

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
UNIVERSITY PROGRAM REVIEW (UPR)
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
BACHELOR OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCE
March 2025

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science

In accordance with the University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external review and the internal responses of the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science.

In addition to identifying the strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, the report prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation and sets out a plan (including the agent(s) responsible for addressing the recommendations and deadline dates) for follow-through. Timelines for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations are built into the process, with areas reporting mid-cycle on their progress to the Senate Program Development Committee, or earlier where there are significant concerns requiring urgent follow-up.

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science 2021-2022 Self-Study submitted to the Office of Quality Assurance on May 21, 2024, included: 1) a summary of recommendations and actions from the last review; 2) descriptions and an analysis of the program, its learning outcomes, curriculum structure, and student experience; 3) information on enrolments as well as financial, physical, and human resources; and 4) the program data including the standard data package provided by the Office of Quality Assurance. Included in the appendices to the Self-Study were faculty member CVs and course learning outcomes.

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science was reviewed by Dr. Beth Marquis, Director, Arts and Science Program, McMaster University; Dr. Ruediger Mueller, Associate Dean, College of Arts, University of Guelph; and, Dr. Lisa Salfi-Novena, Faculty of Engineering, University of Windsor. In addition to assessing the Self-Study, the Review Team conducted a two-day virtual site visit on June 26-27, 2024, which included meetings with faculty, students, the Faculty's Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator, the Associate Vice-President, Academic, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the current and incoming Program Chair, and the Associate Dean Academic of the Faculty of Science.

In their report (August 26, 2024), the Review Team confirmed that the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science is aligned with the University's strategic plan and the program learning outcomes are reasonable and aligned with degree-level expectations. However, the program structure and requirements warrant reconsideration as they seem overly complex and unclear, likely as a result of differing opinions about what the focus of the program should be. A curriculum review and mapping exercise, which would identify how the courses build on one another and meet program learning outcomes and where there are unnecessary requirements or redundancy, is overdue. This would also identify any needed changes to admissions requirements which are currently tailored to the sciences rather than to students who have interest in both the arts and sciences.

The Review Team also noted that the program is hindered by the lack of departmental structures, processes, and supports since it is housed in the Dean's office. Advising and teaching resources are limited, though those involved in program delivery are committed, engaged, and qualified. The Reviewers emphasized the need for a plan to ensure that core Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Science courses are taught on a continuing basis and that workload for advising and curricular committees are shared among faculty who teach in the program. Overall, the Review Team noted that program's emphasis on small-group, interdisciplinary learning is admirable, as is its potential to help students develop fundamental intellectual and scholarly skills. A focus on re-affirming the goal of the program, curriculum review, and building the appropriate structure and support will help reset and revitalize the program.

The Program Chair and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences submitted their responses to the External Reviewers' Report (November 2024 and January 2025, respectively), addressing the recommendations, identifying follow-up actions, and providing clarification or corrections, as appropriate. The Senate Program Development Committee (PDC) Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan (March 2025) considered all the above documentation. The Executive Summary and Implementation Plan, along with any response from the area on the final recommendations, were submitted to Senate in April 2025.

Final Recommendations and Implementation Plan (in priority order)

Final recommendations were arrived at by the Program Development Committee, following a review and assessment of the External Reviewers report and the response from the Dean of the Faculty.

Recommendation 1: That the Program Area, following consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and the Provost, report on whether there is a commitment for continued resourcing of an interdisciplinary arts and science program, whether in FAHSS or elsewhere. While the following recommendations relating to program changes and finding an institutional home would provide for renewed focus that might well result in program viability and renewed student interest, if it is impossible for resources to be provided, this program seems not to have a future, particularly considering the application and intake numbers, and current BIAS class sizes.

Agents: Program Chair, Dean of the Faculty, Provost

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 2: That the Program Area report on efforts to find an institutional home for the program and develop appropriate governance/committee structures and support.

Agents: Program Chair, Dean of the Faculty

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 3: That the Program Area, in consultation with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, undertake a complete curriculum review and mapping exercise which, at minimum, addresses the following:

- (a) review program learning outcomes and determine the program's distinguishing elements. (This should be done in tandem with establishing a home for the program, to ensure that the program objectives and foci and its institutional placement are congruent. See Recommendation 2)
- (b) Consider changing the program so that it more clearly appeals to a wider audience, not just "science" students who are interested in the arts but also "arts" students who are interested in the sciences and those whose interests fracture this disciplinary binary.
- (c) review the program structure/requirements, course learning outcomes, and course scaffolding in relation to program learning outcomes/focus, and simplify the structure where possible.
- (d) Address the issue of ad hoc course substitutions.
- (e) Consider changing the name of the program to something that might be more illustrative of the program's goals and focus and as such more attractive to a wider array of students.

Agents: Program Chair, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 4: That the Program Area develop a plan to address challenges related to faculty complement and teaching resources, and to bring faculty with interdisciplinary interests into the program for teaching, curricular renewal, advising, etc. Consider ways to do this that acknowledge budget limitations (e.g., one cost-neutral suggestion might be to consider cross-listing courses).

Agents: Program Chair

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 5: That the Program Area develop and implement a recruitment and retention strategy, and determine the minimum number of students/year required for the program to be viable, and a timeframe and process for reaching that goal.

Agents: Program Chair, Dean of the Faculty

Completion by: Fall 2026