods requirement should be introduced. Ethnography would be</p>	<p>While SOCPHY 3L03 covers both quantitative methods and qualitative methods, we agree that it would be ideal to develop a new course focusing exclusively on qualitative methods. This may</p>	<p>Tara Marshall</p>	<p>2025</p>

a promising subject for it, given current expertise in the program.	become feasible once we have more permanent faculty members contributing to our program.		
3. CURRICULUM (b) Capstone			
3.5. The capstone course size be capped, conceivably by dividing it into two sections.	Given increasing student enrollments, it is no longer feasible for the capstone course to be delivered by one instructor only. In fall 2020, we will request additional teaching resources so that we may divide this course into two sections as of 2021-22.	Tara Marshall and Sarah Clancy	Fall 2020
3.6. The ethics training in the capstone course be simplified and streamlined. For example, instead of having each group independently prepare iterations of the ethics documents, a single ethics document could be prepared that would cover all groups wishing to survey the general student body – a popular choice of method in the posters we viewed. Each such group could simply contribute questions to an “omnibus” survey questionnaire. Groups wishing to use other methods, such as in-depth interviews for other populations, could still do group-specific ethics paperwork, but could	Currently, templates for ethics documents are provided for the students, and the instructor provides an in-class seminar to go over the completion of said documents. We appreciate the reviewers’ suggestion for an omnibus questionnaire and will keep it in mind when there are very similar student projects (and those similar projects are quantitative in nature). This would likely result in a reduction of workload for the instructor, while at the same time ensuring groups contribute equitably and equally to the project design and there is no discrepancy between groups.	Sarah Clancy	Fall 2020

<p>be provided with typical language and a “fill in the blank” format for incorporating their own plans.</p>			
<p>3.9. Students be required to have completed the Level II methods and statistics requirements before taking the capstone course. Further, we recommend that students be advised to complete the new Level III methods requirement prior to taking the capstone course</p>	<p>We will add the methods course (SOCPSY 2K03) as a prerequisite for the capstone course. We will inform the Associate Dean’s Office and present the change at the Undergraduate Curriculum meeting.</p> <p>Until we have a required Level III methods course in place, we will encourage our students to take the optional methods course (SOCPSY 3L03) before taking the capstone course.</p>	<p>Tara Marshall, Emma Pechmann, and the Associate Dean’s Office</p>	<p>Fall 2020</p>
<p>3.10. The program consider developing an alternative to the capstone, one in which students can explore the relationship between social psychology and community placements.</p>	<p>(See response to 1.2). We will meet with representatives of Experiential Education and explore ways to augment our experiential provision. However, we have reservations about this possibility on two fronts: (1) placements would require additional resources offered by the Faculty, and (2) the capstone course is consistently rated one of the top features of our program, and we are reluctant to make changes that might harm its standing. We think a practicum/placement course at Level III might better satisfy the experiential education component of our program than in lieu of the capstone.</p>	<p>Tara Marshall</p>	<p>Fall 2020</p>

	However, we will discuss this possibility at a faculty retreat.		
4. TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT			
4.1. The program identify opportunities to develop literature review skills (including referencing), beginning in the lower years of the program.	Currently, students learn how to write literature reviews for SOCPSY 1Z03 and 2B03, but we think it would be worthwhile to incorporate a literature review assessment into SOCPSY 2YY3 (Theories in Social Psychology), which is a required course. While our sessional instructors have done an excellent job teaching this course over the last few years, we believe it should be taught by permanent faculty to ensure consistency in teaching foundational skills such as reviewing literature. We will discuss further ways to develop literature review skills at the curriculum review faculty retreat.	Program faculty	2020-21
5. RESOURCES TO MEET PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS			
5.1. Reduce the number of units of instruction taught by faculty with contractually limited or sessional positions to afford the program greater stability in course offering and staffing.	Plans are afoot to convert Sarah Clancy's CLA to a teaching professor position by July 2021. We seek additional tenure-stream faculty to teach units in our department that, at present, are taught by sessional instructors. These teaching units are germane to our program (Theories in Social Psychology, Self & Identity) and are best taught by a sociological social	CLA conversion: Tara Marshall, Jim Dunn (Chair of Health, Aging & Society), and the Dean. Hiring additional tenure-track faculty: we will discuss this with the Dean.	July 2021 (CLA conversion) 2021-2025: hire additional tenure-track faculty

