Final Assessment Report

Psychology
Graduate and Undergraduate Programs
(reviewed 2022/23)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self-Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee November 16, 2022.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Heather Henderson (University of Waterloo) and Peny Pexman (University of Calgary), and one internal reviewer, Michael Savage (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred March 6-7, 2023.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received April 6, 2023.
5. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received April 20, 2023. The Committee had no comments.
6. The Department response was received May 16, 2023.
7. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received May 24, 2023.
8. The Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, response was received June 20, 2023.
9. The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, response was received July 25, 2023.
10. Annual Implementation Reports will be submitted from 2024-2027.
11. The next Cyclical Academic Review is scheduled to take place in 2030/2031.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016 and the Codicil to the Brock IQAP, approved by Senate December 15, 2021. As the revised IQAP was only re-ratified by the Quality Council in June 2023.

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
PhD Psychology	x			
MA Psychology	x			
BA Psychology (Honours)	x			
BA Psychology (with Major)	x			
BA Psychology (Pass)	x			
BA Psychology (Honours) Co-op	x			
BA Psychology (with Major) Co-op	x			
Combined Major (Honours, with Major and Pass)	x			

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

We enjoyed two days of thoughtful discussion with administrators, campus student support office staff, the department leadership team, faculty members, staff, and students. Overall, there was a tremendous amount of evidence of innovative, high-quality programming at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some data patterns should be tracked over time (e.g., decreasing numbers of MA students continuing to Ph.D.) to determine whether these are specific to current (post) COVID challenges or more lasting trends. At this time, these patterns were not factored into our evaluation of program quality. The recommendations listed at the end of the report are all in the context of our rating of all programs as Excellent in quality. That is, our recommendations are intended to enhance existing programming. Areas noted for enhancement include: (1) intentional inclusion of transferrable skills training for both undergraduate and graduate students, (2) increased frequency and clarity of communication about Honours streams options for students, (3) development of a sustainable model of department level leadership, (4) creation of a department committee focused on programming related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, and (5) continued development of onboarding materials and formal peer mentoring for junior faculty.

B. Program Strengths

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

Psychology is a research-intensive department with faculty members with impressive depth and breadth in expertise. Both undergraduate and graduate students are highly engaged in a variety of learning opportunities, particularly those opportunities that support the

development of transferrable skills and career readiness (e.g., community placements, research apprenticeships). The undergraduate program has an innovative series of courses to directly support career planning beginning in the second year. The strong reputation of the program is reflected in the strong (both in terms of number and quality) applications received at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The strength of the graduate program is further reflected by the impressive record of employment for graduate students upon graduation. The high impact activities of both faculty and students are facilitated by a skilled and dedicated group of staff. The Department is to be commended for their creative approach to administration that allows for the distribution of decision making among faculty members (i.e., current co-Chair model, consistent rotation of faculty through the GPD and UPD positions).

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

New communications should be created to support undergraduate students informed decisions regarding, and navigation of, different undergraduate Psychology programs.

The Department responded:
The Department will take several steps to clarify and amplify its communications about the various undergraduate programs:

> Adding a new "choosing a stream" workshop (to be held in person during each of the fall and winter terms).

> Generating supplementary information for students regarding program choice (to be distributed with the new program plan templates being mandated by the University for use by academic advisors).

> Streamlining the undergraduate-related pages of the department website, for ease of navigation and more prominent placement of information about program choice.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation falls under the purview of UPC.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendation to improve communications with undergraduate students. The Communications team in the Dean's office can provide some assistance in streamlining the Departmental website. As well, the Faculty of Social Sciences is part of a University pilot to use Brightspace as a platform to communicate with first-year undergraduate students about program specific requirements.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
This falls outside of Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA)'s purview as it pertains to undergraduate students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the Dean's office to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue and recognizes that this recommendation is also linked to #4.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2023-24.

Recommendation #2

The graduate program should include opportunities for graduate students to gain critical professional skills by presenting their research ideas and findings to multiple faculty members and fellow graduate students, and by engaging in discussions of research theory and practice in their fields.

