

Final Assessment Report

Geography and Tourism Studies

Graduate and Undergraduate Programs

(reviewed 2020/21)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on January 13, 2021.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Daniel Scott (University of Waterloo) and Neil Hanlon (University of Northern British Columbia), and one internal reviewer, Ana Sanchez (Brock University).
3. The virtual review occurred on April 7-9, 2021.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on May 11, 2021.
5. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on May 18, 2021.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on June 10, 2021.
7. The Department response was received on June 14, 2021.
8. The Dean of Social Sciences response was received on Sep 8, 2021.
9. The Dean of Graduate Studies response was received on Sep 15, 2021.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

Program Outcome Categories:

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Committee gave the programs the following Outcome Categories:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
MA			X	
BA / BSc (Honours)			X	
BA /BSc Honours) Co-op			X	
Concurrent BA / Bed and BSc / BEd			X	
Combined Major BA / BSc (Honours and Pass)			X	
BA / BSc (Pass)			X	
Minor			X	

[Concerns]

The reviewers made the following statements related to their concerns with the Department's programs:

The design of the [MA] program with a focus on theoretical/critical geography may be less appealing to some students that might be otherwise be attracted [to] work with some of the Department's stronger researchers. For example, tourism and physical geography students indicated that the current core course arrangements do not serve them well. (Reviewer Report 5.2.1)

Importantly, the erosion of faculty over time has limited the capacity of the department to offer the breadth of courses needed in physical geography and geomatics (Reviewer Report 5.1.2)

Despite the massive efforts of the entire Department to merge and restructure effectively, including reducing the number of degree programs and significant course rationalization, physical geography appears to be struggling to offer required and elective courses needed for a BSc or even a balanced physical-human geography program. (Reviewer Report 5.3.1)

From our conversations with Tourism Studies faculty, they would like nothing more than to run a permanent 3-term annual cycle to ensure that students can free-up a Fall or Winter term to do their Co-op placements. With such small contingency of faculty members, however, we cannot see how this would be feasible. (Reviewer Report 5.5.2)

Some Concurrent Education students indicated concerns that a number of courses in the human geography stream do not align with Ontario Education curriculum for teachables. The courses that do not align well and courses that are potentially missing were not

identified, but this potential misalignment should be reviewed by the Department to ensure they are adequately serving Concurrent Education students who are an important segment of enrollment. (Reviewer Report 5.3.1)

Given these challenges, the capacity to deliver the proposed Minor in the Environmental Science of the Anthropocene is very uncertain to the reviewers. (Reviewer Report 5.3.1)

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

We are pleased to provide this report on the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies (GTS) at Brock University. It was a privilege to learn more about the scholarly activities of this group of students, staff and faculty. We found the Self-Study document to be clear, informative, well-organized account of the department's offerings, outlooks and challenges. The web-conference meetings we had with students, staff, faculty and senior administrators, as well as additional written submissions from students, tended to confirm the validity of the document.

There is a general feeling that the department has done much to support the university's mission and strategic directions. The Department's programs align closely with Brock University's and [Faculty of Social Sciences (FOSS)]' strategic priorities related to undergraduate teaching excellence. The various BA and BSc programs all provide students with strong experiential learning opportunities that include Co-op placements, internships, field courses and field trips, as well as community-based course projects. Our assessment of the department is that its various degree programs are performing at a level that is "good with some concerns."

The faculty and staff of GTS is a cohesive group that works effectively together to deliver programs and courses, and more than carries its weight in terms of service to the broader university mission. The department has designed degree programs that provide students with highly sought skills and knowledge. The department made great efforts to respond to the previous cyclical review and invested considerable time and effort to smooth the merger of G [Geography] and TS [Tourism Studies, formerly Tourism Management]. Faculty worked with senior leadership and other programs, undertook curriculum mapping exercises for each of its degree programs, and rationalized course offerings (including discontinuing 40 courses between 2016 and 2020) to reflect their new faculty complement and specializations. We feel the department is at the point where the benefits of these efforts are now being realized. At the same time, there is also a sense that being good 'team players' at the university has come at a price in terms of morale and the capacity to offer coherent programs. Some stability in courses taught (with fewer new and highly restructured courses) would ease faculty workload and bolster research programs.

We came away from meetings with deep respect and admiration for the collegial nature of the faculty and staff of GTS. Despite massive changes over the last 5 years, this group openly welcomed constructive suggestions to enhance the student experience, their

research, and reputation of Brock U. Faculty and students spoke glowingly about how invested staff are in student success.

