



FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Cyclical Program Review of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
School of International Development and Global Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
2023-2024
February 12, 2026

I. Program(s) reviewed

- Honours BSocSc International Development and Globalization
- Licentiate in Law (LLL) and Honours BSocSc in International Development and Globalization
- Master of Arts International Development and Globalization
- Doctorate in Philosophy International Development

II. Review process (outline of the visit)

The Final Assessment Report on the above programs was prepared from the following documents: (a) the self-study brief produced by the academic unit; (b) the post-visit external review report; and (c) commentary from the Director of the School of International Development and Global Studies, Joshua Ramisch, and the response from Nathan Young, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

This visit took place on April 15 and 16, 2025, as part of the review process for undergraduate and graduate programs. The review team consisted of 1) Sonia Laszlo, McGill University; and 2) Jean Daudelin, Carleton University.

For their visit, the external reviewers met with Alain St-Amant, Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs, Marc Dubé, Associate Vice-Provost, Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies; Victoria Barham, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences; Véronique Strimelle, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences; Sylvie Frigon, Vice-Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences; Martin Lalumière, Vice-Dean, Governance and Internationalization; Joshua Ramisch, Director of the School of International Development and Global Studies; and members of faculty, support staff and students.

III. Summary of program quality reports¹

a. Strengths

- Broad range of classes, covering a mix of theory, applications, and experiential learning.
- Proximity to many actors and decision makers in the international development sector in Ottawa provides a unique opportunity for hands-on-experience in the co-op program.
- Good training in qualitative methods of analysis.
- Bilingual dimension of the program
- Multidisciplinary outlook
- Opportunities for international experience
- Students' sense of belonging is strong

b. Challenges

- Insufficient coherence across courses leading to repetition and overlap, as well as incoherence between sections of the same course, with different material and pedagogical methods.
- While many courses have experiential learning components, there is a lax interpretation of the term in several cases.
- While the co-op option is a strength, there is considerable frustration among students for two main reasons:
 - Many students find it difficult to obtain a placement, especially among international students.
 - Placements often bear little relevance to international development.
- The programs under-emphasize the economic dimensions of development. Also, instruction in quantitative methods is weak.
- The mission statement (website) does not convey the strengths of the programs.
- At the undergraduate level, instructors report significant differences between the competencies of incoming domestic and international students.

¹ Based on the documents prepared during the review process, often cited verbatim.

- Cutbacks worldwide in foreign aid spending will negatively affect employment prospects for graduates in international development organizations.
- At the PhD level, we found that time to completion is relatively long.
- At the MA level, there is an imbalance in course offerings between English and French programs, making it hard for students to complete their program in French.
- Doctoral supervisory duties appear to be overly concentrated on a few faculty members.
- The administrative staff is excellent but spread thinly, especially with high turnover at the clerical level.
- Funding is a major issue for graduate students.

IV. Summary and assessment of the proposed action plan²

The External Reviewers' recommendations were addressed by program leadership via an action plan that was considered by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee on November 12, 2025, and by the Senate Committee for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs on November 6, 2025, and February 12, 2026.

The program leadership agreed with all recommendations of the external evaluation. The actions to be taken and the timetable are clearly defined and have been endorsed by the Dean's Office.

The SCEUP and the GPEC are satisfied with the program leadership's response and action plan.

V. Conclusion

The review exercise confirmed the strength and stability of the programs offered, and it identified recommendations for their ongoing improvement. The members of the Senate Committee on the Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs (SCEUP) and the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee (GPEC) would like to thank the

² The academic unit's response and action plan are appended.

external evaluators for their detailed assessment, as well as all the stakeholders involved in this cyclical program review process.

VI. Schedule and timelines

A progress report that outlines the completed actions and subsequent results will be submitted to the evaluation committee by December 15, 2027.

The next cyclical review will take place in no more than eight years, in 2030-2031.