The Department responded:
The Department acknowledges that presenting research ideas and findings to multiple faculty members and graduate students in their fields is critical to graduate training. The Department's informal speaker series does provide opportunities for students to present data and discuss theories. Although this series is neither a program requirement, nor is it area specific, the Department recognizes that it could do more to create opportunities for students to present their work to peers and faculty within this forum, particularly as we return to in-person events post-COVID.

More importantly, the Department recognizes that with changes to how Focal Area Research Seminar (FARS) functions, changes to the graduate program may be required in order to re-create the kind of experiences that benefited students in the past. The Department has committed to having an in-depth discussion about this topic as part of our summer retreat (June 2023), during which we will evaluate possible ways that we might change FARS and/or the graduate program as a whole in order to foster these opportunities.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider including, which could potentially relate to recommendation #3. It would be consistent with both the Master's and Doctoral level degree learning expectations within the University.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendation to enhance opportunities for professional development, noting that the Dean's office has added staff dedicated to assisting graduate programs in the Faculty and working closely with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs to enhance such opportunities.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA is in support of this recommendation and will work with FOSS and the Department as needed.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the staff of both Deans' offices to enhance opportunities for graduate students' professional development.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Deans
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2024-25.

Recommendation #3

The graduate program should include work-integrated or experiential learning opportunities for graduate students.

The Department responded:
The Department agrees that work-integrated or experiential learning opportunities are important for graduate students. Indeed, our program offers three different types of apprenticeships – community, research, and teaching – each of which provides experiential learning opportunities. The community apprenticeship in particular offers the possibility of work-integrated learning, including potentially through a Mitacs placement. In addition, the program offers several courses that offer opportunities to learn skills critical in many work-environments (i.e., programming in R, Matlab, and python). There are also work-applicable experiential learning opportunities in the Professional Issues course that is offered regularly. Students are able to earn course credit for all of these opportunities and apply them to their program requirements.

We acknowledge, however, that more opportunities for work-integrated and experiential learning opportunities would be important to graduate students. The Department intends to examine the following ways that might help foster additional work-integrated opportunities. 1) better promotion of the community apprenticeship option to students through on-going (annual) orientation sessions and other courses (professional issues) (see also recommendation #8 about including Mitacs in FGS orientations); 2) re-examining the program requirements (see also recommendation #2), thereby providing more opportunities for apprenticeship courses; 3) reaching out to the Co-op Office to inquire about how they might facilitate connections with the industry; and 4) establishing a database of companies and organizations where students have conducted apprenticeships in the past, as well as locations where former students are now employed.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation is a pedagogical issue for the program to consider including additional experiential learning, which could potentially relate to recommendation #2 given the number of doctoral students who move into post-doctoral research fellowships and faculty positions. Future program changes fall within the purview of the Academic Review Committee (ARC)/IQAP.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendations to enhance work-integrated or experiential learning opportunities, noting that staff in the Dean's office can assist with connecting to the expanded University-wide Community and Government Relations Office.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA supports the program's initiatives and will work with the program to help ensure that graduate students are aware of such opportunities. We will also provide students with information on work-integrated and experiential learning opportunities, such as Mitacs, through workshops and orientation sessions.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the staff of both Deans' offices to enhance existing work-integrated or experiential learning opportunities for graduate students.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Deans
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2024-25.

Recommendation #4

Offer centralized information for undergraduate students about opportunities to engage in research.

The Department responded:
The Department will expand its communication to undergraduate students about opportunities for research experience, in the following ways:

Adding to the Department's website an "opportunities for research experience" webpage (with a listing of faculty members who are seeking paid or volunteer research assistants, with some basic information for each)

Adding a new "getting research experience" workshop for students (to be held in person and at least once each year)

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation falls under the purview of UPC.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewer's Recommendation to offer information to undergraduate students about research opportunities, noting that assistance is available in the Dean's office for updating Departmental websites.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
This falls outside of FGSPA's purview as it pertains to undergraduate students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the Dean's office to determine appropriate strategies to move forward recognizing that this recommendation is also linked to #1.

Implementation Plan (1ˢᵗ Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2023-24.

Recommendation #5

Enhance onboarding and mentorship supports for early career faculty.