We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with undergraduate and graduate students. Even though these meetings were scheduled last-minute, students provided in-depth and valuable insight for the review. In addition, we received numerous written submissions from current and former students. We came away with an overall sense that students were generally satisfied with their programs of study, and grateful for the preparation they received and the professionalism of faculty and staff. Obviously, there is always opportunity to improve student experiences and opportunities, and we have included a number of recommendations with this in mind.

GTS is well positioned to contribute its scholarly activities in areas of major interest and concern to the university, and society more generally (*e.g.*, climate change, tourism, conservation, urban and rural development, transportation planning, environmental sustainability). The department can and should play a vital role in the Niagara Region's post-COVID economic recovery (*e.g.*, tourism and shifting population/economic activity in the Greater Toronto Region). In order to do so, however, something must be done soon to reverse the attrition in the department's faculty complement. We understand that it is not our purview to recommend faculty replacement or hiring, but we have made some recommendations intended to help focus efforts of GTE to grow and renew its faculty complement.

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

The Department's programs align closely with Brock University and the Faculty of Social Science strategic prioritization of undergraduate teaching excellence. The general sense we had speaking with students, and from written submissions, is that Geography and Tourism Studies undergraduate courses are widely regarded to be well organized, and GTS instructors are likewise highly appreciated for their willingness to accommodate diverse student goals and interests.

The current graduate students we heard from were generally positive about their experiences in their chosen programs, especially concerning the quality of course instruction and their experiences working with supervisors and supervisory committees. Close connections and regular interaction with supervisors and members of supervisory committees was noted as a key asset.

The MA Geography is especially noted for its strengths in critical theory, epistemology, qualitative methods. Researchers in physical and tourism fields were highly regarded by students and have strong research performance metrics that attract students, but the program structure is not well suited to their graduate students.

The review team heard repeatedly that people are a major strength of the program. At both undergraduate and graduate levels, students we met spoke very highly of the faculty and staff in the Department. The ability for professors to really know and mentor individual students is a major strength of the program. Both faculty and students spoke glowingly about how invested staff are in student success and how important they are to the success of the program.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

GTS should undertake a strategic visioning of the Department as a whole.

The Department responded:

The Department is generally supportive of this recommendation; however, we most recently adopted a Departmental Strategic Plan in 2020. Thus, our plan is to revisit this document during our Annual Departmental Retreat in May 2022 in order to update it with consideration for the recommendations from this Cyclical Program Review.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

Beyond broadly supporting the suggestion of strategic visioning and curriculum review in considering the future direction of the department, it is beyond the purview of SGSC to comment on these recommendations, which are for the members of the Department of Geography [and Tourism Studies] and the Dean of the Faculty Social Science[ss] to decide.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Departmental plan to revise their Strategic Plan in May 2022 in light of the Reviewer's recommendation to undertake strategic visioning.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Given the many challenges experienced by academic institutions in general as a result of the pandemic as well as recommendations provided from this review, I support this recommendation as well as the Department's plan to revisit in May 2022.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #2

GTS should prioritize a faculty line in Geomatics as part of its faculty renewal strategy.

The Department responded:

The Department is fully supportive of this recommendation for all of the reasons outlined by the reviewers. Furthermore, there are many job opportunities across Canada that are fully Geomatics-related or that include such a skill set among the job requirements. Many graduates who have taken our geomatics courses have been successful at landing careers in the field. Many of the co-op positions available to our students are Geomatics-related as well. Adding another full-time faculty member, particularly in light of the transfer of one of our two specialists in this field to the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre two years ago, would enable us to take full advantage of these many opportunities. This would also enable the Department to work towards enhancing the gender balance of its faculty complement, which, in turn, would also have benefits for our students. The Department has thus far been unsuccessful in its annual requests for such a replacement position but will continue to maintain dialogue with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and other members of the University's senior administration to assert this as a critical need for the Department.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded this recommendation:

Would potentially allow graduate supervision within the unit in the fields of physical geography, geomatics, and sustainability, but this would change the balance of fields of geography within the unit. Beyond broadly supporting the suggestion of strategic visioning and curriculum review in considering the future direction of the department, it is beyond the purview of SGSC to comment on these recommendations, which are for the members of the Department of Geography and the Dean of the Faculty Social Sciences to decide.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

Allocation of Faculty positions is subject to Faculty and University wide approval processes. The Dean's Office supports the Department submitting its requests for faculty renewal as part of that process.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Decisions about possible positions fall outside of FGS' purview, but I support the recommendation and the response from the department to continue to engage position requests with the Faculty Dean.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to prioritize a faculty line in Geomatics in future faculty renewal plans to be accepted. The Committee recognizes that decisions on faculty resources lie outside of its jurisdiction.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #3

GTS should also prioritize the recruitment of a physical geographer to ensure the long-term viability of the BSc Geography.