	<p>psychologist with expertise in symbolic interactionism. To satisfy the student desire for additional psychological social psychology, we seek to hire a tenure-stream experimental social psychologist who could teach units that are essential to a well-grounded education in psychological social psychology (e.g., intergroup relations, close relationships). We are particularly keen on hiring at least one BIPOC individual for these positions.</p>		
<p>5.2. Consider both the conversion of the current CLA to continuing status and an increased, ongoing commitment from the departments of Sociology and Psychology to contribute teaching power in support of this program.</p>	<p>As noted in 5.1, Sarah Clancy's position will be converted to a teaching professor position by July 2021.</p> <p>Rather than an increased commitment from Sociology, we would prefer to decrease Sociology's 9-unit commitment to our program. Until we have permanent staff to teach these units, we could hire sessional instructors or a CLA. While the teaching provided by Sociology faculty has been excellent, we do not know on a year-to-year basis who will be teaching these units, and there have been years that Sociology was unable to deliver on this commitment due to a lack of available faculty. We have similar misgivings about seeking a teaching commitment from the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour (PNB). They do</p>	<p>We will discuss this with the Dean.</p>	<p>2020-2021</p>

	<p>not have any research-stream faculty who specialize in social psychology and might not be able to teach units in our program.</p> <p>Rather than seeking a commitment of additional teaching units from Sociology or PNB, we would prefer to discuss the possibility of a joint appointment for a CLA or tenure-stream professor.</p>		
5.3. Review space issues with the goal of ending the program’s reliance on “borrowed space” for core operations.	We are in complete agreement with this recommendation.	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-2025
5.4. Critically review the annual budget to ensure that funding of the student experience in smaller programs and departments is reasonably comparable to that of larger departments. This is not simply a resources issue: it is an equity issue.	We are in complete agreement with this recommendation.	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-21
7. PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT			
7.1. Track the numbers of students enrolling in independent study courses and the projects they work on. The application form for such courses should collect data	Our program administrator will track independent study students and put the titles of their studies on our website. We will also devise a survey to ask these students about their motives for doing the independent study.	Emma Pechmann and Tara Marshall	2020

about the students' motivations.			
7.2. Identify the kinds of inconsistency in SOCPsy 2K03 that have proven troublesome in the past, and accordingly amend the Curriculum Map, as well as any longer, internal course description document that the program may use.	There has been inconsistency in who has taught this course due to faculty unavailability (e.g., parental leave). We will ask the course instructor to look over the course description and make amendments if necessary and change the Curriculum Map accordingly.	Paul Glavin	Fall 2020
7.3. Develop more precise learning outcomes for SOCPsy 2K03.	We will ask the faculty member who regularly teaches this course to provide more detail on the course outline for SOCPsy 2K03. Along these lines, we will ask all instructors to incorporate Program learning outcomes into their outlines for 2020-21.	Paul Glavin	2020
7.4. Use program faculty meetings or a teaching retreat to continue to discuss the connections among courses in support of the learning objectives. Use syllabi as resources in these discussions.	We will discuss connections among courses in support of learning objectives at a faculty retreat in fall 2020 focused on curriculum development.	Program faculty	Fall 2020
7.5. Experiment with a Level II orientation to paths through the program.	To reach all Level II students, we will introduce an orientation to paths through the program as part of a required course - SOCPsy 2YY3. Tara Marshall delivered an orientation along these lines for students taking	Tara Marshall	Fall 2020

