
Final Assessment Report- Executive Summary

Sociology

2018-2025

To: Algoma University Senate

From: Dr. Brett Goodwin, Vice President Academic and Research

Date: November 2025

In accordance with the Algoma University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan provide a synthesis of the cyclical program review process (and related outcomes) of Algoma University Sociology programming, including: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Sociology, Single Major (BA4.SOCI), Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Sociology, Combined Major (BA4.SOCI.xxxx), Bachelor of Arts (General) Sociology Single Major (BA3.SOCI), and Bachelor of Arts (General) Sociology, Combined Major (BA3.SOCI.xxxx). This report identifies the strengths of the program, together with the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement. The report sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies (a) what bodies are responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report, (b) what bodies are responsible for providing any resources made necessary by the recommendations, (c) any changes in the organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations, (d) what bodies are responsible for acting on those recommendations, and (e) the timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Cyclical Program Review Summary for the Sociology Program

The Sociology Self Study Committee submitted the completed self-study to the CAO Office on January 9, 2025. The Quality Assurance Committee approved the Self-Study and recommended it for external review at its next meeting on February 20, 2026. The self-study included an analysis of program strengths and areas for improvement informed by quantitative data analysis, feedback from students, and an analysis of the program curriculum. Included were the CVs for full-time faculty, course outlines, and student survey results.

Two arm's length reviewers were selected by the Quality Assurance Committee of the Senate to conduct the external review. The reviewers (Dr. Rochelle Côté, Memorial University and Dr. Morgan Poteet, Mount Allison University) were provided with a briefing package and conducted a virtual site visit on March 27-28, 2025. The external reviewers met with faculty in the program, the members of the Self-Study Committee, the departmental and Faculty chairs, academic and administrative unit heads, including the Vice President, Academic and Research, the Acting Associate Vice President Student Affairs, the Chief Information Officer, the Manager of National Recruitment, the Educational Developer, the University Librarian and current students and alumni of the program.

The reviewers submitted the Reviewers' Report on the Sociology program on June 4, 2025. In their report, the external reviewers provided feedback on each of the evaluative criteria in the IQAP. The objectives, admission standards, curriculum, teaching and assessment, and quality indicators were assessed for the programs under review.

The reviewers provided 6 recommendations for improvement of the Sociology program.

Below you will find a summary of the findings and recommendations.

Summary of Significant Program Strengths

- The Sociology program is committed to Algoma's Mission and Values. The department excels at ensuring students gain skills and knowledge that reflect a strong sense of social justice and critical knowledge of their place in society. The majority of courses in the program incorporate explicit attention to global, decolonial, and Indigenous perspectives. This commitment directly reflects Algoma's Special Mission and aligns with several of the Indigenous Learning Outcomes from the IQAP.
- The program draws a broad appeal from students from many different departments, indicating that students across disciplines recognise the value of Sociology courses.
- Faculty are dedicated to supporting the student experience through their commitment to teaching, often teaching on overload to maintain course offerings.
- The Sociology program covers the current landscape of sociology, offering a range of courses from core concepts and theories to specialized areas like health, work, family, crime and social movements.

Summary of Reviewer Recommendations

- The Department should retain the 4-year Honours BA and strengthen it by offering both a thesis and a course-based option. The Department should also consider a major paper option equivalent to a thesis or two 4th-year courses
- The reviewers recommend that the Department consider new directions and innovations for the program, such as a new specialization and strength that will increase interest and strengthen ties with other large Algoma programs.
- The Department should streamline course offerings to decrease faculty stress, reduce administrative burden, and ensure that students can reliably set expectations and plan their degree pathways. Optional ways of doing this include: eliminating or removing anthropology courses, minors and Sociology courses with consistently low enrollments that are not core requirements.
- Pause development of an MA program to focus all efforts and limited resources on building a strong undergraduate program.
- Create an expedited review process to prevent delays and encourage timely completion of honours theses.