The Department responded:

The Department fully supports this recommendation in conjunction with our support of Recommendation #2 above. Since our last program review in 2013 the Department has lost two physical geographers to retirement and one geomatics specialist with a specialization in physical geography; none of these positions have been replaced, much to the detriment of our students. We are nonetheless proud of our unit's continued strengths in the realm of physical geography (with two award-winning faculty members) and the strength of the BSc Geography curriculum. Many of our physical geography students have gone on to successful careers in related fields and, to this day, there are many career/employment opportunities available to graduating students possessing a BSc in Geography. The ability to recruit a physical geographer with expertise in geomatics will enable us to further strengthen and promote this degree option. It would also complement the geomatics concentration/minor.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded this recommendation:

Would potentially allow graduate supervision within the unit in the fields of physical geography, geomatics, and sustainability, but this would change the balance of fields of geography within the unit. Beyond broadly supporting the suggestion of strategic visioning and curriculum review in considering the future direction of the department, it is beyond the purview of SGSC to comment on these recommendations, which are for the members of the Department of Geography and the Dean of the Faculty Social Science to decide.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

Allocation of Faculty positions is subject to Faculty and University wide approval processes. The Dean's Office supports the Department submitting its requests for faculty renewal as part of that process.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to prioritize the recruitment of a physical geographer in future faculty renewal plans to be accepted. The Committee recognizes that decisions on faculty resources lie outside of its jurisdiction.

Implementation Plan (1st (Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #4

In order to advance a more coherent university-wide strategy on sustainability, we recommend:

- a) A dialogue and internal review on how the sustainability dimension of [the] university strategic plan can best be achieved through campus-wide collaboration.
- b) That the university conducts campus-wide sustainability curriculum mapping to identify duplication and areas of synergy. With support from Senior Administration, GTS could lead this exercise.
- c) That GTS be a core hub for sustainability as a more-encompassing unit. GTS can bring together other contributing units as well (e.g., ESRC [Environmental Sustainability Research Centre], Earth Sciences, Health Sciences, Goodman School of Business, new Engineering minor, and others).

The Department responded:

The Department agrees with these recommendations, particularly the point that “there is evidence of duplication and internal competition without any indication of net gain for the university.” With regards to Recommendations #4a and 4b, we would welcome the opportunity to engage with members of the senior administration and the many academic units across the University that have an interest in sustainability-related teaching and research in order to take advantage of the many opportunities for collaboration highlighted by the review team in their report. In response to Recommendation #4c, we also agree that the Department is very well positioned to assume a leadership role and to serve as a core hub in such an endeavour; indeed, human-environment relations and sustainability are central concerns in our Human Geography, Physical Geography, and Tourism and Environment programs. The Department and individual members of our faculty have already established strong program-related ties with other units identified in this recommendation (e.g., Earth Sciences and the ESRC) and we see great potential to establish further links with faculties and units such as the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, the Goodman School of Business, the Departments of History and Biological Sciences, and the future Department of Engineering, among others.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

Beyond broadly supporting the suggestion of strategic visioning and curriculum review in considering the future direction of the department, it is beyond the purview of SGSC to comment on these recommendations, which are for the members of the Department of Geography and the Dean of the Faculty Social Science to decide.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s Office supports the Departmental Response to the Reviewers Recommendation and will work with units both within and external to the Faculty of Social Sciences to assess and develop collaborative processes and programs in related fields.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I fully support this recommendation and FGS is available to support any initiatives related to this recommendation that might impact and create more opportunities for graduate students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to advance a university-wide strategy on sustainability to be beyond the scope of this review. The Committee recognizes the opportunity for collaboration between the Department and sustainability stakeholders across the university and the support indicated by the Deans in their responses to the recommendation. However, decisions on the advancement of an institutional strategy, which spans many Departments, Centres and Faculties would not be within ARC's jurisdiction.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #5

The Department should re-examine and consider an appropriate name change / rebranding for the tourism program.