Unit Response and Implementation Plan

Faculty:

- Faculty of Social Sciences

Unit:

- School of International Development and Global Studies

Programs evaluated:

- Honours BSocSc in International Development and Globalization
- Licentiate in Law (LLL) and Honours BSocSc in International Development and Globalization
- MA in International Development and Globalization
- PhD in International Development

Cyclical review period:

- 2023-2024

Date:

- 2025-12-19

General comments:

In June, the School of International Development and Global Studies (SIDGS) received the External Review Report produced in the context of the harmonized cyclical program evaluation. Given the complexity of having undergraduate, MA, and PhD programmes with very different histories and institutional configurations, we appreciate the external reviewers' efforts to treat these programs both individually and as a collective whole.

We note, in particular, their assessment that our School's "combination of theory, policy analysis, experiential learning and methods classes [and graduate student research requirements] compares very well with multidisciplinary social science programs at all three levels". They also commend the "remarkable commitment of the [SIDGS] faculty to the bilingual dimension of the program", and our "strong engagement with the Global South, through the training of international students, the international focus of faculty research, and the opportunities for international experience it offers to its Canadian students". While their report is also rich in suggestions for improvements, we are pleased with their overall assessment that the "[p]rograms administered by the School... are operating well under difficult circumstances that affect all programs in Canada, and especially in International Development".

The report makes three recommendations, all of which we consider to be high priority. We take all the recommendations seriously and feel confident that by addressing them, our programs will be even stronger. The recommendations and our responses are included below.

Recommendation 1: Increase appeal of Undergraduate, MA and PhD Programs to a broader audience

Unit response:

"International Development", as a sector and as a field of study, confronts several challenges, many of which we outlined in our auto-evaluation. The reviewers helpfully identified some "big picture" and more

practical mechanisms to increase our programs' appeal and visibility. While many of these strategies fall outside of an individual unit's control (e.g. COOP program logistics, university website practices), we acknowledge the importance of both a) improving the visibility and articulation of our School and its programs as they work for social change, and b) improving the value and quality of the student experience.

On the first point, our newly launched "Hub for Development Policy and Practice" will be a signature platform for showcasing state-of-the-art thinking in the field. The Hub's professional short courses and web presence will enable our School's staff and students to engage more effectively with development practitioners in Ottawa and around the globe. We will also make more effective use of on-campus COOP opportunities to boost social media visibility, and to leverage alumni involvement in the School's research, community engagement, and knowledge mobilization.

To improve the value and quality of student experience, we will take the reviewers' advice to ensure all our programs' students receive the skills, networks, and platforms necessary for a career in development or allied fields "beyond aid" (see also Recommendation #3). While we cannot alter the university's timeline on which part-time instructors are recruited to teach courses, rebalancing the list of existing courses to align better with full-time professors' areas of expertise, and ensuring the learning objectives are better coordinated logically will go a long way to addressing the reviewers' concerns (and those of our own staff and students) about "coherence". To do so, we will designate course coordinators for the relevant blocks of undergraduate courses, who will meet as soon as possible with the Undergraduate Coordinator and Program Committee to ensure course learning objectives articulate logically with each other and the Program Learning Objectives (PLO's) that were revised as part of the Cyclic Evaluation.

We also commit to ensuring that students can tailor and complete their learning experience to their own, diverse needs as seamlessly and in as timely a manner as possible. This includes streamlining and reforming the MA program structure slightly, updating the undergraduate course offering to respond more clearly to changes in the international development landscape, and providing a Major and a Minor in DVM to make the field more accessible and relevant to other programs of study. (For improvements to the PhD program, see Recommendation #2 below.)

Decanal response:

The actions summarized and proposed by the unit will have a measurable impact on program appeal. The Hub for Development Policy and Practice is being launched with financial support from the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Hub will strengthen the unit's connections to development practitioners locally, nationally, and internationally, and will provide a bridge for graduating students (undergraduate and graduate) to the professional/practitioner world. The reduction of required credits for the MA program will make it more attractive, and the replacement of the MRP with Directed Study courses will provide greater structure for non-thesis students to complete the program in a timely manner. Reorienting the mandatory methods courses to address knowledge synthesis and mobilization/translation will better align acquired skills with workforce needs.