	SOCPSY 2B03 in fall 2019; however, 2B03 is not mandatory for all Level II students and would be better delivered in SOCPSY 2YY3.		
7.6. Compare students' views of multidisciplinary by level of study.	We will develop a short online survey that asks students in each level of study about their views of multidisciplinary.	Tara Marshall and Emma Pechmann	2020-21
7.7. Track changes in the Level I GPA of entering students.	We agree with this recommendation and will do so over the coming years.	Tara Marshall and Emma Pechmann	2020-2027
7.8. Partner with the Academic Skills unit and Student Success Center to provide enhanced support for under-prepared learners.	We will liaise with the Student Success Center to see what support they can provide for our students.	Tara Marshall	2020-21
7.9. Create a Faculty Advisor role.	The faculty will discuss this role at a retreat.	Program faculty	2020-21
7.10. Publicize student research by exhibiting posters from the capstone course on the program website.	In March 2020, Sarah Clancy created a virtual slideshow of the capstone poster session (cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic). We have posted it on our website and have decided to do this every year from now on to highlight the projects that our students work so hard on.	Sarah Clancy, Emma Pechmann	We will do this every year from now on
7.11. Investigate whether the Social Psychology Student Society's Facebook page could be used to track the careers of a greater number of alumni.	We will investigate the possibility of posting a link to an online survey on the Student Society's Facebook page that asks alumni about their careers.	Tara Marshall, Emma Pechmann	2020

7.12. Revise the careers information in the program website to better reflect the diversity of graduates' career paths.	We have recently collected information on career paths from over a dozen alumni and will revise the careers information on our program website in accordance with this information.	Tara Marshall, Sarah Clancy, Emma Pechmann	Fall 2020
7.13. Seek out an opportunity for the curriculum to address how responses to traumatic course material can be understood using social psychological concepts.	We will discuss this issue at our faculty retreat focused on curriculum development.	Program faculty	Fall 2020
7.14. Preserve the expertise in sociological social psychology (symbolic interaction) being lost through retirement via a targeted hiring in the area and ensure that the terms and conditions of employment for this appointment include the teaching of 6-9 units of instruction in SOCPHY.	We agree with this recommendation, but the details of faculty hires must be negotiated at the Faculty level.	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-2025
7.15. If there is a move to departmentalize the program, then an expansionary position in psychological social psychology would be beneficial.	We agree with this recommendation, but the details of faculty hires must be negotiated at the Faculty level.	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-2025
7.16. Expand the number of faculty	As suggested in section 5.2, we wish to hire program-	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-2025

members contributing to the program and teaching SOCPSY courses.	specific faculty rather than to “borrow” teaching units from other departments on an ad hoc basis. The details of faculty hires must be negotiated at the Faculty level.		
7.17. Review the academic calendar and web-based resources that address progress from this program to potential graduate study and careers for transparency, accuracy, constancy of message and completeness.	We appreciate this recommendation and will review these sources.	Tara Marshall and Emma Pechmann	Fall 2020
8. SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE			
8.1. The complement of faculty members who have “cross-appointments” to Social Psychology be increased over time for the purpose of providing curricular stability to the program and decreasing the program’s reliance on a contingent/sessional faculty.	We partially addressed this point in section 5.2. Part of the problem is that there are few existing faculty members outside of our program who do any research, teaching, or practice related to social psychology. Non-specialists can deliver classes on research methods/statistics or content more peripheral to social psychology, but core content should be taught by social psychologists. We prefer to hire social psychologists who self-identify as social psychologists.	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-21
8.2. While we address this issue elsewhere in the report, as a governance matter, the program	We are in complete agreement that the program coordinator should not have to “beg and borrow” for teaching resources. However,	We will discuss this with the Dean.	2020-21

<p>coordinator should have access to increased teaching resources that are not contingent on having to “beg and borrow” resources from department Chairs. This does not require an expansion of faculty complement in the Social Sciences but a firm commitment to the allocation (or potential reallocation) of teaching workload.</p>	<p>we would rather hire self-identified social psychologists than have our units taught by redeployed faculty whose disciplinary identification and teaching preferences lie within their home department.</p>		
<p>8.3. Program members should adopt a more “department-like” schedule of meetings to address curricular and program-related matters to enhance collegial governance practices and to increase the extent to which those teaching within the program interact with each other on that basis.</p>	<p>At a faculty retreat, we will discuss the possibility of introducing more “department-like” meetings during the fall and winter terms. We are mindful of balancing the goal of faculty interaction with not overburdening faculty with additional labour.</p>	<p>Program faculty</p>	<p>2020-21</p>
<p>4. Service to the Social Psychology program should be fully considered by the home department during evaluative processes.</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation and further propose that any new roles we add to the program (e.g., Faculty Advisor role) should come with a reduced service commitment in the home department.</p>	<p>We will discuss this with the Chairs of the respective home departments and with the Dean.</p>	<p>2020-21</p>