The Department responded:

The Department agrees with and fully supports this recommendation. Internal discussions regarding a name change have already begun. In the coming months the Department will be submitting a Request for Major Modifications to change the name of the degree from a BA in Tourism and Environment to a BA in Sustainable Tourism.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s Office supports the Departmental recommendation to move forward with a name change and looks forward to receiving the proposal.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #6

Plans to develop a new Masters in Tourism program should be put on hold for now.

The Department responded:

The Department agrees with this recommendation. Although we have discussed the possibility of developing a new stand-alone Master's degree in Tourism Studies, our current faculty complement and the number of courses they must teach in order to sustain the undergraduate program would prevent us from initiating a new graduate-level Tourism program without the addition of a new faculty position. Three Tourism and Environment faculty have left the Department (pre-merger) over the past decade and have not been replaced. When teaching a full-load our five current Tourism and Environment faculty members teach a total of 20 courses; however, from year to year, this doesn't account for the factoring in of sabbaticals and other types of leave (whereby the courses taught by these faculty have not been replaced by sessional stipends), the need for a Tourism Graduate Program Director (which would bring with it a half-course release), and the degree of supervisory work that would be required for a small number of faculty.

As an alternative, at least a temporary one, the Department plans to explore the possibility of developing a "Tourism Geography" stream (or using some other name) that could be integrated into our existing MA in Geography program. The current Graduate Program Director of our MA in Geography program worked up a provisional model for such a stream a few years ago and this will provide a foundation for our discussions in this regard. If such a stream is approved and implemented, we will monitor student enrollments in order to gauge the potential viability of a stand-alone graduate-level Tourism program at some time in the future.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Departmental plan to explore the possibility of revising its MA program, in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I fully support this recommendation. FGS is available to help develop a stream and will be available to support the recruitment and monitoring of enrolments as needed.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee understands that the Department is investigating the possibility of a new field of study such as “Tourism Geography”, within the existing MA which could serve as an alternative in the meantime.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2022-23

Recommendation #7

The Department should explore the potential for collaboration with Niagara College to help develop post-graduate degree opportunities and more coordinated regional approaches to tourism programming.

The Department responded:

The Department accepts this recommendation and is willing to explore the potential for future collaborations with Niagara College, particularly in the form of a combined undergraduate degree/certificate program.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s office supports the Departmental plan to explore potential collaboration with Niagara College. Initial conversations have taken place with Brock and Niagara College.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2022-23

Recommendation #8

GTS should undertake a comprehensive review of its field courses as outlined in greater detail below.

Supporting/Clarifying Text from Reviewer's Report

Field/excursion courses are a core element of both geography and tourism studies and consistent with the university Strategic Plan priority of internationalization. We offer the following recommendations related to the challenges of offering consistent international experiences:

- a) Review the suite of field/excursion courses and the related requirements by the Geography and Tourism Studies programs. Consider allowing students more flexibility to choose from a cluster (i.e., 'one of') of field/excursion courses to fulfill any related requirements to address student concerns about the appropriate fit of the Peterborough course, and potentially help achieve the threshold of enrollment for international field courses more often.
- b) Establish dialogue with other academic units at Brock that are conducting field courses and explore integrating inter-disciplinary groups of students that can be travel to the same destination with different but related educational experiences.
- c) Discuss the potential development of a new field course in collaboration with the new Canada-Caribbean Institute and its diverse regional partners.
- d) Consult with the Dean about a reliable budget allocation for 1-2 courses per year, and/or also potential arrangements to support early deposits needed to arrange travel and accommodations to lower the price that students eventually pay, should and potential increase early enrollments.
- e) Consult with the Dean about potential flexibility in class minimums for international field courses.

The Department responded:

The "Peterborough" field course (GEOG 3P56 and GEOG/TOUR 3P57) has been a flagship of the Geography programs for many decades and is considered one the most important and memorable courses for our students and alumni. Beyond its value as an experiential learning opportunity, the course also plays an important role in building a sense of community for our undergraduate students, something that carries over into the rest of their time at Brock (which is helpful when students complete group projects in later courses, for example). Thus, the Department is adamant about maintaining this course for our Geography students.

