Final Assessment Report – Women's and Gender Studies

Undergraduate programs reviewed 2025/26

A. Summary

1. The Centre's Self-Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on December 8, 2025.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (Trent University) and Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis (Memorial University), and one internal reviewer, Christina Phillips (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred March 16-17, 2026.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received April 20, 2026.
5. The Centre's response was received May 19, 2026.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received May 21, 2026.
7. The Dean Faculty of Social Sciences response was received August 17, 2026.
8. Annual Implementation Reports will be submitted from 2027-2030.
9. The next Cyclical Academic Review is scheduled to take place in 2033/2034.

The cyclical program review process was conducted under the terms and conditions of the 2023 IQAP.

Program Outcome Categories:

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Reviewers gave the programs the following Outcome Categories:

NOTE: Selecting from Excellent Quality, Good Quality, Good Quality with Concerns and Non-Viable.

Excellent Quality:

- BA (Honours, Pass) Women's and Gender Studies
- BA (with Major) Women's and Gender Studies
- BA Combined (Honours, Pass) in Women's and Gender Studies

Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote:

Overall: The WGST Centre comprises a small, dedicated, and well-respected core group of instructors, staff, and students who contribute significantly to the university's [and Faculty of Social Science's (FOSS)] mission through infusing decolonial, intersectional feminist perspectives and an interdisciplinary framework into curricula, events, and service work (e.g., PACHRED) with limited resources, financial- and personnel-wise. Relatedly, the Centre has attained a high degree of community involvement and service beyond the university through social justice outreach, event organizing, and student practicum placements.

The Centre is well-run administratively as evidenced by the workings of the Program Committee, whose members laud its collegial environment.

Faculty create and deliver innovative teaching practices such as guest speakers in classrooms and novel approaches to recruitment (letters to students who earn A's, a revamped website featuring students, third-year practicum). Consequently, WGST teaches a disproportionately high percentage of Full time Equivalent (FTE) students relative to other programs such as Sociology (see Self-Study Vol. I, p. 47).

Some of the main challenges facing the Centre include (a) new higher enrolment thresholds (for summer courses in particular) that jeopardize course offering capacity; (b) insufficient faculty complement to offer more WGST courses resulting in the Centre having to over rely on sessional instructors and cross-listed courses (some of which have insufficient WGST content); (c) relatively low numbers of majors, which threaten the program's viability under current modes of program valuation; (d) administrative restructuring that potentially increases the workload of the Centre's

administrative assistant and adds a non-cognate discipline to their responsibilities, in turn possibly constraining efforts to maintain a harmonious, close-knit community.

In relation to challenge "c," we add that the Centre's worth is more apparent when assessed in relation to FTE's (rather than majors), since WGST teaches many non-WGST majors across FOSS and other faculties such as Applied Health Sciences--numbers that reportedly stand to increase when Brock implements changes to its program architecture.

B. Program Strengths

The reviewers noted:

Outstanding faculty

Students report that professors are outstanding educators, describing them as highly knowledgeable, passionate, transformational, world-expanding, and inclusive of a wide variety of perspectives. Faculty members have strong scholarly production and funding records and have made significant service contributions across the university.

Program Attributes

- In line with the Brock strategic plan, WGST promotes transdisciplinary learning. This is evident not only in diverse coursework but in faculty dialogue. Monthly Program Committee meetings of WGST-affiliated faculty from across the university are repeatedly identified as the highlight of faculty/staff university engagement. These meetings were described as the kind of conversations faculty/staff hungered for when pursuing a life in the academy.
- The Centre encourages good citizenship via active service to local communities and conscientious participation in the world.
- The Centre hosts numerous engaging and popular public events open to all.
- The Centre fosters job-ready skills: Current student and alumni report high approval ratings (80-100%) in this regard, noting that the degree provides many skills including but not limited to communication, critical thinking, analytical and complex problem-solving, and synthesis of information.
- The Centre provides experiential opportunities in local communities (e.g., the third-year practicum).
- The Centre offers diverse modes of course delivery, providing flexible, accessible, and accommodating offerings for students.