Dean’s Response, Faculty of Social Sciences:

The reviewers offered high praise for the program. They noted the high level of student engagement and commitment, the high level of student identification with the program, and the consistently positive comments by program alumni. They highlighted a number of innovative aspects of the curriculum, including the group-and project-based capstone course (which students consistently praised as well), the extent to which the program enabled students to think creatively about multi-disciplinarity alongside the inherently interdisciplinary nature of social psychology, and the commitment of the faculty to the program and the students. Clearly the program is doing many things “right” — enrolment has grown steadily since the program was introduced seven years ago. The review confirms that it is a program of which the Faculty of Social Sciences can be very proud.

Naturally, the reviewers also identified areas for enhancement, many of them linked to the tremendous growth of the program, which is creating strains, and to the status of Social Psychology as a free-standing program outside a department or school. The reviewers provided over 40 specific recommendations addressing matters ranging from relatively minor issues to those vital for the continued success of the program. The program has provided a detailed response to all the reviewer recommendations, groups into thematic areas. Through its response, the program clearly demonstrates its commitment to thoughtfully considering all the recommendations, and to taking specific actions to address them as appropriate in a timely manner. I focus my comments on those recommendations that bear on actions that must be taken by the Dean or which are of particular importance to the continued success of the program.

1. Curriculum

Capstone Project

- The reviewers emphasize the success of the capstone project in addressing numerous program learning objectives, and the high regard with which the capstone course is held among students. The capstone course occupies a pivotal place in the curriculum. But the growth of the program enrolment means that it is no longer tenable to offer a single course section taught by a single instructor. The obvious solution is to offer multiple sections of the capstone course. The Faculty will support this change with the resources necessary to implement it.
- The reviewers offer some recommendations regarding design enhancements to the curriculum that the program will consider, perhaps the most significant of which is creating the option to do a community placement rather than the capstone course. I will leave it to the program to consider the merits of this suggestion given the overall learning goals of the program and the role of the capstone course in meeting those goals, but the Faculty’s Office of Experiential Education, which facilitates internships and placement for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences stands ready to work with the program to create this option if desired. The introduction of such an option is consistent with the Faculty’s growing emphasis on experiential learning. In my view, the capstone course and a placement are not either/or—it may be possible and desirable to create a placement option even for those who take the regular capstone course.

Diversity and Indigenization of the Curriculum

- The program will take up these recommendations at a retreat to be held this academic year. These issues have become more important in these last few months, and the revisions can be undertaken as part of a larger initiative of the Faculty to examine program curricula and course content through a diversity lens. As the reviewers note, it is essential that this work be undertaken in a manner that fully respects the history and cultures of Indigenous peoples and people of colour, but that it also does not place unreasonable demands upon them to “do the work” of revising curricula.
- The Faculty will recommend to the MacPherson Institute that the IQAP template be modified to address the absence of a component that asks programs to address issues of Indigenization of its curriculum.

Methods Training

- The program has identified an interim measure to address the recommendation that a 3rd-year methods course be introduced. The interim measure, however, does not fully address the problem as it does not allow the program to make the 3rd-year methods course mandatory. A full resolution requires additional instructor resources for the program. There are multiple options for this, and this issue has to be integrated into the large discussion of additional faculty resources for the program. The Faculty will work with the program to find a suitable resolution. While awaiting resolution of the larger faculty-resource issue, this issue can be brought forward this coming fall as part of the program’s teaching-resources request to the Faculty.