At the same time, we do understand and appreciate the review team's comments about the suitability of TOUR 3P57 for students enrolled in the Tourism and Environment program. Accordingly, the Department will commit to exploring the possibility of allowing Tourism and Environment students to choose from the suite of field courses currently listed in the Undergraduate Program Calendar (such as Croatia, Vancouver, Chicago, Peterborough or the Term Abroad) or any new field courses developed in the future in order to meet their field course- related program requirement. This may also help to increase enrollments in these field courses and, therefore, make it less likely that they

will be cancelled by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences due to their not meeting the prescribed course enrollment minimum. Taking this approach for the Tourism and Environment students can only happen, however, if a formal agreement can be put into place with the Dean's office regarding permission to offer these courses and with regard to budgeting course-related expenses (e.g., faculty travel expenses).

We will also explore the possibility of developing a Niagara-based Tourism and Environment field course (similar to the current GEOG/TOUR 3P57) as a way of taking further advantage of Niagara's expansive tourism geography; this will also help the Department to build more connections with the region's tourism industry. Finally, we will look into the possibility of working collaboratively with Niagara College in the design and delivery of such a Niagara-based course.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

Approval of course offerings, including field courses is subject to Faculty and University wide budgetary and approval processes, including Finance requirements for what counts as an appropriate course fee. The Dean's office supports providing assistance for students in paying field trip expenses.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Department is best-positioned to determine a response to each of the reviewers' listed suggestions.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #9

The curriculum committee should review how reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and decolonization are included in the current curriculum.

The Department responded:

The Department supports this recommendation and will incorporate such a discussion into its strategic planning update at the Annual Retreat in May 2022.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Departmental plan to review its curriculum in light of Indigenous peoples', decolonization and reconciliation.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

FGS supports this recommendation and the Department's response. A discussion at their retreat is [a] reasonable action item to move this forward.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #10

The curriculum committee/Department should review the range of proposed new minors/specializations in light of recent faculty losses and potential near-term faculty renewal.

The Department responded:

The Department disagrees with this recommendation. Both Minors were approved through the Dean’s Office, UPC, and Senate after we consulted with other academic units in selecting the required and elective courses. While the logistical aspects of this recommendation have some merit, the Department developed both Minors with the knowledge that we would rely on contributions from other units to fulfill some of the requirements. Admittedly, the Minor in Geomatics relies largely on the participation of a single faculty member in our Department; however, it also draws on many courses offered by other units, so students should have a range of options to choose from each year. Some of the courses making up the Minor in the Environmental Science of the Anthropocene are taught outside our Department and therefore also do not rely on our faculty complement entirely. These two Minors will not likely be impacted by any near-term retirements and neither of them require new courses to be taught. Notwithstanding these points, and as per our response to Recommendation #2, the Department will be prioritizing the hiring of a Geomatics specialist in its faculty renewal plans and requests for new faculty positions.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s Office supports the Departmental response to maintain the two recently approved minors.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to review proposed new minors/specializations to be accepted for consideration. The Committee recognizes that the Department’s two existing minors have been thoroughly reviewed and approved through normal channels and have the continued support of the Dean.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2022-23

Recommendation #11

We recommend that the Department and Library staff conduct an assessment of how other universities are utilizing their map libraries.

The Department responded:

The Department supports this recommendation but must note that we already have a strong connection with the Map, Data and GIS Library within and outside of our undergraduate and graduate courses. In some courses, for example, students receive complementary instruction and guidance on obtaining geospatial data for analysis in assignments. GIS Day is an example of when students come together to meet in the Library to interact and network with each other, faculty, staff and working professionals from outside the university. This often aligns with the timing of our competition for the Esri Canada student scholarship, the committee for which the Library leads and our Department participates. The Map, Data and GIS Library also provides additional computers with course-related software for students to use. It has often been recognized as a hub of activity and collaboration for students completing geomatics courses.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

... #11 is being addressed as part of the restructuring plans in the University Library, about which SGSC was consulted - and the important role of the map library was brought up.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's office supports the Department's response to the Reviewers' recommendations.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

This falls to the side of FGS, however, I appreciate the Department's response and it appears that this is already current practice.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as stated. The Committee recognizes that the Library is currently undergoing a structural review which includes an assessment of the role of the Map Library. ARC understands that the Department has a strong connection with the Map Library and does not have concerns with the utilization of this resource.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #12

We strongly recommend that senior administration promptly conduct a workplace safety review of GTS lab spaces, and implement remedial actions as necessary.