- It provides inclusive, diverse, and popular elective options for students across the university, preparing students to work with the diverse peoples of Ontario, especially in public-facing jobs, but valuable to all workers in Ontario who must abide by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1: Separate the first-year course (WGST 1F90) into two half (P) courses.
Supporting/clarifying text: Separating the course into two half courses would offer more students across campus the flexibility to take one as an elective/general requirement. This separation falls in line with similar separations of first-year courses in other departments at Brock University.

The Centre responded:
The separation of the first-year course (1F90) into two half P courses will be a key discussion item at the Centre's upcoming retreat in June 2026. It is expected that the Centre's fall UPC submission will include this separation of the full year first year course into two half courses and will take effect in the 27/28 academic year.

The Undergraduate Program Committee responded:
UPC supports Recommendation 1 and reminds WGST to take note of timelines and procedures for submitting course revisions; and ensure program notes are changed to reflect course change(s).

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
I am in support of the recommendation to separate the first-year course WGST 1F90 into two half P courses.
Timeline: I anticipate that the Centre will follow through in this current academic year to have the half courses in place for 27/28.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Centre will move forward as appropriate to separate Women's and Gender Studies 1F90 into two half (P) courses.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be short-term.

Recommendation #2: Encourage the teaching of WGST courses by affiliated WGST permanent faculty across campus.
Supporting/clarifying text: There is a thriving group of social-justice oriented faculty who regularly attend monthly WGST Program Committee meetings, thereby forming a strong intellectual community. They express great enthusiasm for WGST and gratitude for the WGST community, with some sharing with reviewers an interest in teaching in WGST. More permanent faculty teaching WGST courses could increase faculty visibility for WGST, and with visibility more student attraction to the program. Consequently, WGST would be further enriched through greater trans-/interdisciplinarity. The barrier to this is a perception that decanal units and/or Chairs from other departments would not accommodate this option in teaching plans. The Centre is encouraged to work with senior administration to reduce barriers for interested faculty.

The Centre responded:
The Director of WGST will initiate meetings with affiliated WGST faculty and with Deans to encourage the teaching of WGST courses by affiliated faculty housed outside the unit.

To date, the Director has spoken with the Dean of Social Sciences about this issue, and the Dean has voiced their support of WGST affiliated faculty teaching WGST courses on load. The Centre Committee includes faculty in Applied Health Sciences, the Humanities and Education, as well as Social Sciences. These faculty can assist the Director with moving this recommendation forward. WGST will also undertake an ongoing process of review of its Rules of Procedure regarding formal processes of WGST affiliation of non-core faculty and of procedures by which affiliated faculty teach WGST courses.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
I am in support of encouraging Deans in other Faculties to approve their faculty members' requests through Department Chairs to teach courses on load across Faculties.
Timeline: Ongoing

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Centre, in consultation with the Dean's office, is best positioned to determine opportunities to encourage the teaching of Women's and Gender Studies courses by affiliated faculty housed outside the unit.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director and Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be medium-term.

Recommendation #3: Encourage cross-appointments to WGST by affiliated WGST permanent faculty across campus.
Supporting/clarifying text: Some faculty on the WGST Program Committee also expressed interest in being cross-appointed to WGST. More permanent faculty cross-appointments would further solidify the benefits outlined in Recommendation #2: increased visibility for WGST among students (and also faculty) and greater program trans-/interdisciplinarity. Put another way, more cross-appointments would help to strengthen and diversify the Centre's programming and reach. Finally, such cross-appointments could organically lead to more cross-listed courses, which may prove beneficial with the new degree architecture. The same barrier also exists--the perception that Deans and/or Chairs from other departments would not permit such movement. The Centre is encouraged to work with senior administration to facilitate faculty cross-appointments where possible.

