

External Review of the Department of Sociology

February 2026

External Review Committee

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Executive Summary

In conducting our review of the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria and its academic programs we were provided with the Department's self-study report and extensive supporting documentation, followed by a site visit conducted via Zoom on February 25, 26, and 27, 2026. The site visit provided us with opportunities to meet with senior administrators, Department faculty, continuing sessionals, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, and alumni. We observe the Department to be a dynamic, productive academic unit that offers high quality undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare its graduates for a diverse range of careers and other pathways. Students, graduates, and other observers appreciate the role that Department faculty, instructors, and staff play in providing them with a welcoming and supportive environment.

Department faculty have made a conscious decision to focus its academic programming and research on four core areas of specialization in order to highlight its distinctiveness while maintaining academic excellence while acknowledging the limitations associated with what can be delivered by a unit with a relatively low to medium faculty complement. The large proportion of courses and students taught by sessional instructors suggest there is room for increasing the faculty complement. The case for increasing this complement could be strengthened by demonstrating and building upon the solid research and programming foundations currently in place in the Department. While the Department is engaged in many innovative programming initiatives, there is room for further growth and innovation in areas like community-engaged learning and the cultivation of connections that may link core areas of Department expertise with related initiatives in other parts of the University. These prospects have been made possible in part by the recent hiring of several new faculty members. These faculty have brought new energy and ideas to the Department, but it is essential to ensure that equitable workload assignments and supporting resources are in place to make it possible to meet expectations over time.

Department members are engaged in a wide range of activities that encompass relations with members of other units across campus as well as communities outside the university. Despite the innovative nature of many of these endeavours, the Department continues to have a relatively low profile within the University. Department members are encouraged to work with senior administrators to showcase some of these activities as well as to consider ways in which these connections can be broadened and enhanced. Similarly, while relationships within the Department are positive, there are prospects to engage in further community-building by ensuring that research and teaching faculty work with sessional instructors, graduate students, and others within the Department in areas like mentorship and symposia on research and pedagogy.

Key Recommendations

1. We reiterate the recommendation made in the previous Department review that the Department take steps to increase its profile within the University, in part by engaging more fully with other units, in order to demonstrate the nature and strength of the contributions made by its members to the University, community, and world at large.
2. We recommend that Department members (with support from the Faculty and University as appropriate) establish a program to ensure that structured, intentional mentorship is regularly provided to all new faculty, as well as sessional instructors and graduate students who are moving into teaching roles.
3. We recommend that the Department's faculty complement planning continue to work to achieve gender equity and racial diversity.
4. We recommend that the Department Chair work with Department members to establish a plan to ensure workload equity across all faculty members on a regular basis, especially to ensure more balanced distribution of and recognition for service activities, honours thesis and graduate supervision, and teaching (including preparation time).
5. We recommend that, as the Department continues to expand its course offerings related to the core areas of specialization it has identified, it remains open to innovative programming opportunities in other areas both in Sociology and in interdisciplinary programming.
6. We recommend that the Department's Graduate Studies Committee work with faculty and students to regularize and strengthen the colloquium series with participation by faculty, students, and other Department members as well as speakers and participants from outside the Department.
7. We recommend that Department members explore mechanisms to increase opportunities for Sociology students to engage in cooperative learning and other forms of community-engaged learning.
8. We recommend that the Undergraduate Committee and Department Chair explore the introduction of a colloquium on teaching so that all Department members would be able to benefit from as well as recognize expertise in pedagogical matters within the Department (and drawing, as well, from outside knowledge).