The Department responded:

The Department is fully supportive of this recommendation and sees it as perhaps the most important of the recommendations in the reviewers’ report. We will immediately pursue this matter in collaboration with Brock’s senior administration and Health and Safety personnel.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded that this recommendation:

...has implications for graduate student researchers and teaching assistants. These should be investigated by the University Safety Officer and immediately addressed.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The University wide Health and Safety committee undertakes regular inspections of all parts of the University campus and provides reports to the appropriate units with recommendations and/or requirements for satisfying health and safety measures. In addition, reports of safety concerns can be made to the Health and Safety committee by employees in the unit where there is an immediate issue. These are copied to the relevant supervisors including the Dean of the Faculty. The Dean’s office fully supports these processes and measures.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Again, this is to the side of FGS, but the health and safety of Graduate Students is paramount and I support this recommendation and the Department’s response. Indeed, I hope this review is underway.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to review workplace safety to be accepted for consideration. The Committee understands that there are existing mechanisms in place for monitoring health and safety across the institution. ARC expects that the Department will work through these channels to address any concerns that arise regarding workplace safety.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #13

With respect to the Tourism Studies Co-op program, we recommend:

- a) Exploring options to offer undergrad tourism courses all year round (perhaps through sessional instructors or ILTA positions);
- b) Offering some required and critically important UG courses as ASYNC [asynchronous] online;
- c) Exploring options to offer 0.5 courses in a condensed format not just in Spring/Summer but in the Fall/Winter as well (there are several examples such as super-courses that run for one week or two, intensive courses that run for 6 weeks); or even schedule course more flexibly (evening, weekends);
- d) Allowing students to take UG courses from other universities through LOPs (letter of permission) either online or in person;
- e) Avoid cancelling UG courses due to low enrollment, which creates domino-effects for students and disruptions for faculty members;
- f) Establishing agreements with other interested stakeholders within Brock (Trans-disciplinary centres, Canada Games, Indigenous Studies, Canada-Caribbean Institute, Health Sciences) and outside (Centennial College) to find additional Co-op placements for students.

The Department responded:

The Department accepts this recommendation in the sense that it will continue to engage in dialogue with the Co-op Office and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences in order to address the issues outlined in the review team's report. Our primary concern is the potential impact of students completing Co-op work terms during the Fall and Winter terms, as their absence from courses during that time may lead to courses being cancelled due to their enrollments not meeting the Dean's prescribed minimum number of registrations. We will conduct some analysis of the student data to determine how much of a problem this would create and will discuss with the Dean the possibility of having lower course enrollment minimums put into place in order to allow students to do their Co-op placements outside of the Spring and Summer terms. We will also look at opportunities to plan the timetable for our Tourism and Environment courses more strategically (i.e., what is offered in the Fall Term vs. the Winter Term) in order to take full advantage of the times when Co-op students are on campus taking their required courses. One possible advantage of having students do their Co-op work terms in the Fall and/or Winter Terms would be the reduced level of competition with students from other universities for placements.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's office will continue to support Departmental efforts to improve the Tourism co-op program, in collaboration with the Co-op office.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the Department is best-positioned to determine a response to each of the reviewers' listed suggestions.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #14

Review the viability of the MRP [Major Research Paper] graduate studies option.

The Department responded:

The Department does not agree with this recommendation. The MRP stream is an integral part of the MA in Geography program and more than one-half of our students have followed this stream since the program began in 2007-2008. The MRP stream is not meant to provide students with specialized knowledge in a particular sub-discipline of Geography but is meant instead to more broadly train them as geographers at a Masters level of competence. Many of our students who have completed an MRP have gone on to complete a PhD, which, to us, demonstrates the rigorous nature of the MRP stream. We also feel that there are many students who want to engage in graduate study without the requirement to complete a thesis; at the same time, the shorter time to completion that comes with the MRP stream is a more affordable option for their graduate schooling (as they pay less tuition due to their shorter time in the program). Additionally, the fact that MRP students must take two more courses than thesis students helps the Department to avoid having graduate courses cancelled due to their enrollments being lower than the Dean's prescribed minimum. Finally, we doubt the wisdom of discontinuing the MRP option in a provincial context in which course work and MRP-based MA degrees are gaining in popularity relative to thesis-based degrees.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This practice is common in small Masters programs, and SGSC is examining policies and procedures to standardise this practice at Brock.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean of Social Science supports the Departmental plan to continue with the MRP while also encouraging the Department to consider revisions to its Graduate program, in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

While I appreciate the spirit of the recommendation, I do agree with the program's response. However, the recommendation also suggested that the program perhaps explore whether broadening the courses that might count towards the degree is an option. I think reviewing the curriculum never hurts and this could align with Recommendation #4 regarding sustainability.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee understands that there is broad confidence in the viability of the MRP, while acknowledging that improvements may arise through curriculum review and renewal.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2022-23

Recommendation #15

Develop a web-based graduate student handbook.