The Centre responded:
Similar to recommendation #2, the Director, in cooperation with the Dean of Social Sciences, can work with affiliated WGST permanent faculty and senior administrators to pursue cross-appointments.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
I am in support of the Centre encouraging interested faculty to pursue cross-appointments to WGST, noting that the Collective Agreement has a process in place for initiating and approving cross-appointments.
Timeline: Ongoing

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to encourage cross-appointments to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Centre, in consultation with the Dean's office, is best positioned to determine opportunities to pursue cross-appointments to Women's and Gender Studies. Noting that the Collective Agreement includes a process for initiating and approving cross-appointments.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director and Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be medium-term.

Recommendation #4: Finalize the merger of the WGST program and the Social Justice and Equity Studies (SJES) MA program.
Supporting/clarifying text: The idea to merge WGST's undergraduate program and the MA in SJES enjoyed enthusiastic support across all faculty, students, and staff consulted for this report. As articulated in these conversations and echoed in the Centre's Self-Study, the merger's potential benefits are legion. It would (a) encourage undergraduate WGST students to continue with graduate studies and facilitate that transition; (b) reinforce WGST's commitment to approaching gender as one among many co-constituted categories of analysis/oppression that require a social justice response; and (c) aid with undergraduate recruitment and retention by appealing to a broader swath of students (see Vol. I, p. 56). In light of this clear vision and widespread support from faculty, students, and staff, we endorse moving forward with the merger.

The Centre responded:
In a letter dated April 7, 2026, the Dean of Social Sciences expressed support for the proposed merger of the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies and the MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies to form the Centre for Gender, Social Justice and Equity Studies. The Ad-Hoc Committee on the proposed merger is in the process of having the merger approved by Senate and the relevant subcommittees. At its retreat in June 2026, the WGST Centre Committee will draft changes to the undergraduate program and courses and to the Rules of Procedure in preparation for the merger.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
I fully support the proposal, with the clarification that next steps would entail (1) moving the MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies program into the Centre for Women and Gender Studies (2) changing the name of the Centre for Women and Gender Studies to the Centre for Gender, Social Justice and Equity Studies, through the appropriate Senate process.
Timeline: Current academic year.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Centre to continue its efforts to finalize the merger.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director and Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be short-term.

Recommendation #5: Pursue the possibility of securing more full-time faculty hires through the appropriate channels.
Supporting/clarifying text: As reported in the Self-Study, the Centre's current faculty complement is of 3.25, making it difficult to address many of the challenges facing the WGST program, including the need to increase course availability, reduce the percentage of courses taught by sessional instructors (higher in WGST than in other programs), minimize duplicate content across courses, and enhance the practicum course experience. Moreover, two WGST faculty (1.25 positions) are poised to retire in the next three to five years, while two other WGST faculty have reduced teaching loads due to service duties and administrative appointments. An increased faculty complement would not only facilitate the Centre's ability to address the above challenges, leading to greater program coherence and sustainability, it would also redress inequities between units at Brock. Moreover, awarding additional hires to the Centre would be consistent with its advocacy for Indigenous and Black cluster hires. Finally, more WGST faculty would reduce the need for sessional instructors to deliver the intro course, thus fostering greater connection among students to the Centre/program.

The Centre responded:
The Centre fully supports this recommendation for the reasons outlined by the Reviewers. To add to the reasons above, the Centre had a fully appointed Faculty member resign in 2024, to pursue artistic endeavours, and was not replaced. WGST submitted new position proposals (a limited term ILTA and a tenure-track position as part of the Black Cluster hire) in 2024 and 2025 respectively. These position proposals were supported but not successful. As noted, receiving retirement replacements will be vital to the Centre's ability to continue program delivery. The Director of WGST, in cooperation with the Dean of Social Sciences, will continue to advocate for faculty resources and articulate strong arguments that in turn make visible to university administration the rationale for increased faculty complements in the near future.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
I am in support of the Centre following the Faculty and University-wide process for making a case for tenure-track positions.
Timeline: Ongoing

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC deems this recommendation worthy of consideration, but the allocation of resources lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. ARC expects that the Centre will continue to advocate through available channels for additional full-time faculty.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director and Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be medium-term.