At the undergraduate level, efforts to reduce pre-requisite barriers and review required/optional courses will both facilitate progress through the program and increase flexibility in course offerings, allowing more regular rotation of courses. Continual review and updating of course titles and descriptions will make the program more attractive to potential incoming students.

Creation of a major/minor in International Development and Global Studies is essential, as the additional enrolment will stabilize DVM course offerings in both languages and maximize teaching resources.

The action plan for recommendation 1 is reasonable and achievable with current resources.

Actions to be undertaken for recommendation 1¹:

Action 1 – Streamline and enhance the MA student experience
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce program requirements to 24 credits (to align with other MA programs and allow faster completion, especially for COOP students) • Replace Major Research Paper with facilitated Directed Study courses (to allow a better and peer-supported research experience to non-Thesis students, and more efficiently use professorial resources) • Revise our mandatory methods classes to emphasize- applied research skills-(i.e. the application of widely transferable research and knowledge translation techniques, rather than preparing a minority of students for Thesis-type fieldwork)
Priority level*: 1-Urgent
Assigned to: MA Coordinator, MA Committee
Timeline: Immediate (2025, for implementation in Fall 2026 intake)
Curriculum change? Yes – reducing credit requirement to 24; abolition of MRP; creation of new Directed Study course(s)

Action 2 – Update undergraduate course offerings
<p>Description:</p> <p>- Curriculum changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update older course titles and descriptions (to better reflect priority topics) • Revise pre-requisites for key courses (to allow more non-DVM students to take them, and to ensure DVM students do not experience delays in completing program requirements) • Review and regularly coordinate learning objectives across courses (to ensure a logical coherence between courses that are intended to be complementary; to reduce the risks or perceptions of “repetition” between courses; to ensure logical consistency and rigour between English and French versions of the “same” course; see also Recommendation #3 below) <p>- Administrative changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the timetabling and number of sections of “Required” and “Optional” courses (to eliminate delays in undergraduate student progression, especially COOP students) • Ensure coherence between sections and between English and French versions (Undergraduate Coordinator will re-establish our older practice of designating relevant APUO and APTPUO-LTA instructors as Course Coordinators to facilitate coherence between sections and similar courses. These Course Coordinators will meet regularly with each other and the Undergraduate Program Committee; see also Recommendation #3)
Priority level*: 1-Urgent
Assigned to: Undergraduate Coordinator, Undergraduate Committee, Course Coordinators
Timeline: Immediate (2025, for implementation in Fall 2026 intake)

¹ N.B. Issues specific to the PhD are addressed in Recommendation #2 and not here.

Curriculum change? Yes – “Minor reform” to update some existing course titles and descriptions and revise pre-requisites

Action 3 – Create a Major and a Minor in International Development and Global Studies (DVM)
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a 60-credit Major in DVM (to better enable students to combine DVM with other programs, especially in the Faculty of Social Sciences; also to valorize the accomplishments of DVM-registered students who are unable to complete the 120-credit Honours B.Soc.Sci requirements) • Create a 30-credit Minor in DVM (to better enable students to combine DVM with other programs, especially in other faculties, where students have limited elective options outside their home field)
Priority level*: 2-Important
Assigned to: Undergraduate Coordinator, Undergraduate Committee
Timeline: Near term (2025-2026, for implementation in Fall 2026 or 2027 intake)
Curriculum change? Yes – Creating a Major and Minor out of existing undergraduate courses