Program Quality Outcome

The Quality Assurance Committee of the Senate discussed the distinguishing features of the Sociology programming described by both the Self-Study Committee and the Reviewers. The Quality Assurance Committee approved the Report on Program Quality and rated the program as being **“Good Quality- QualCom has no serious concerns about program quality, as it is apparent that students are receiving a sound educational experience. The number and nature of the recommendations for quality enhancement, while they may be significant, do not impact the overall quality or viability of the program”** on August 25, 2025.

The Sociology program shall prepare a report of the status of the agreed-upon Implementation Plan 18 months following Senate approval of the Final Assessment Report. This report shall be submitted via the Office of the CAO to the Quality Assurance Committee for review. The date of the next Sociology program review is 2030/31.

Implementation Plan

The Academic Dean was asked to review the Report on Program Quality and rank the recommendations. The Dean completed the prioritization practice and informed the Department on September 12, 2025. The

Department Chair submitted the draft Implementation Plan to the Designate of CAO on October 17, 2025. The Quality Assurance Committee (QualCom) approved the draft Final Assessment Report and the Implementation Plan on December 8, 2025. Items in the chart below are ordered according to the ranking and priority level provided by the Academic Dean

Draft Implementation Plan

Priority #	Recommendations	Who is Responsible for Leading /Following-Up?	What Resources are Required?	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1.	<p>RECOMMENDATION 1: Retain and strengthen the 4-year Sociology Honours program.</p> <p>Based on the self-study and in particular, the requests for feedback on how to stabilize the number of majors and ways to address the need for a 4-year program in Sociology for students; the data provided to us on enrolments and other documents; and our meetings with faculty, students, and the VP, we recommend streamlining the Sociology program, retaining and strengthening the 4-year Sociology Honours program, while continuing to offer the option to students of a 3-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology.</p> <p>We feel that an important contribution of the Sociology program is to offer students a route to pursuing professional programs or graduate studies following the completion of the undergraduate degree. Given the current size of the department and the number of students completing the Honours degree, we recommend</p>	<p>Department - The chair will plan and organize the meetings to divide tasks and review what other programs are doing, the benefits of naming the capstone a Major Research Paper, or other.</p>	<p>Time and assistance to ensure all CURCOM forms are completed appropriately.</p>	<p>Major program revisions - CURCOM processes → 6 months</p>

	<p>providing both thesis and course-based options. This would allow students the choice of completing a thesis without deterring those who would prefer the course-based option. The department might also consider a major paper option that would be equivalent to the thesis or two 3-credit 4th-year courses for fulfilling course requirements for the Honours degree.</p>			
2.	<p>RECOMMENDATION 4: Recommendations for calendar cleaning, tightening, and innovation.</p> <p>After having looked at the course offerings, spoken with faculty members, and reviewed all other materials, the review committee recommends the following, in order to facilitate the creation of future teaching plans and decrease faculty member stress, decrease administrative burden to department members, and perhaps most importantly, streamline course offerings so that students can reliably set expectations around sociology courses, and plan their degree pathways and progress: (a) eliminate anthropology courses, (b) eliminate both minors, (c) remove courses that have consistently low enrollments and do not impact degree completion requirements, (d) creation of online sections of core and some popular courses, (e) creation of a 4th year internship course, (f) pause pursuit of MA degree programme.</p>	<p>Department: Looking to have the list ready for the Senate in January 2026 at the latest</p> <p>MHWA → Review and clean up prereqs for SOCI Majors / Minors, but none for students taking courses as electives only</p>	<p>The Chair will contact the QUALCOM office for support in ensuring all courses identified as needing to be updated and their rationale (prereqs, etc) follow the proper processes.</p> <p>The Chair needs assistance in coordinating meetings with other Department Chairs and ensuring all parties receive appropriate credits for these collaborations. This will be key in attaining successful collaborations.</p>	<p>By the end of Winter 2026 to get all courses advertised for Fall 2026</p>

At present, the department of Sociology has 35 sociology courses on the books plus several anthropology courses, many of which have either not been offered in several years, or draw very few students. Making a concerted effort to streamline course offerings will have the effect of providing a reliable suite of courses that will teach students about the richness and value of sociology, while providing reliable course offerings annually. Courses with consistently low enrollments, that have not been taught in several years, that are not core to degree requirements, are all good places to start. We also recommend the elimination of anthropology courses from the calendar until such a time that resources are in place to run this concurrent programme.