The Department responded:

The Department does not feel this recommendation is a necessary one upon which to follow through. We have had a graduate student handbook that contains most of what the reviewers recommended since the MA in Geography program began in 2007-2008. It has also been posted online for approximately six years and our graduate students are routinely informed about its usefulness as a resource. Nonetheless, the Department will look to updating it with specific information for international students and a more informal FAQ section and to making sure that it is visible to students for convenient access.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This is consistent with the ongoing SGSC initiative to evaluate the role of websites in communicating programming information and standardizing calendar content.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Department in updating its Graduate Website - noting that assistance with website updates is available through the Communications team in the Dean's office.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

All graduate programs are required to have Graduate Handbook that is regularly updated. Thus, this recommendation is current practice. However, FGS is working towards creating a template for Handbooks to help ensure general information about regulations and requirements is current.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be already current practice. The Committee encourages the Department to continue collaborating with institutional resources regarding the graduate student handbook.

Implementation Plan

No action required. Current practice.

Recommendation #16

Update the GTS website, particularly with a view to highlighting student successes and experiences.

The Department responded:

The Department accepts this recommendation and is currently working towards adding some of the features suggested by the review team. Our Communications Coordinator is spearheading this effort and is currently piloting a project in which we are gathering testimonials from members of our alumni to share on our website and on social media.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This is consistent with the ongoing SGSC initiative to evaluate the role of websites in communicating programming information and standardizing calendar content.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s office supports the Department in updating its website - noting that assistance with website updates is available through the Communications team in the Dean’s office.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

FGS supports the recommendation and the Department’s response. FGS is available to provide support.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to consult with the Tourism and Geography Society (TAGS) student club, when implementing this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #17

The Curriculum Committee should initiate/continue a comprehensive review of all degree programs.

The Department responded:

The Department is hesitant to fully accept this recommendation. As the review team has noted, the Curriculum Committee worked actively and aggressively to implement the recommendations of the last program reviews and to restructure our program curricula at the time of the Geography/Tourism merger in 2016. Since then, however, the Curriculum Committee has remained the most active committee in our Department and meets routinely to modify our programs and to consider other possible program additions or deletions. Thus, we do not feel the need to initiate a *comprehensive* review of our programs but will nonetheless commit to considering issues such as those identified in Recommendation #17 as part of our Annual Retreat in May 2022 (in conjunction with the updating of our strategic plan).

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

Beyond broadly supporting the suggestion of strategic visioning and curriculum review in considering the future direction of the department, it is beyond the purview of SGSC to comment on these recommendations, which are for the members of the Department of Geography and the Dean of the Faculty Social Science to decide.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Departmental plan to continue to review its curriculum offerings.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I agree in part with this recommendation, but only insofar as what has been outlined in the Department response and in relation to Recommendation #14.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be current practice. The Committee recognizes that the 2020/21 review required a comprehensive review of the curriculum for all the programs offered by the Department. In addition, the Department will be required to report on the implementation of the curriculum-based recommendations from this review for the next four years.

Implementation Plan

No action required. Current practice.

Recommendation #18

As part of continuing curriculum reform, we recommend the following:

- g) [a] Explore where combining 4th year and grad enrollments could offer synergies to achieve upper year enrollment thresholds;
- h) [b] Review course offerings/focus are adequately serving Concurrent Education students' needs for provincially approved teachable subject areas; and,
- i) [c] Consider expanding larger enrollment service courses (potentially online offerings) in targeted areas that Geography can serve the campus (e.g., interdisciplinary global climate change or pandemics and society).

