

18-MONTH POST IQAP FOLLOW-UP REPORT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM	IQAP REVIEW DATE	PREPARED BY
Master of Sociology- Applied Social Research	April 10, 2014	Provost & Vice-President, Academic

PROGRESS OF PPC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	% COMPLETE	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	EXPECTED COMPLETION
The hiring of a new tenure-track faculty member.	100	To support the new MA in Sociology- Applied Social Research program, Nipissing University advertised and filled one (1) tenure-track position. Dr. Benjamin Kelly began this tenure track position at Nipissing University on January 1, 2017. Dr. Kelly currently serves as the Graduate Coordinator and actively supervises students and teaches courses at the graduate level in the MA in Sociology- Applied Social Research program.	July, 2017

The M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree reflects a long-term process of planning on the part of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts and Science and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Faculty of Education and Professional Studies (formerly the Faculty of Applied and Professional Studies). The two departments already share courses in theory, research methods, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and other ‘stream’ and elective courses, and faculty members work collaboratively on a number of research projects, including most recently the design of a cognitive screening instrument for use by police officers in Ontario. Recognizing the similarities (three of the five faculty in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice are sociologists) and strengths in academic and research interests across the departments, the M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree was structured to capitalize on and provide an important impetus for further development, fostering and training of students at the graduate level. Across the northeastern Ontario region, faculty have carried out a wide range of applied research projects in urban and rural communities and with First Nations groups, including studies of the prevalence and consequences of contingent work in northeastern Ontario; evaluation of youth suicide prevention programs; evaluation of domestic violence prevention programs; First Nations policing; and palliative care services.

The MA Sociology– Applied Social Research is available in the form of either a one-year Major Research Paper (MRP), or a two-year Thesis Research Project (TRP), and offers students the option to register full-time or flex-time. The MA Sociology– Applied Social Research program accepted its first cohort of students in Fall 2017. The initial cohort consisted of 5 students. In Fall 2018, the program welcomed its second cohort, consisting of 6 students. In Fall 2019, the third cohort consisted of 6 students. Currently, there are 11 students enrolled in the program (0 withdrawal and 1 flex-time). As of June 11, 2020, there are 6 applicants for our Fall 2020 intake. Based on the OCGS program proposal, the MA Sociology program aims to admit 7 students each year. The initial OCGS program proposal included 9 faculty members (1 has since resigned and 1 is on long-term disability). Currently, there are 12 faculty with full status in the MA Sociology program and an additional 6 with affiliate status. Faculty affiliated with the program are drawn from the School of Nursing, School of Social Work, and the departments of Psychology, and Social Welfare.

Students in both the Thesis (27 total credits) and MRP (24 total credits) stream are required to take three 3-credit courses that are foundational to their degree (Research Design, Advanced Sociological Theory and either Qualitative Analysis or Quantitative Analysis). Both MRP and TRP routes provide the option of completing a practicum component with a placement in a government, not-for-profit, or private agency. Working under the supervision of faculty, community, and regional members of the program advisory committee, students have undertaken applied research and evaluation studies with various levels of government, police agencies and social services. In addition to their TRP, Thesis students must take two additional 3-credit elective course (e.g., Special Topics in Social and Policy Issues; Determinates of Population Change; Science, Technology and the Environment; Education and Inequality; Directed Studies). Electives may also include a practicum placement. In addition to their MRP, MRP students must take three 3-credit elective courses that

may also include a practicum placement. Based on the available faculty workload, the MA Sociology program only offers 1-2 elective course(s) per academic year.

Student TRP and MRP research includes diverse topics, such as: first-generation post-secondary student skill outcomes; characteristics of persons with serious mental disorders who have repeat contact with police officers; managing and losing trust within emergent group formations; institutional intervention and sexual violence; gender equity and fertility intentions.

Because a significant portion of the MA program's learning outcomes include student proficiencies in sociological theory, qualitative methodologies and applied social research, a new tenure-track faculty position to fill this expertise and fulfill the program learning outcomes was advertised in 2017. Furthermore, the successful candidate not only had to possess the aforementioned expertise but also needed to play a major role in using this skillset to help develop and grow the first Sociology MA in Applied Social Research in Ontario. The 2017 tenure-track hire in this area, Dr. Benjamin Kelly, is an applied sociologist who specializes in sociological theory, social psychology, social problems and qualitative methodologies. He has taught graduate level sociological theory and qualitative analysis. As the current Graduate Coordinator of the program, Dr. Kelly has helped implement a flex-time policy that allows students to enroll in flex-time studies. The hiring of Dr. Kelly has provided additional support for graduate students who seek to link their conceptual framework and data collection to more applied research settings within the context of social problems. His ongoing fieldwork looks at the lived experience of activist-scientists and their concerns surrounding environmental risk in relation to industry, government, public policy and First Nations.