Action 4 – Improve the School’s visibility to potential students
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve connections with Ottawa and Gatineau-area high schools (build and maintain our connections with area student success coordinators / guidance counsellors to facilitate current DVM students in connecting with high schools to promote international development issues and our programs) • Improve School website content (to better promote current research opportunities, policy engagement, and to highlight student post-graduation accomplishments) • Improve the School’s social media visibility (beginning with existing funds – e.g. directorial funds to support an on-campus COOP placement to promote the School’s research, policy, and other strengths on relevant platforms, and then working with the Faculty to maintain such social media visibility) • Improve Alumni engagement (strengthen and maintain our platforms for connecting with Alumni. Options include but are not limited to: a) using our existing, active DVM Alumni group on LinkedIn for greater communication within our alumni network, ensuring that jobs and other opportunities are regularly shared to this group; and b) using our Alumni database to better integrate past students with current ones, including as resource people for post-graduation work opportunities, and potential clients / instructors for the Hub’s professional short courses.) • Make more of the School’s events available online or as recordings (to improve accessibility for Southern participants, potential students, and other interested participants outside the Ottawa area)
Priority level*: 3-Advised
Assigned to: Director, Undergraduate Coordinator, FSS Marketing, Registrar, Alumni Affairs
Timeline: Medium term (2025-2027)
Curriculum change? No

* PRIORITY LEVEL: 1. URGENT-IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED 2. IMPORTANT-ACTION REQUIRED WITHIN 18 MONTHS (MAXIMUM) 3. ADVISED: DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY-ACTION TO BE DISCUSSED AND MUST BE IN PLACE BY MID-CYCLE (WITHIN 4 YEARS)

Recommendation 2: Reduce the time to PhD completion

Unit response:

Graduations from our PhD program only began after the previous cyclical evaluation of our graduate programs (in 2018). As a result, the current evaluation placed our doctoral program under the spotlight. While the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic period (which disrupted and delayed students' research and writing activities, especially between 2020 and 2022) are now receding, the reviewers noted it would be in the interests of the School and its students if we could reduce the time to PhD completion still further.

Again, while some of the impeding factors are beyond the scope of individual units (e.g. entrance awards and fee structures, availability of external funding, Canadian immigration requirements for student visas), we as a School are committed to making doctoral studies viable in both French and English. In some cases, we only need to reinforce our existing policies (e.g. deadlines for proposal defense in Year 2, reinforce potential peer-to-peer support networks, dedicate teaching opportunities for doctoral students in good standing). However, as noted by the reviewers, it would also be useful to provide a meaningful "off-ramp" for struggling students to leave the PhD and complete their studies in the MA program (as revised under Recommendation #1, Action 1). This would complement the existing "fast-track" option from the MA to PhD, and would ensure that neither students nor professors feel obliged to prolong a doctoral experience that will not result in a PhD Thesis.

Decanal response:

Reducing time to completion for PhD studies is a challenge across the University of Ottawa and nearly all Canadian universities – the problem is not unique to the PhD in International Development. The proposed plan for reducing time to completion is consistent with known best practices. The creation of an exit pathway will allow for some students to depart the program with a credential, which will mitigate the problem of over-stay. A commitment to enforce existing timeline rules is welcome but requires buy-in from students and colleagues. The unit should consider hardening timelines for both the comprehensive examinations and the thesis proposal so that missed deadlines count as a failed attempt to complete.

Improving supports for students in the post-fieldwork phase of their studies should improve completion times if carefully deployed. The unit should avoid over-burdening PhD students with excessive teaching duties, for example. Measures to support the cohorts and reduce isolation (while building professional skills) are particularly welcome.

The action plan for recommendation 2 is reasonable and achievable with current resources.

Actions to be undertaken for recommendation 2:

Action 1 – Create a viable exit pathway from the PhD program for students unable to complete a Thesis

Description:

- **Establish guidelines for an exit option from the PhD.** Based on comparator doctoral programs, this option will be available to students who have successfully passed their Comprehensive Exam. Students passing into the MA would receive credit for their completed coursework (12 credits) and their completed Comprehensive Exam (3 credits). Beyond these 15 credits, students would have twelve months to complete 9 more credits (3 courses, or 1 course and an MA Thesis) to satisfy the MA's requirement of 24 credits.