Recommendation #6: Investigate the viability of having an internal Centre Director.
Supporting/clarifying text: Given the unique challenges of running a trans-/interdisciplinary program, having a WGST faculty member at the helm as Centre Director would allow that person to avail of their experiences teaching in the program.

The Centre responded:
The Faculty Handbook (A6.3) defines departments as units with 4 or more full-time faculty and centres as units with 3 or fewer full-time faculty. The current WGST faculty complement is 3.25 and could be interpreted as falling between the faculty requirements of a department and a centre. Due to this in-betweenness, this issue of whether WGST should seek approval to become a department has been discussed periodically at Centre Committee meetings. The key advantage of remaining a Centre is that Centre Directors are not WGST faculty and the 1.0 course release that the Director receives does not increase the number of WGST courses taught by sessional instructors. While the Centre appreciates the Reviewers' rationale about the teaching experience of an internal Centre Director, to date the Centre has prioritized having as many courses as possible taught by WGST full-time faculty. Thus, this recommendation is closely tied to recommendation #5 regarding securing more full-time faculty hires. Should WGST receive additional full-time faculty hires, the viability of an internal Centre Director can be revisited.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Collective Agreement outlines the process for selecting Program Directors for the Centre.
Timeline: Ongoing

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to investigate the viability of an Internal Centre Director to be accepted. The Committee expects that the Centre will advocate accordingly through available channels. Again, noting that the Collective Agreement outlines the selection process.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Centre Director and Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be medium-term.

Recommendation #7: Monitor the manageability of the administrative assistant position and inclusivity of office space.
Supporting/clarifying text: Given the recent changes to the Faculty Administrative Support Services operating model and structure and associated administrative assistant job descriptions, including new responsibilities across programs / departments, we recommend that the Centre, in collaboration with senior administration, monitor the workload of the new position to assess its viability and manageability. Also, in light of concerns raised about the inclusivity of the administrative shared office space (see 5.5.1.), we recommend that the Centre, in collaboration with senior administration, put measures in place to ensure WGST students feel safe and comfortable in the administrative office, an environment that might be facilitated through combining administrative staff/offices with programs/departments that share some alignment in values.

The Centre responded:
The Centre supports the continued monitoring of the new Faculty Administrative Support services model. It also agrees that "combining administrative staff/offices with programs / departments that share some alignment in values" could assist WGST students in feeling safe and comfortable. The Director, in consultation with the Centre Committee, will work with the Dean's office to assess workload and the continued viability of the new Administrative Support services model.

The Dean of Social Sciences responded:
The Faculty-wide administrative model currently provides WGST with access to an Administrative Assistant, Academic Coordinator and Advisor. Increased role clarification will help continue to provide appropriate administrative support to the center.

The Faculty of Social Sciences encourages space sharing among departments and units, noting that Chairs and Directors allocate space within their units while the Dean is responsible for assigning space to units.
Timeline: Ongoing

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee expects that the Centre will continue to monitor the allocation of inclusive space(s) and the changes associated with the new Administrative Support Services model, and advocate through the available channels as necessary.

Implementation Plan
Responsible for implementation: Centre Director
Responsible for approving: Dean of Social Sciences
Responsible for resources: Dean of Social Sciences
Timeline: ARC anticipates implementation to be medium-term.

D: Final Comments: Section 8 of Reviewers' Report

In the current global political climate of backlash against women's, gender, feminist, and sexuality studies and EDID more broadly, coupled with the closing of some WGS programs in North America, WGST at Brock is fulfilling a crucial role in knowledge production and the pursuit of social justice.

E. Summary of Recommendations:

Short-term: 1, 4
Medium-term: 2, 3, 6, 7
Long-term: N/A
Outside ARC's Jurisdiction: 5