The review committee also recommends that SOCI 1806/1807: Sociology of Health, Wellness & Addictions be converted into upper years (2000 or 3000-level) courses, that require SOCI 1016/1017 as a pre-requisite, and that reflects the advanced course content. A grounding and introduction in the discipline is key to ensuring that students can take courses that are more directed and area specific, as with all other upper level courses in the department. This would also add to developing a clear programme structure for students. We also recommend the elimination of the two minors, but not the courses. The courses are very important for students, but we recognize the administrative pressure these streams may have on faculty already trying to attend to programme requirements of 3-year and 4-year degrees. Ensuring the courses are on offer will

	<p>give students exciting course options, but relieve some of the administrative pressure.</p> <p>Consideration can be given to the creation of online sections of core courses and some popular electives. With this recommendation, there is a greater likelihood of attracting students from satellite campuses, and encouraging these students not only to take sociology courses, but declare majors/minors in the programme. It would also potentially allow the department to create larger sections of core courses, in an effort to ease pressure on annual teaching plan crafting.</p> <p>In an effort to build a stronger connection to “employment readiness”, we recommend the creation of a 4000-level internship elective course, that would marry applicable knowledge of sociological concepts, theories, and methods, with voluntary opportunities in key organizations. A sample syllabus is attached to this Report, to give some suggested directions for how to structure and build such a course (Appendix B).</p> <p>While it is understandable that the department would want a MA programme, we do not advise its creation at this time. Focus and work must remain with building a strong undergraduate programme, with a note to revisit this idea at the next AUP cycle. The department is under-resourced, and the addition of another programme requiring faculty resources for supervision, as well as the creation of further courses, does not benefit the overall goal of the department at this time.</p>			
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3.	<p>RECOMMENDATION 6: Increasing domestic student enrollments and FTEs.</p> <p>Irrespective of whether we are talking about FTEs or overall course enrollments, with the current climate favouring fewer international students, there comes an increasing interest in attracting and retaining domestic students. Ontario has a wealth of choices for post-secondary education, which makes it that much more difficult to distinguish oneself in such a competitive field. Having said this, Algoma, and by extension the department of Sociology, is uniquely positioned to significantly attract domestic students from local catchment areas around Sault Ste. Marie, as well as attract students from the two other campuses, through the creation of online sections of key sociology courses for degree completion. This, alongside Recommendations 1-5, will assist in attracting domestic students to Sociology and also help to increase the number of FTEs in Sociology.</p> <p>Additionally, we recommend that Algoma University invest in the Department of Sociology, by paying for the production of a department banner and pamphlet prototype, to be used for annual job fairs that will create a stronger and more exciting presence for the Department. We recommend that the Department also consider community outreach to high schools, the creation of an annual social event/open house for Algoma</p>	<p>Department - to plan events to bring high school students to experience what it's like to learn about sociology and applications (surveys to find trends and see how many people think like they do, etc.)</p>	<p>VPAR/Board - need to work together and with us to undo the damage done to our program due to the pause</p>	<p>6- 9 months - ready for Winter 2027 intakes</p>

	<p>University parents and students, to learn about the discipline and opportunities available to students. The creation and maintenance of a community of faculty and students, that are engaged and excited about the Department, will rub off on others and create interest in joining, and in this instance, also increase potential of converting students to majors. What is clear to the committee is that the Department is full of faculty and students who care very much about it, want it to succeed, and really just want some form of commitment and investment to be able to maintain the strengths of the Department and to adapt to the rapidly changing environment through innovation.</p>			
4.	<p>RECOMMENDATION 2: Creation of an expedited ethics review for undergraduate thesis research.</p> <p>We recommend creating an expedited process for ethics review for the Honours thesis students, to prevent delays for students in being able to proceed through the stages of research and encourage timely completion. This could be an ethics review process internal to the department as well as encouraging students to pursue research projects not requiring ethics review (archival research or the use of pre-existing data, for instance) or that are minimal risk.</p> <p>Retaining and strengthening the 4-year Honours degree in Sociology also responds indirectly to the request for feedback on how to improve outreach</p>	<p>→ Department → Non-issue. Faculty needs to ensure that students send their REB in November/ early December latest</p>	<p>Work with REB to ensure that students' REBs are going well and we are meeting timelines so students' final projects can be done on time.</p>	<p>Ongoing starting this Fall 2025</p>

