

YORK UNIVERSITY

Final Assessment Report – Executive Summary

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
STUDIES**

MA, PhD, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Cyclical Program Review – 2009 to 2016

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

Program(s) Reviewed:

MA, PhD

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Dr. Alberto Cambrosio, Department of Social Studies of Medicine, McGill University

Dr. Hannah Landecker, Department of Sociology & Centre for Genetics and Society,
University of California (UCLA)

Dr. Spiros Pagiatakis, Associate Dean, Research & Graduate Studies, Lassonde School
of Engineering, York University

Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones:

Cyclical Program Review launch: September 15, 2016

Self-study submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: August 9, 2017

Date of the Site Visit: October 24-25, 2017

Review Report received: November 16, 2017

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan received by the Joint Subcommittee
on Quality Assurance, March 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lyndon C. Martin", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Lyndon Martin, Vice-Provost Academic, York University

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

SITE VISIT: October 24-25, 2017

The reviewers met with Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic and Fahim Quadir, Interim Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies. In addition, the reviewers met with all of the Deans involved with the STS program, Ray Jayawardhana, Dean, Faculty of Science, Alex Mills, Associate Dean Students, Faculty of Science, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Dean, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, Sylvie Moran, Associate Dean of Research, Faculty of Science, Buks Van Rensberg, Associate Dean of Faculty, Faculty of Science.

Interviews were held with faculty members involved in the STS program: Kenton Kroker, STS Chair, STS Faculty (group interview, 5 members), Ernst Hamm, former STS Chair, other STS scholars at York (group interview: 5 members), Kean Birch, STS Graduate Program Director, John Dupuis and Genny Jon, Librarians, STS Graduate Program Faculty Members (group interview: approx. 10-15 faculty members, coming and going).

A few faculty members who could not be present because of other academic commitments emailed submissions to the reviewers.

Student participation in the site visit was robust. The reviewers met with the following graduate and undergraduate students: the STS Graduate Students (group interview: approx. 35-40 students) and the STS UG Majors/Minors students (group interview: 5 students). The reviewers noted that the most impressive meeting, both in terms of attendance and of issues raised, was with graduate students, who provided an open letter signed by 40 out of 47 graduate students, and a large number of individual letters that provided additional detail.

OUTCOME

The Vice-Provost Academic, upon receipt of the External Review Report, determined that regular process of a cyclical program review could not proceed, and the programs would not be asked to respond to recommendations. The Provost's Office assumed responsibility for working with deans, faculty, and students to organize a facilitated process for discussing the programs' challenges, exploring solutions and developing a path forward.

A report on the progress of the initiatives outlined in the implementation plan will be included in the Self-Study undertaken as part of the next Cyclical Review which will launch in September 2022 in alignment with the other programs in the Humanities Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. A site visit will take place in Fall of 2023 or Winter of 2024.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND STRENGTHS:

The reviewers stated in their report that, "STS is a rapidly growing field, as shown, for instance, by the very successful meetings of its professional associations, e.g., the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S) meeting in Boston (September 2017) with

approx. 1400 participants, and the joint 4S/EASST (European Association of Science & Technology Studies) meeting in Barcelona (September 2016), that drew over 2000 participants presenting over 1700 papers in 32 parallel sessions. York University has a number of distinguished faculty members who are internationally recognized as leading STS scholars.”

The Self-Study report describes the York STS program is Canada’s largest and, arguably, closest program to the true interdisciplinary nature of STS. However, that Self Study Report had already alerted the reviewers to the existence of a rift between Science & Technology Studies (STS) faculty members and the reviewers indicate that, “rather than a single program, we were confronted with three different programs that, beyond obvious differences such as undergraduate vs. graduate level.....the content, structure, and, ultimately, fate of the STS undergraduate and graduate programs are intimately linked to a reconfiguration of the present structural arrangements”

Challenging discussions about resources and administrative structures of the program took place between 2017 and 2021, culminating with a shift for the Graduate program which is now resourced through the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. The undergraduate program is offered through the Faculty of Science.

RECOMMENDATION

Acknowledging that they were confronted by the divisions between faculty and faculty structures that further complicated the situation, the reviewers were able to provide some thoughtful commentary on possible reconfiguration and realignment of the graduate programs from the Faculty of Science to the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies.

Their report elaborated concerns about the existing graduate programs and recommended suspension of admission to these programs pending resolution of the location of the program, how faculty are appointed to the program, and a revised governance structure for the program.

The reviewers said, “Therefore, we see the way forward along the following path. We recommend that a discussion and decision-making process be laid out that is directed toward the goal of building on the program’s manifest promise and strength in a manner that is bureaucratically and economically feasible, so that the focus can return to the intellectual project, nurturing the careers of York’s outstanding STS scholars and students. We recommend that all of the interested faculty and all of the implicated Deans and Associate Deans come together to work through the possible scenarios.”

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION

The Vice-Provost Academic, in consultation with the chair Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance, determined that it would not be appropriate or fruitful to request program and decanal responses to the reviewer recommendations. The decision was made to defer the preparation of the Final Assessment Report until the restructuring discussions could be finalized and the resulting faculty alignment with the program

allowed for programs to contemplate the reviewers' comments about program redevelopment options.

Despite delays created by the pandemic over 2020/2021, progress has been made. The graduate programs are now housed in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies.

A summary of activity since the Review Report was received in October 2017 was included as a preface to the major modification that was approved by York University's Senate in May of 2021. Meetings were held with the Provost, the Deans of the Faculties of Science and Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Ad hoc subcommittees of the Program Executive worked with program members and graduate studies on program requirements and governance implications.

The Program Symposium on "STS Futures" (Feb 2020) brought together some of the world's leading STS scholars with Program faculty and students to discuss general issues about the future of STS as a field.

2021 Program Enhancements to the Graduate Program

At its April 2021 meeting, the York University Senate approved major modifications, proposed in response to the Review Report from 2017, that included new program requirements (new research cluster course; new colloquium requirement and a new Competencies Exam), as well as some small enhancements to existing program requirements. The major modifications proposal also confirmed the relocation of the graduate program in Science and Technology Studies from the Faculty of Science to the Humanities Department in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies.

The Implementation Plan below summarizes the actions resulting from the Cyclical Program Review process.

Action	Responsible Individuals	Timelines
Establish revised governance for the graduate program.	Members of the graduate program	Academic Year 2017-2020
Resource Faculty for the graduate program determined.	Deans, LAPS and Science, members of the graduate program	Academic Year 2020-2021
Program requirements reviewed and revised.	Members of the Graduate Program	Academic Year 2020-2021