Priority level*: 1-Urgent
Assigned to: PhD and MA Coordinators, Faculty of Social Sciences VD Graduate Studies
Timeline: Near term (2025-2026)
Curriculum change? Yes – Creating a new degree or certificate out of existing courses. This process is contingent on approval of the revised, 24-credit MA requirements

Action 2 – Strengthen PhD Proposal Defense process
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure stricter adherence to the existing Proposal Defense timeline (i.e. set agreed intermediate and final dates in each cohort’s second year to ensure that all students defend their Proposal no later than eight months after their Comprehensive Exam) • Establish clearer guidelines for Thesis Advisory Committees (i.e. set agreed structures and timelines to ensure students meet with their Committees to discuss and refine their Proposals) • Provide appropriate supports to students considering or likely to use the MA exit option outlined in Action 1 (i.e. establish reporting mechanisms – for student, supervisor, and/or committee members – to report on progress within two semesters following the Comprehensive Exams. If potential challenges or opportunities with the research are identified, this process should keep an MA exit open as a dignified and viable alternative to a doctoral Thesis)
Priority level*: 1-Urgent
Assigned to: PhD Coordinator, PhD Committee
Timeline: Immediate (Fall 2025 onwards)
Curriculum change? No

Action 3 – Strengthen supports to students post-fieldwork and through their Thesis preparation
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure PhD students receive a fair share of any part-time teaching positions (N.b. This is already in effect. In any semester, once we know which courses will be available to part-time instructors, we consult the current pool of available doctoral students to identify their teaching preferences and thematic strengths. This guides the School’s decisions about which courses to post for PhD students vs. open competition. We view this as a crucial, career-building opportunity for students, as well as an important mechanism to redirect, as the reviewers note, “teaching expenditures towards financing graduate students” in good standing and on track to complete their Theses on time.) • Ensure strong, doctoral student participation in the School’s Brown Bag seminar series (i.e. to workshop papers and ideas as they progress through the ranks.) • Establish structures to build solidarity and reduce isolation. Examples include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) monthly peer-to-peer writing sessions (in person or online), facilitated by members of the PhD committee in both languages; b) monthly “coffee mornings” in the School’s graduate café for all PhD students, to build connections across languages and cohorts (several professors already run “affinity groups” along this model, but we can systematize the practice to make it more inclusive and mandatory for all PhD students regardless of their supervisor).

Priority level*: 2-Important
Assigned to: PhD Coordinator, PhD Committee, Brown Bag seminar series Coordinator, Graduate Students Association
Timeline: Immediate (2025-2026)
Curriculum change? No

Recommendation 3: Increase the acquisition of transferable skills at all levels

Unit response:

We concur with the reviewers that in today’s competitive job market and changing international development landscape, we must emphasize the breadth and transferable relevance of skills and knowledge acquired in all levels of our programs. While our students go on to diverse careers (in public or private sector employment, academia, advocacy or activism, amongst others), we believe that one of the virtues of an interdisciplinary School such as ours should be training students to synthesize and “translate” complex material for other audiences. Skills and experience that demonstrate the interconnections between diverse bodies of knowledge for an “international development” issue should build competencies that are easily adaptable to other contexts as well.

Without new teaching resources, it will be important to build on our history of engaged and innovative pedagogy (see section 4.2 of the auto-evaluation). The reviewers propose, for example, that our School’s clear strength in qualitative methods (both in teaching and in practice) could act as a draw when coordinating with other units on quantitative, economic, or language skills. We will use our program learning objectives (which were updated in the auto-evaluation) to better coordinate the course offerings that we will be revising as part of Recommendation #1 Action #2. The goal will be to continue to ensure a logical coherence between courses that we have intended to complement each other. We will also re-establish our pre-pandemic practice of designating relevant APUO and APTPUO-LTA instructors to facilitate coherence between sections and similar courses (especially between English and French).