The Department responded:
During this academic year, the Psychology Department struck an onboarding and mentorship working group to develop onboarding procedures and resources. This resulted in the creation of several documents that are now available on SharePoint, including the following: 1) a checklist of onboarding procedures for the Department Chair; 2) onboarding procedures for part-time instructors; 3) an overview of required or common course preparation tasks; 4) a summary of useful resources for faculty and instructors, including communication and information storage, financial (e.g., Workday), teaching, and research-related information; and 5) a summary of the responsibilities and assistance provided by Psychology Department staff and faculty in major service roles.

The document outlining the Chair's onboarding responsibilities includes assigning and introducing a faculty mentor prior to the position's start date and contacting/introducing previous instructors of courses assigned to the new faculty position to enlist their support and assistance as required. The Department will ensure clear expectations regarding the mentorship process are included in the onboarding documents and that these are communicated to faculty mentors.

These procedures and resources were not in place when new faculty in our Department were last hired and onboarded (January 2021), so they have not yet been implemented and their potential benefits have not yet been realized. We look forward to implementing these onboarding and mentoring procedures going forward.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation relates to human resource management within the department, Faculty, and University and is outside of the purview of SGSC. That said, we are pleased to see this issue being brought to the attention of Senior Administration and more broadly to Senate.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendation, noting that an onboarding guide for Chairs and Directors is being developed in the Dean's office, that can assist Chairs and Directors in providing information to new faculty. In addition, the Dean's office invites new faculty from across Departments in Social Sciences to meet and greet information sessions.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
This falls outside of FGSPA's purview.

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/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2023-24.

Recommendation #6

Create an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee in the Department.

The Department responded:
We agree that it is important to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within our Department. Indeed, the Department has addressed these issues through existing committees and service roles on many occasions in recent years.

For example, in the past academic year, the Department established a Respectful Workplace Charter, with the assistance of a professional mediator, and struck a working group to develop and improve onboarding materials and resources for new faculty and part-time instructors.

Furthermore, to increase accessibility, diversity and inclusiveness in our graduate program, the Graduate Committee removed the admission requirements for GRE scores and the completion of an undergraduate thesis and put forward a motion (approved by the Department) that faculty supervisors must supplement graduate student funding with an additional $3,000 stipend.

The Department also liaises with the Human Rights and Equity Office to receive support regarding equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility issues. For example, we have scheduled an advanced session of EDI training for the Department to prepare for the CRC hiring process. The Department has also been working closely with the EDI Research Officer to plan the recruitment process for the CRC position.

From a governance point of view, we consider this approach to be more efficient and effective than striking a standing committee, given limits on the number of service roles that departmental members can fill annually and the need to avoid over-burdening our members who belong to designated groups. Such an approach also helps us to avoid overlap with the efforts of the University and other department-level committees that are considering these issues.

However, to ensure the Department, and those performing service roles or serving on committees, remain up to date on best practices and useful resources, we will discuss the

creation of a service role (EDIA Officer) tasked with providing the Department and relevant committees with periodic updates or reports on information or resources relevant to equity, diversity, inclusiveness, and accessibility. More generally, this position will view departmental policies and procedures through an EDIA lens, make recommendations where appropriate, and serve as a resource for departmental committees.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation relates to resource allocation and departmental procedures outside of the purview of SGSC. However, it is noted that such a committee is consistent with the University's Strategic and Academic Plans and SGSC is pleased to see this issue being brought to the attention of Senate.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendation to create an EDIA Officer role in the Department and supports sharing best practices across Departments in the Faculty.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA supports the department's efforts to remove barriers around their admissions procedures for graduate students. We further applaud the Department's move towards supplementing graduate student funding.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration by the Department. The Committee understands that the recommendation is already under review and believes that the Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on the issue of EDIA, as part of their overall efforts under Brock's Strategic Plan Pillar #4: Fostering a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation, and decolonization.

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 2023-24.

Recommendation #7

Engage in succession planning and leadership development.