The Department responded:

The Department accepts the review team's recommendations #18b and #18c and will consider these issues first at the Curriculum Committee level before any changes are proposed. As per Recommendation #18a, this is a more problematic recommendation to accept. We can certainly look into the possibilities of combining fourth-year and graduate-level courses; however, a number of possible obstacles or outright barriers exist. First, the current academic regulations are that graduate students may enroll in only ONE course in which a majority of students are not graduate students. Second, this may have the impact of reducing graduate student enrollments in other MA courses, which runs the risk of them being cancelled due to their not meeting the prescribed minimum number of students. This is especially true given that the Dean's office has indicated that any combined fourth-year undergraduate and graduate-level course would have a minimum enrollment standard of 10 students (the minimum used for fourth-year undergraduate courses), rather than the minimum standard of five students in place for graduate-level courses. It is uncertain whether these combined courses would meet such a requirement and their cancellation due to low enrollment would negatively impact the graduate students who were interested in taking them. Finally, because many of our MA students also completed their undergraduate degrees at Brock, they may have already enrolled in these courses as undergraduate students and therefore cannot re-take them.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

This practice is common in small Masters programs, and SGSC is examining policies and procedures to standardise this practice at Brock.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Department's plan to pursue curriculum review as recommended and encourages the Department to consider revising its graduate program, including potentially combining 4th and 5th year courses, in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I will only comment on the 1st recommendation. I agree with the Department's response, combining senior undergraduate and graduate courses has a number of challenges as outlined by program, and thus, I disagree with this recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the Department is best-positioned to determine a response to each of the reviewers' listed suggestions.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #19

Review time to completion data of Masters programs to determine if a case should be made to extend graduate student funding support to 6 semesters from the current 5 semesters.

The Department responded:

The Department fully supports this recommendation and will explore the University’s willingness to approve such a change.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:

The number of funded terms in the MA program is being considered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies in consultation with SGCS.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s office supports the Departments’ plan to review its graduate program, including times to completion, in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

The duration of program is determined by the department. This should be based in pedagogical reasons. If it makes sense that the program length should be 6 terms, then the program can submit a major modification. If approved, the graduate students’ funding will then change to align with the program duration. In other words, if the major modification is approved, students will be funded for the 6 terms.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #20

Reconsider the mandatory internship milestone to graduate from the undergraduate program.

The Department responded:

The Department has mixed feelings about this recommendation. Admission to the Co-op programs out of high school is limited to students with high academic averages that many of our incoming students do not possess. Furthermore, some students are forced out of the Co-op programs after commencing their studies at Brock because they have not maintained the minimum average grade, while others voluntarily leave the Co-op program. Thus, we believe that it is important to provide all of our Honours students with the opportunity to acquire useful work experience in their field of interest, which is what the capstone Honours Internship course provides. Many of our students look forward to taking this course as part of their studies.

The course is also an important selling tool in our recruitment efforts, as students (and their parents) see the Internship as one of the valuable experiential learning opportunities that our programs provide. Brock University has also promoted quite heavily its strength as the provider of experiential learning opportunities; this course makes up an important part of this marketing effort.

Notwithstanding the points made above, the Department will consider making the Honours Internship an optional (i.e., elective) course rather than a mandatory one. This would allow students who do not wish to take advantage of this opportunity the option of choosing two other one-half credit courses in its place (the internship is worth 1.0 credits). An added benefit of this change would be to increase student enrollments in other fourth-year courses that may otherwise be cancelled due to their falling below the Dean of Social Sciences' prescribed enrollment minimum of 10 students in courses at that level.

In order to further strengthen the value of the Honours Internship course to our students, the Department will also explore the possibility of adding some duties related to the administration of this course (such as reaching out to prospective employers) to the job description of a current or future administrative staff member. This has the potential to increase the number of valuable internship opportunities for our students, would provide some consistency from year to year in terms of communication with employers (rather than having different professors administer the course each year or every few years), and would also help to address concerns expressed by the review team throughout its report about the need for more in the way of connections to the Niagara community (especially as it pertains to the Tourism program).

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean's Office supports the Department's willingness to consider making the Honours Internship optional as part of a curriculum review to increase flexibility for students and encourages the department to draw on the resources of the experiential coordinator assigned to the Faculty of Social Sciences to enhance experiential opportunities for students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2021-22

Recommendation #21

Explore expanded collaborations with the new Canada-Caribbean Institute, particularly with respect to advancing sustainable tourism research and teaching.

The Department responded:

The Department accepts this recommendation as we feel it would provide excellent opportunities to develop new field courses, exchange programs, and research collaborations that may also benefit graduate students.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:

The Dean’s Office supports the Department’s plan to collaborate with the Canada-Caribbean Institute.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I support this recommendation and agree with the Department that this could greatly benefit graduate students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2022-23

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,2,3,5,8,9,12,13,16,18,19,20

Second Priority:

Recommendations 6,7,10,14,21

Not Accepted:

Recommendations 4,11

No Action Required (Current Practice):

Recommendations 15,17