Finally, we appreciate the reviewers’ statement that our School “is considered a leader in experiential learning at the university”. To solidify this reputation, we will strengthen opportunities for students to apply their theoretical training in practical contexts, and to provide structured spaces for them to make sense of their experiential learning. While the In-depth Experiential Learning Stream (IELS) will remain core to this process, we intend to use its structures and lessons to reinforce the same dialectic between theory and practice throughout our programs. For example, even though COOP placements remain a significant attractor (with 35% of undergraduate and 40% of MA students enrolled in COOP as per our auto-evaluation data), we are keenly aware that our School has no influence over the number or types of placements available to our students. Our commitment to building robust, experiential learning opportunities that go beyond COOP will require the School (and its Hub) to use our existing partnerships with development practitioners and researchers. We will continue to promote international internships and volunteering opportunities as well as community service learning (CSL) options in our courses and recommend this option to all full and part-time instructors.

Decanal response:

The efforts to review and coordinate course learning objectives is an excellent step towards ensuring up-to-date skills acquisition and minimizing repetition across courses. In addition to the software tools mentioned in Action 1, the unit should consider integrating AI training in select methods courses by amending official

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course descriptions as well as learning objectives (special emphasis here on qualitative methods courses).

The unit is an acknowledged leader in experiential learning, and further development of this stream will both enhance student experience and ensure continuous development of transferable skills. The Faculty strongly supports increased engagement with Professionals in Residence and the nascent Hub for Development Policy and Practice.

The action plan for recommendation 3 is reasonable and achievable with current resources.

Actions to be undertaken for recommendation 3:

Action 1 – Review and coordinate course learning objectives
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and regularly coordinate learning objectives across courses (to prioritize the introduction and reinforcement of key skills with identified “clusters” of related courses; see also Recommendation #1 Action #2: the Undergraduate Coordinator will re-establish our older practice of designating relevant APUO and APTPUO-LTA instructors as Course Coordinators to facilitate coherence between sections and similar courses. These Course Coordinators will meet regularly with each other and the Undergraduate Program Committee) • Review opportunities within existing courses to reinforce students’ experiences with valuable software and AI tools (such as ArcGIS, NVivo, Perusal, R or Stata, etc.) • Explore opportunities for complementarity with other units (for example on quantitative, economic, and language skills)
Priority level*: 1-Urgent
Assigned to: Undergraduate Coordinator and Committee, MA Coordinator and Committee, Course Coordinators
Timeline: Near term (2025-2026, for implementation in Fall 2026 intake)
Curriculum change? No – To be completed in parallel with and after the MA restructuring (Recommendation #1, Action #1) and the updating of undergraduate courses (Recommendation #1, Action #2)

Action 2 – Solidify the School’s reputation as a leader in experiential learning at the university
<p>Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and deepen our pioneering In-depth Experiential Learning Stream (IELS) (to coordinate, document, and systematically learn from the off-campus partnerships and experiential learning practices being built into our IELS-coded courses) • Increase opportunities to integrate experiential learning in existing courses not part of the IELS (for example using selected fourth-year courses as “capstone” courses to reflect on and interpret the diverse range of students’ own learning experiences; enlarging the possibilities for Community Service Learning or other non-traditional experiential learning in our undergraduate and MA courses) • Explore ways to better link our partners with the university (e.g. using our Professionals in Residence, research and development partners of faculty members and the Hub) • Promote our students’ experiential learning activities and outcomes (i.e. for knowledge mobilization and learning within the School; to improve the School’s visibility and appeal – Recommendation #1)
Priority level*: 3-Advised

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Assigned to: Director, Coordinators (Undergraduate, MA, PhD), Coop Coordinator, Hub, TLSS (Teaching Learning Support Services), CSL (Community Service Learning)
Timeline: Medium-long term (ongoing)
Curriculum change? No