

York University

Final Assessment Report – Executive Summary

URBAN STUDIES

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

Urban Studies Undergraduate Program, Department of Social Science

Cyclical Program Review – 2008 to 2015

This Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the programs listed below.

Program(s) Reviewed

Specialized Honours BA in Urban studies
Specialized Honours BA in Geography and Urban Studies
Honours BA in Urban Studies
Honours (Double Major, Major/Minor, Minor/Major) BA in Urban Studies
International BA in Urban Studies
Ordinary BA in Urban Studies

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Dr. Olena Hankivsky, Professor, School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University
Dr. David Wilson, Professor, Geography and Geography Information, University of Illinois
Champaign
Dr. Robert Drummond, Professor, Political Science, York University

Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones

Cyclical Program Review Launch: September 2015
Self-study submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: August 19, 2016
Date of the Site Visit: October 20, 2016
Review Report received: January 17, 2017
Program Response received: March 16, 2017
Dean's Response received: May 2018

Implementation Plan and FAR confirmed by Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance,
May 2018

Submitted by Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic, York University



This review was conducted under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol, August 2013.

Outcome:

An implementation plan has been approved that addresses the recommendations.

The Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance concurred with the recommendation of the Vice-Provost Academic that a post-CPR review involving the Department of Social Science is required in light of the departmental omnibus statement and the Dean's statement on departmental challenges. The outcomes of this departmental review, which will be undertaken collaboratively with the Office of the Vice-Provost, the Office of the Dean of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies and the Department, will form part of the 18 month program Follow-up Report for Urban Studies as well as other programs housed in the Department. The Follow-up Report will provide an update on specific aspects of the implementation plan resulting from the cyclical program review as well as any further recommendations or action plans made in consideration of the Departmental Review.

The Follow-up Report will be due 18 months after the review of this report by the York University Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance (January 2020).

The next Cyclical Program Review will begin in the Fall of 2023 with a site visit expected in the Fall of 2024 or Winter of 2025.

Program Description and Strengths:

The Reviewers noted that, "...Urban Studies delivers a curriculum and modes of instruction that.....emphasize the interrogation of cities and urban processes. This program...in seeking answers and solutions to Toronto's many growth and development concerns, fulfills these objectives through diverse and flexible curricula." They noted that the Urban Studies program is "closely tailored to the current state of the discipline and recent developments in the social sciences. Lecture topics and readings.....capture the latest trends in urban social and political theory. Here ongoing debates about people, place change, and global developments are incisively incorporated into the curriculum."

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Note: some recommendations have been abbreviated.

Recommendation 1: The Program needs to continue to strengthen and nuance its currency and relevance – with rapid changes in the discipline of urban studies, the Program needs to absorb these and position itself for further absorption in the future. Urban Studies is currently well situated for capturing these latest trends. We suggest that even stronger ties to 2 highly relevant units on campus be forged, geography and environmental studies. This should involve further efforts at collaborative teaching and research, and continued involvement with the York inter-disciplinary institutes (City Institute, Institute for Social Research).

Program, in consultation with Associate Dean Programs and Curriculum Manager, to review expanded course offerings with program learning outcomes in mind and delinking the general education offering from the core.

Summer 2018 for review of courses, submit proposal for changes Fall 2018

Recommendation 2: The Program must secure its 3 new faculty lines that have been proposed -- Urban Studies, with more than 110 majors and providing a strong service component to the College and University, needs to enlarge its full-time faculty.

The Program has developed a proposal that identifies its hiring priorities and will revise the proposal to rank the priorities and address the four “pillars” outlined by the Dean – curricular innovation, collaboration, enrolment and recruitment patterns, and curricular clarity. Two CLA appointments have been approved for 2018-2020.

Summer 2018

Recommendation 3: The Program needs to strengthen its offer of applied/job oriented knowledge in the curriculum – the Program rightfully centers inter-disciplinary, critical knowledge in its curriculum, but under-emphasizes the applied aspects of urban studies. Students feel this is a central limitation of the Program.

Program will develop a proposal that supports greater professionalization opportunities by way of experiential education. A stand alone certificate should be contemplated only once the needs of undergraduate students have been met.

Sept 2018

Recommendation 4: Urban Studies needs to advertise its content and purpose more widely and more directly – at the moment, the Program is misunderstood by too many in its content and goals.

No action required: Improved website information ensures that students understand that the program is a liberal arts and not an urban planning program.

Recommendation 5: The Program should use alumni to add more realism and groundedness to the Urban Studies curriculum and planning trajectories.

Vice Provost Academic, on behalf of all Faculties to resume discussion with Alumni Affairs in order to advance collaborative efforts to track graduating students and seek their input on their York experience.

Recommendation 6: Every Urban Studies major should be required to participate in advisement.

No action required: new provisions in the Faculty and Department ensure that advising is well-managed.

Recommendation 7: The Program must upgrade its process of advising – currently, the UPS undergraduate program assistant can advise on URST requirements only.

No action required. See above

Recommendation 8: The University and Urban Studies Program needs to better equip teaching assistants for classroom responsibilities

No action required: the small number of courses that requires TA support does not warrant action

Recommendation 9: The Program needs to trim its course offerings for students at the third and fourth year levels....

No action required: As the Program reviews its curriculum, with a view to provide greater program coherence, extended list courses will be reviewed and determinations made as to whether or not they retain relevance and are willing to serve Urban Studies students. See Recommendation 1