The M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree, along with the new 2017 tenure-track hire, has contributed to each of the key objectives identified in Nipissing University's Strategic Research plan as detailed below:

- 1) to provide the strategic directive to strengthen and support existing and emerging research, guiding Nipissing University into the future as a regional, national and international centre of research excellence in selected areas;
- 2) to encourage and facilitate intra-, inter- and multidisciplinary research initiatives among the faculty and develop research clusters, centres based on strength;
- 3) to further enhance the research training of all students, and, in particular, to continue our commitment to undergraduate research;
- 4) to pursue collaboration and partnership with other regional, national or international communities, industries, institutions, and government agencies to develop research activities which are of relevance and value to our local communities and our region; and,
- 5) to attract and provide increased financial resources and infrastructure to foster research excellence and innovation in designated areas.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS LEADING UP TO 4-YEAR FOLLOW-UP REPORT

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	PROJECTED COMPLETION
A full-time Advisor/Placement Officer attached to the program to support the practicum courses SOCI 5507 MRP Practicum and SOCI 5508 TRP Practicum.	K. McMillan, M.A. Sociology	Projected 2021
Given the program focus on contemporary social issues, permanent staffing of contemporary social theories courses will need to be redressed.		Ongoing; projected 2021
A centrally-located, common office space/graduate cubicles is provided for graduate students, located in the “H” wing of the university, close in proximity to many of the research institutes (e.g. RDC, IASR) affiliated with graduate programs at the university. Computers, printers and office materials are provided for graduate students.		Completed
Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty (Seven of the ten faculty involved in the M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree are Associate Professors, and three of these are appointed at the rank of full professor.)		Completed
Evidence of financial assistance		
Nipissing University provides a range of funding opportunities for full-time enrollment graduate students, including		

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA), Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA), Nipissing University Graduate Scholarships (NUGS) and Nipissing University Research Fellowships (NURF), along with additional funding opportunities provided by Tri-Council and applied research grants held by faculty members. In addition, Nipissing University strongly encourages and provides support for graduate students seeking Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) and Canada Graduate Scholarships – Masters funding. Normally, graduate support funds provided by Nipissing University to full-time graduate students are in the order of \$10,000.00 or more annually.

Completed

Completed

The Tier II Nipissing CRC Chair in Life Course Transitions in Northern & Rural Communities (funded, September, 2015) will provide \$25,000.00 per year for 5 years for graduate student funding in the M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree, along with funding of up to two postdoctoral fellow positions to support teaching and research in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The 5-year Correctional Service of Canada MOU (funded August, 2015) will provide as much as \$25,000.00 per year over a five-year period for graduate student research. Additional grants applications, totaling more than one-half million dollars, have been submitted by faculty in 2015.

Completed

The Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (RDC) announced in September 2015 and funded through a \$250,000 CFI grant and additional funds from Nipissing University will provide faculty and graduate students involved in the M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research

degree with unique opportunities to work with Census, Social Survey and other microdata in researching social issues and social problems confronting northern and rural communities.

Completed

With planned efficiencies in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology undergraduate program, including the elimination of small (<100) sections of SOCI 1016 Introduction to Sociology, SOCI 2016 Classical Sociological Theory and SOCI 2017 Contemporary Theory (<50) and SOCI 2126 Sociological Research Methods (<40), the equivalent of 1 FTE will be made available for teaching in the M.A. in Sociology – Applied Social Research degree; while the remaining .4 FTE will be contributed from the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice in the form of similar efficiencies gained in their undergraduate program and/or new hires in that rapidly growing undergraduate degree.

Completed

That the university locate the faculty of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, and graduate students enrolled in the M.A. program, in a central physical space in order to promote the formation of *'a cohesive group of graduate students and supervisory faculty'*.

Completed

In light of the mixed method research focus of the proposed program, it would be ideal to have software for qualitative data analysis available on campus. (Nipissing University does have a limited

Completed

number of site-licenses for NVivo, the most popular qualitative analysis program. The department will ensure that University Technology Services (UTS) is aware that there will be a need to increase the number of available site-licenses to accommodate students in the Sociology M.A. program).

Given the current work of faculty with census data, and the increased interest and demand forthcoming from graduate students supervised by the faculty, a Research Data Centre (RDC) Statistics Canada-sponsored satellite facility has been established at Nipissing University.

Completed

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

The MA Sociology program addresses five out of the six themes within Nipissing University's Strategic Research Plan (SRP, 2019-2024). Our graduate faculty and students conduct research within the SRP themes of Indigenous and Decolonial Research, Environment & Natural Resources, The Human Condition, Conflict Resolution, and Inequality.

With the 2017 addition of the faculty complement, the MA program in Sociology-Applied Social Research now has 10 faculty contributing to the program. The Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (RDC) announced in September 2015 and funded through a \$250,000 CFI grant and additional funds from Nipissing University further enhances the faculty members' and graduate students' involvement in this program, providing them with unique opportunities to work with Census, Social Survey and other microdata in researching social issues and social problems confronting northern and rural communities. Next steps include solidifying the position of a full-time Advisor/Placement Officer to support the practicum courses SOCI 5507 MRP Practicum and SOCI 5508 TRP Practicum, and staffing of contemporary theories courses by adequate redeployment of faculty who are primarily involved in the undergraduate Sociology program.