2. Faculty Resources

This is perhaps the most vital issue for the program and underlies many of the more-specific issues raised in the review. As the reviewers note, the program is under-resourced with permanent program faculty. The Faculty began to address this issue two years ago with the recruitment of two new faculty members with specific teaching and service commitments to the Social Psychology program, and it acknowledges that additional work remains to stabilize this popular, high-quality, growing program.

I would like to clarify one point of misunderstanding: the program director does have teaching workload under their control. The director can control the teaching assignments within the program of those faculty with explicit commitments to teaching in the Social Psychology program as part of their letters of appointment. The amount of workload under their control may be too little currently, but it is present.

Increase permanent faculty affiliated with the program

- The Faculty has obtained approval to convert the contractually limit appointment of Dr. Sarah Clancy to a teaching-stream position, which offers permanence conditional adequate performance in the role. Dr. Clancy plays a pivotal role in the program as instructor of the 1st-year program and of the 4th year capstone course. Solidifying her status is essential.

- Hiring additional faculty affiliated with the program is a priority of the Faculty. The COVID pandemic has introduced greater uncertainty regarding the ability of the Faculty to undertake new faculty recruitment in the near-term as the pandemic will affect enrolments in (and therefore the funding to) the Social Sciences at McMaster. The Faculty will work with the program and the Office of the Provost (which must approve all hires) to facilitate such a hire in the context of the Faculty's overall hiring priorities and budget resources.
- The reviewers recommend that additional current permanent faculty in social sciences become affiliated with the program so as to increase the number of courses that can be offered through the social psychology program. As the reviewers note, this will take some creativity to identify inducing arrangements, but the Faculty will work with the program to do this as feasible with faculty it identifies as desirable to have affiliated with the program. Not surprisingly, no other program in the Faculty currently volunteers that it has a surplus of teaching resources available to be re-allocated to another unit, so doing this will likely require net new teaching resources for the Faculty. But there may be situations in which it is advantageous to the program to enter such arrangements rather than getting resources directly.

Program/Department Status

The reviewers argue that the social psychology program is at a crossroads and that it requires either a firm commitment as a non-department program or a signal that it can transition to a department. Implicit in the way the former option is raised is the notion that it may still be perceived as “experimental.” This is unequivocally not the case: it is now a core program of the Faculty of Social Sciences and absent some dramatic change will continue indefinitely. Indeed, as emphasized by the reviewers, it is one of the most popular programs that offers an exceptional student experience.

The option of transitioning to a department brings with it both advantages and disadvantages from both the program and the Faculty perspectives. While it does create greater flexibility in certain respects (e.g., in principle with respect to recruitment, since faculty can be appointed to a department but not a program), being a small department does not resolve many of the challenges currently associated with being a small program and it introduces some new challenges. As Dean, I am open to considering this option, but any such a decision will not be taken lightly. The question must be carefully and thoroughly studied and we all must understand exactly what we expect to gain by such a transition that will benefit both the program and the Faculty.

These two, of course, are not the only options. One could consider, for instance, creating a School of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences that houses multiple interdisciplinary programs (the Faculty has others) within a structure that has all the attributes of a department and which allows the constituent programs to retain their distinctive identities but which captures many of the benefits of a larger administrative unit. Such an option (along with other possibilities) needs to be considered along with becoming a stand-alone department.

Finally, a small matter, but I would note that the program is not located in “borrowed space” on loan from the Department of Health, Aging and Society. While located on the same floor as Health, Aging and Society, the space it occupies is the program’s space, not Health, Aging and Society’s.

Summary Comments

This review has been timely. The program recently transitioned from leadership under its founding Director, Dr. Dorothy Pawluch, who deserves rich praise for creating such a strong program, to a new Director, Dr. Tara Marshall. The program has grown to the point where some aspects of the original design need to be reconsidered to accommodate increased program enrolment. And with two recent hires affiliated with the program, there is new energy and scope for modifications that build on the successes to date. I want to again thank the reviewers for their detailed, thoughtful, and comprehensive recommendations. It is not often that reviewers engage in such a way so as to offer their best recommendations to improve a program. They are to be commended. Finally, as Dean, I am committed to work with the program to implement the many valuable recommendations of the review.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation:

McMaster’s Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with a progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.