The Department responded:
The current Co-Chairs and Associate Chair (who oversees academic integrity) will be in place through the 2023-24 academic year. Early in the 2023-24 academic year, the Department will begin the process of identifying faculty members to assume these service roles (i.e., Chair, Associate Chair), which will start in 2024-25. As noted in our response to

recommendation #5, some new onboarding materials for the Chair role have already been developed, and the current Co-Chairs have been assembling onboarding material that they will review with the incoming Chair prior to their assumption of the role. These materials will be made available on SharePoint. As is customary, the outgoing Chair(s) will meet with the incoming Chair(s) to review and discuss the role and any outstanding or upcoming business.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation relates to human resource management and departmental procedures within the purview of the Department, Dean, and within the BUFA collective agreement. Though in general SGSC supports the idea of succession planning for leadership development for Chairs and GPDs.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office is in support of the Departmental Response to the Reviewer's Recommendation and is developing onboarding resources for incoming Chairs and Directors. The Dean's office also provides funding for professional development opportunities for Chairs and Directors through the Dean's Strategic Discretionary Fund for Professional Development.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
This falls outside of FGSPA's purview.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Department will move forward as appropriate and discuss their efforts with the Dean's office.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2023-24.

Recommendation #8

Expand Departmental Orientation for new graduate students.

The Department responded:
The Department has had, and continues to have, an orientation session for graduate students each Fall that includes information about degree milestones, course pathways, and available services within and outside of the Department. Importantly, starting in Fall 2023, FGSPA will be holding a faculty-wide orientation session that will include information from the Library, the Graduate Student Association, CUPE, and the Centre for Pedagogical

Information. We have also asked FGSPA to include Mitacs at this event. Moving forward, the Department intends to schedule our orientation around this event so that students can attend the FGSPA session and benefit from this information.

We also note, however, that students report being "overwhelmed" by the amount of information presented to them at these orientations. The Department will examine whether there are ways that we can provide this information to them on an ongoing basis – e.g., during the Department's informal speaker series or through the Professional Issues course. We also plan to return to our practice of offering separate "re-orientation" sessions for students further along in the program (I.e., MA2, PhD1 and PhD2, and PhD3 and PhD4), as we have found these sessions to be useful for offering students information on an as-needed basis.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation for additional "onboarding and information" for graduate students post COVID-19 falls within the department's resource allocation and departmental procedures. It is consistent with information shared by GSA members of SGSC and Senate and is consistent with Brock's Academic Plan. That said, SGSC is pleased to see this issue being brought to the attention of Senate and the respective Deans.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office supports the Departmental Response to the Reviewers' Recommendation, noting that additional staff in the Dean's office dedicated to graduate program support can work with programs and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs to assist with developing best practices for ongoing graduate student orientation.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA supports this recommendation and the Department's response. We are pleased to be able to coordinate our orientation event with the program's and to include the requested information in our session. Further, FGSPA has an extended onboarding process that will help students to navigate the information provided to them – this will hopefully help to alleviate the issues raised regarding feeling overwhelmed. We will continue to work with the program to determine the best ways in which to support their students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects the Department will work in consultation with both Deans' offices to determine strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department/Deans
Responsible for implementation:	Department/Deans
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2023-24.

Recommendation #9

Limit graduate admission offers to 1 per candidate.

The Department responded:
The graduate committee is going to recommend to the Department a trial period of a new procedure whereby students with multiple offers are asked to re-rank supervisor preference based on their interests and/or the interest of prospective advisors. We prefer to collect these new rankings rather than rely on applicants' original rankings during the application process as students often update their preferences after meeting with potential supervisors and learning more about their research. Offers will be made based on this ranking in order to avoid multiple offers being sent to students.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee responded:
This recommendation relates to graduate application processing within the department, which falls within the department's operating procedures, and is consistent with policies in with the Faculty Handbook or Faculty of Graduate Studies. That said, SGSC supports the spirit of the recommendation to "reduce concerns about undue burden (perceived or actual) on incoming students", however the decision to act on this recommendation rests with the department.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Dean's office encourages the Department to revise its graduate admission procedures, in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs regarding best practises.

The Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Doctoral Affairs responded:
FGSPA also strongly encourages the program to revise this practice. Competing offers within a single program is not a best practice. FGSPA will no longer allow more than one offer to be sent to a potential student. Ongoing conversations about this continue and we will work with the program to find ways in which to appropriately match a student to a supervisor.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects the Department will work in consultation with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs to determine best strategies to move forward on this issue.

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 2023-24.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:
   Recommendation(s): 1,4,5,6,7,8,9

Second Priority:
   Recommendation(s): 2,3