

YORK UNIVERSITY

Final Assessment Report – Executive Summary

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
STUDIES**

Undergraduate Program, Faculty of Science

Cyclical Program Review – 2009 to 2016

This Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the programs listed below.

Program(s) Reviewed:

BA – Honours, 90-credit

BSc – Specialized Honours, 90 credit

Honours minor

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Dr. Alberto Cambrosio, Department of Social Studies of Medicine, McGill University, CA

Dr. Hannah Landecker, Department of Sociology & Centre for Genetics and Society, University of California (UCLA), USA

Dr. Spiros Pagiatakis, Associate Dean, Research & Graduate Studies, Lassonde School of Engineering, York University

Cyclical Program Review Key Milestones:

Cyclical Program Review launch: September 15, 2016


Self-study submitted to Vice-Provost Academic: August 9, 2017

Date of the Site Visit: October 24-25, 2017

Review Report received: November 16, 2017

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan received by the Joint Subcommittee on Quality Assurance, March 2022.

Follow-up Report due October 2023.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lyndon C. Martin".

Lyndon Martin, Vice-Provost Academic, York University.

This review was conducted under the York University Quality Assurance Protocol, August 2013.

SITE VISIT: October 24-25, 2017

The reviewers met with Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic and Fahim Quadir, Interim Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies. In addition, the reviewers met with all of the Deans involved with the STS program, Ray Jayawardhana, Dean, Faculty of Science, Alex Mills, Associate Dean Students, Faculty of Science, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Dean, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, Sylvie Moran, Associate Dean of Research, Faculty of Science, Buks Van Rensberg, Associate Dean of Faculty, Faculty of Science.

Interviews were held with faculty members involved in the STS program: Kenton Kroker, STS Chair, STS Faculty (group interview, 5 members), Ernst Hamm, former STS Chair, other STS scholars at York (group interview: 5 members), Kean Birch, STS Graduate Program Director, John Dupuis and Genny Jon, Librarians, STS Graduate Program Faculty Members (group interview: approx. 10-15 faculty members, coming and going).

A few faculty members who could not be present because of other academic commitments emailed submissions to the reviewers.

Student participation in the site visit was robust. The reviewers met with the following graduate and undergraduate students: the STS Graduate Students (group interview: approx. 35-40 students) and the STS UG Majors/Minors students (group interview: 5 students). The reviewers noted that the most impressive meeting, both in terms of attendance and of issues raised, was with graduate students, who provided an open letter signed by 40 out of 47 graduate students, and a large number of individual letters that provided additional detail.

OUTCOME

The Vice-Provost Academic, upon receipt of the External Review Report, determined that regular process of a cyclical program review could not proceed, and the programs would not be asked to respond to recommendations. The Provost's Office assumed responsibility for working with deans, faculty and students to organize a facilitated process for discussing the programs' challenges, exploring solutions and developing a path forward.

A report on the progress of the initiatives undertaken in response to recommendations in general and as specified in the implementation plan will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due in 18 months (October 2023).

The next cyclical program review will launch in Fall of 2024 with a site visit expected in Fall of 2025 or Winter of 2026.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND STRENGTHS

Science and Technology Studies has been offered as an undergraduate major since the early 1970s at York, through both the BA and BSc and in various Faculties as those structures have evolved.

The Self-Study report describes the York STS program is Canada's largest and, arguably, closest program to the true interdisciplinary nature of STS. However, that Self Study Report had already alerted the reviewers to the existence of a profound rift between Science & Technology Studies (STS) faculty members and the reviewers indicate that, "rather than a single program, we were confronted with three different programs that, beyond obvious differences such as undergraduate vs. graduate level.....the content, structure, and, ultimately, fate of the STS undergraduate and graduate programs are intimately linked to a reconfiguration of the present structural arrangements"

RECOMMENDATION

Acknowledging that they were confronted by the divisions between faculty and faculty structures that further complicated the situation, the reviewers provided thoughtful comments on the possibilities for the future of Science and Technology Studies in the Faculty of Science, particularly given its ties to the strong Natural Science courses.

Their report elaborated concerns about the positive feedback of students pursuing individual courses in STS and the challenges that STS students pursuing the major majors expressed in terms of making sense of the program and its goals.

The reviewers recommended building on the strengths of the program and "revamping the STS major along more cogent and focused lines, with some descriptor that is legible to incoming undergraduates and potential employers."

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATION

The Vice-Provost Academic, in consultation with the chair Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance, determined that it would not be appropriate or fruitful to request program and decanal responses to the reviewer recommendations. The decision was made to defer the preparation of the Final Assessment Report until the review and restructuring of the undergraduate program could be finalized

Important consultations and discussions about the undergraduate program were undertaken between 2017 and 2021 with support provided by the Vice-Provost Academic and the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis. The undergraduate program continues to be housed in the Faculty of Science.

2022 Program Enhancements to the Undergraduate Program

Curriculum and program renewal discussions for Science and Technology Studies have been supported by the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic, the Dean’s Office in the Faculty of Science, research offered by the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis, and thoughtful discussions by faculty dedicated to the program. The major has undergone significant restructuring, redesign and curriculum renewal. This led to a major modification that has resulted in a renewed program including updated program learning outcomes. The program has also been renamed Science, Technology and Society to more appropriately reflect the objectives of the program. A proposal is under development to also rename the department. In addition, a minor option has been established, with specific disciplinary themes identified, Life Sciences and Society, Technology Innovation and Society, and Earth, Sustainability and Society. The minor option is open to students from all Faculties.

At the January 2022 meeting of the York University Senate, the above modifications were approved for implementation in Fall of 2022.

The Implementation Plan below summarizes the actions resulting from the Cyclical Program Review process.

Action	Responsible Individuals	Timelines
Review of undergraduate program	Members of the undergraduate program; OIPA, Office of the Vice-Provost Academic	Academic Year 2017-2021
Major Modifications proposal finalized	Dean, Faculty of Science, members of the undergraduate program	Academic Year 2020-2021; proposal for changes effective Fall 2022 approved by Senate