

YORK UNIVERSITY

Final Assessment Report – Executive Summary

WORK AND LABOUR STUDIES

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

Work and Labour Studies 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

Honours BA
Honours BA Double Major
Honours BA Double Major Interdisciplinary (Linked)
Honours BA Major/Minor
Honours BA Minor

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:


Dr. Kendra Coulter, Associate Professor, Centre for Labour Studies,
Brock University

Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones

Cyclical Program Review Launch: September 2015
Self-study submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: September 12, 2016
Date of the Site Visit: Desk Audit
Review Report received: November 28, 2016
Program Response received: February 2, 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.

Desk Audit in lieu of Site Visit

All of the programs housed within the Department of Social Science launched a cyclical program review under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol in Fall of 2015. Work and Labour Studies, as a program within Social Science, presented a dilemma: the program did not have a coordinator to take the lead on preparation of a self-study document. The only full-time tenured faculty member was not available to take the lead, and it did not seem appropriate to ask a limited-term faculty member to undertake this task. Given program interdependencies and the commitment to collaboration among programs at the level of the Department, it was imperative to include Work and Labour Studies in the review. Moreover, it was not clear that a delay in launching the review would yield the desired results. In order to include the program in the Social Science Review, some modifications to the process were required.

At the behest of the Vice Provost Academic, the Associate Dean, Programs, for Liberal Arts and Professional Studies provided an overview of the program from his perspective. He was well-positioned to do so, given his role as Chair of the Department until January 2016, when he assumed the Associate Dean role. In order to secure the best advice for this small program with dwindling faculty support and declining student interest, the Vice Provost invited a subject matter expert, drawn from a list generated by those affiliated with the program, to conduct a desk audit in lieu of a site visit. With modest revisions to the template for the external review report, the Vice Provost is satisfied that the report we received and the responses to it position us well to conclude the CPR.

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 Work and Labour 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 Work and Labour Studies (WLKS) program has a long history at York University, serving both a small but dedicated number of majors and minors as well as a broad student population through its general education courses and course offerings which are cross-listed in a number of other programs. In 2010 the program renamed itself from Labour Studies to Work and Labour Studies. The change recognizes a shift in the field that enriches the well-established industrial relations perspective with a broader concern with the global workplace and the international political economy of work, and also responds to profound, controversial changes in the world of work that have been shaking up the regulatory systems of the labour market, increasing precarious employment, and provoking searching debates about public policy.

The Review Report states that the program in its current form is sound in terms of structure and content.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Note: Recommendations have been abbreviated in this Implementation Plan.

Recommendation 1: The most serious and dire issue is, of course, the lack of faculty members. If this program is to exist, modest but immediate investments must be made. The current situation undermines the quality of current students' experiences and contributes to a perceived volatility which further undermines the numerical case for the program. The program can effectively operate with a modest number of collaborative permanent faculty members (3-4) who commit to their share of service and teaching. I recommend that retirements and departures be replaced. This is the most substantive and foundational issue, without question.

We note the Dean's concern for the viability of the program: "*the Dean's Office is concerned that the program has underlying structural issues that will not be addressed without a critical examination of the viability of the program as it is currently structured.*"

The program must address the structural issues before new appointments can be recommended. In the short term, the Department of Social Science could propose ways in which this program could be integrated better into the "ecosystem" of Social Science to maximize existing resources or to leverage collaborative opportunities with existing faculty and curriculum in LA&PS in the broad area of WKLS.

Recommendation 2: I recommend the immediate appointment of an interim coordinator to commence her/his work at the beginning of the winter term with appropriate course release or the equivalent. Current students need to have a reliable contact and resource, and this step would go a long way towards creating stability in the short term.

Identify a co-ordinator for WKLS from within the Department of Social Science or the broader LA&PS community.

Timeline: July 1, 2018

Recommendation 3: I also recommend the identification of an internal champion who recognizes the value of the work and labour studies program and its place in York's future.

The WKLS program and the Department of Social Science Executive/Chair will seek to identify a champion for the program from within the Department of Social Science or LA&PS to help develop the program and bring this name forward to the Dean's Office.

Timeline: July 1, 2018

Recommendation 4: There are a number of faculty members in other programs with an interest in work and labour issues who could potentially be enticed to play a larger role in the WKLS program if they knew the University was committed to its future, and if their existing responsibilities and loads were lightened to make room for additional commitments

The WKLS program and the Department of Social Science will redouble their efforts to find faculty members who are willing and able to participate in the program in a variety of ways including teaching and service. Should such faculty be found, the Dean's Office will facilitate their secondment to the program. Should these efforts be unsuccessful, the program and the Chair will articulate other solutions and meet with the Dean's office to discuss.

Timeline: Beginning of October 2018 meeting with the Dean's office to discuss the success of these efforts.

Recommendation 5: With new faculty resources, introduction of a new course in a recruitment-friendly topical area (e.g. labour and popular culture, labour and sport) would broaden the appeal to students. An online or mixed-delivery course would also be a strategic addition.

The WKLS program will articulate a new/future curricular structure that it believes would improve recruitment and retention. Program revisioning could include delinking the General Education course in WKLS from the program. When the proponents have articulated a revised curricular structure or direction, they will meet with the Associate Dean Programs to discuss.

Timeline: September 1st, 2018

Recommendation 6: I suggest the program build on its strength in local-global issues and the successful Global Labour Research Centre if looking to establish and promote a distinctive identity.

The GLRC and WKLS are asked to work together to articulate possible synergies alongside curricular renewal. If an agreement to collaborate with the GLRC is not established by December 2018, reasons for this failure should be articulated and addressed, either through a re-articulation of the program curriculum or through a reorganization of the program within the Department of Social Science (such as a “stream” of Interdisciplinary Social Science in Work and Labour Studies).

Timeline: December 2018 with report back to the Dean’s Office by March 2019.