	<p>and domestic enrolment, since it is important to have a robust program in order to attract students to Sociology. Retaining and strengthening the 4-year Honours degree in Sociology is consistent with Recommendation 4: Cleaning up the calendar by reducing course offerings and ensuring students have access to the courses they need in each year to be able to effectively complete the Honours program.</p>			
5.	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3: Propose new programme directions and innovations.</p> <p>The review committee recommends two possible new programme directions for the department of Sociology, which should ultimately bring increased interest to the discipline and also strengthen ties to two other large programmes at Algoma. We suggest that Sociology create a new strength in either (1) Technology and Society, or (2) Employment and Entrepreneurship.</p> <p>A specialization and strength in Technology and Society will marry well with Algoma University's current strength and established program in Computer Science. Given the increasing reach of technology in our lives, Algoma has an opportunity to give its students a critical understanding of the global and local (glocal) impact of social media, artificial intelligence, smartphones, and/or other forms of technology, and the link to current societal and individual-level outcomes. Of equal importance is this department's strong commitment to decolonization and Indigenization. Increasingly, Indigenous scholars and communities want sovereignty over the collection, maintenance, and</p>	<p>Department - will have the conversations to determine affinities and interests with other programs, and the Chair will take these forward to the Chairs of programs we want to work with.</p> <p>Eg. We can talk to faculty in the School of BE who have shown interest in sociology and have affinities to Sociology (ideas: HR certificate with a sociological critical understanding, etc)</p>	<p>As stated in Recommendation # 4, the Department will require support in facilitating meetings with other identified programs and also ensuring that all programs are credited fairly.</p>	<p>12 months</p>

	<p>control of any and all data related to them, and also have an interest in how to harness technologies for community advantage. Worldwide conversations are happening around how best to do this, whether it be the creation of servers, cellphone towers, solar and wind technologies on Indigenous lands, to asserting and ensuring sovereignty rights over Indigenous data.</p> <p>A Technology and Society specialization would require one new hire for the department, the creation of a 2000/3000-level course, and a 4000-level course, conversations with Computer Science to determine how best to collaborate on this area of specialization. With the commitment to Algoma's Special Mission Statement around Indigenization, the department is already well positioned to think about how best to use this strength to contribute to the current and extremely relevant conversations happening within Indigenous communities in Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand (Walter et al., 2021). Of note, a targeted Indigenous hire in Technology and Society would be an ideal fit for this new specialization.</p> <p>Alternatively, a specialization and strength in Employment and Entrepreneurship will marry well with Algoma University's strength and established programme in Business. Sociology's particular contributions to labour market studies, capitalism, unions, and business studies, with a particular focus on the role of gender, class, ethnicity/race, social networks and social capital, make this a second rich option for expanding this department's reach and contributions to student learning and engagement. Increasingly, a critical understanding of the impact of business, the role</p>			
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	<p>of credentials, factors that determine labour market participation, are critical to participating in economic development projects. Students would benefit from the additional of sociological analyses of labour market participation – both employment and entrepreneurship pathways.</p> <p>This specialization would also require one new hire to the department, the creation of a 2000/3000-level course, and a 4000-level course, and conversations with Business to determine how best to collaborate on this area of specialization. Also keeping with Algoma’s Special Missions Statement around Indigenization, the department is again well positioned to contribute to global conversations around Indigenous social mobility, labour market participation, professionalization, entrepreneurship, and social enterprise. At present, data shows that Indigenous businesses currently contribute roughly \$50 billion annually to Canada’s GDP, with little to no acknowledgement, or interest in giving Indigenous Peoples a seat at the table (Bank of Canada, 2023). This is an opportunity to engage scholars, educate students, and also determine how Algoma can position itself as a leader in this space.</p>			
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