

# Final Assessment Report

## Women's and Gender Studies

### Undergraduate Programs

(reviewed 2017/18)

#### A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on December 5, 2017.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Ann Braithwaite (University of Prince Edward Island) and Annalee Lepp (University of Victoria) and an internal reviewer, Athena Colman (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 7-9, 2018.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 4, 2018.
5. The Centre's response was received on May 8, 2018.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on May 8, 2018.
7. The Dean of Social Sciences response from Ingrid Makus was received on May 29, 2018.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

The academic programs offered by the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies which were examined and rated as part of the review were:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA (Honours) Women's and Gender Studies			X	
BA with Major in Women's and Gender Studies		X		
BA (Pass) Women's and Gender Studies		X		
Minor in Women's and Gender Studies		X		
Certificate in Women's and Gender Studies				N/A: this is being phased out
Combined Honours and Pass in Women's and Gender Studies with Sociology		X		

## B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

Based on the material provided by the unit, the information gathered during the site visit, and our knowledge of Women's and Gender Studies as a discipline in Canada and the U.S., the external reviewers identify the following as the key strengths of the Women's and Gender Studies program at Brock University:

- Strong leadership in, commitment to, and demonstrated implementation of the project of indigenizing the university through its most recent appointment of a full-time tenure-track Indigenous scholar (one of two Indigenous scholars at Brock University), its ongoing focus on colonialism and Indigenous feminisms in the WGST curriculum and in faculty research, and the development of close connections to local Indigenous communities;
- WGST faculty members and students' leadership in and major contributions to addressing equity, human rights, and social justice issues at Brock University, including racial and sexualized violence through involvement in the President's Human Rights Task Force, the Campus Sexual Violence Prevention Committee, and other university-wide initiatives and events;
- WGST faculty members' powerful record of research and scholarship, which includes peer-reviewed publications (books, edited collections, journal articles, etc.), internal and external grants, journal editorial work, national and international research dissemination through conference presentations and keynote and invited lectures, and leadership in the Social Justice Research Institute and the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock;
- A vibrant collegial, collaborative, and committed Women's and Gender Studies Program Committee, with broad faculty representation from across the university as well as student, postdoc, and librarian representation, and a well-conceptualized governance structure;
- Steady growth in undergraduate student enrollments between 2008-2009 and 2015-2016 (from 767-1,123 students), strong student retention rates, and a recent increase in the number of majors (from 30-52) through recently instituted Director-led advising practices with great potential for further growth;
- Demonstrated commitment to offering a student-centred and supportive yet intellectually rigorous WGST academic program combined with excellent student experiential learning opportunities through, for example, a full-year practicum made possible via the development of close partnerships with over twenty local non-profit organizations, including Indigenous organizations; and

- Strong focus on current inter/disciplinary emphases in the field of Women's and Gender Studies, including historical and contemporary examinations of colonialism and Indigenous feminisms, cultural production and activism, gender and sexuality as they intersect with other markers of social difference (intersectionality), and transnational and diasporic issues.

## C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

### Recommendation #1

The review team recommends that the WGST program further maximize its curricular resources by identifying some efficiencies in its course offerings and curricular structure. In particular, we recommend some revisions to the architecture of the program as a way to increase student recruitment especially at the 200-level, enhance flexibility in core and elective courses, maximize the teaching capacity of (currently very limited) core faculty members, and enable formalizing the existing involvement in graduate education.

In its response, the Centre stated:

WGST agrees with Recommendation #1 regarding curriculum. WGST has already engaged preliminary conversations regarding the curricular structure of our academic unit and confirm that we wish to move away from the current bifurcated structure that separates social sciences and humanities courses. Given our limited compliment of faculty, (1.75), we agree we must consider how to make our course offerings flexible. We acknowledge that it is prudent to formalize WGST's robust involvement in graduate education as this will make this service and unscheduled teaching, under the auspices of our academic unit, more visible.

The Faculty Dean stated that:

The Dean's office agrees with the reviewers recommendation and the Unit's response that the WGST program reviews its curricular structure and course offerings to further maximize it curricular resources.

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

#### Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Centre
Responsible for resources:	Centre
Responsible for implementation:	Centre
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

## Recommendation #2

The review team agrees with the WGST Self-Study Report's argument that the program needs new faculty lines to ensure its continued viability as a standalone unit. We thus support the request for a new tenure track hire for the program, as soon as possible.

We also recommend that the program and the administration explore the option of another cross-appointment between WGST and another unit—depending on the direction in which the program decides to move.

In the short term, we suggest that WGST explore how to formalize connections with faculty from other institutional locations, in order to lend stability to the program and its curriculum.

In its response, the Unit stated:

WGST agrees with Recommendation #2 regarding Faculty Resources. WGST's faculty compliment and ratio of course offerings instructed by contract lecturers is far outside the normal standards across all faculties at Brock University and far exceeds the recommended ratio articulated in our current collective agreement. Although our current levels of scholarship and academic program delivery are in very good standing, and in excellent alignment with Brock Strategic Mandate Agreement, WGST could do so much more for the whole of the Brock community if an equitable accounting of faculty resources was engaged and resulted in new full time faculty appointments for WGST.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office notes that requests for faculty positions are subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

## ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to explore ways to formalize connections with faculty from other institutional locations to be accepted. ARC considers the recommendation for additional faculty positions to lie outside the Committee's jurisdiction and expects that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

### Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Centre
Responsible for resources:	Centre
Responsible for implementation:	Centre
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

### Recommendation #3

We are concerned about space for the WGST program—since space is always also about visibility. We thus recommend that the chair, whoever they are, always have space within the program, along with other faculty.

We also encourage the administration to work with the WGST program to ensure adequate office for WGST TAs—the people doing some of the integral work to curriculum delivery and successful student learning.

In its response, the Department stated:

WGST agrees with Recommendation #3 Physical Resources/Space. We will continue to advocate for adequate working conditions and space for all individuals integral to curriculum delivery.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office notes that securing space needs entails working through the newly-formed University wide space committee that has Faculty representation.

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for space resources.

### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

#### Recommendation #4

We recommend that the WGST program continue its work in promoting WGST and enhancing its visibility on campus, including updating its website and information cards, etc. when appropriate. It might also consider working with current students to establish a WGST student union to assist, in a more formal way, with some of the student recruitment and promotional work, in that students, like alumni, can often act as the most important ambassadors of an undergraduate WGST program.

In its response, the Department stated:

WGST agrees with Recommendation #4 Visibility. WGST understands the importance of visibility to the success of our academic unit. We have a record of persistently requesting and advocating for an academic advisor to be centrally connected to WGST. Such a change would help ensure the visibility of our academic unit and enhance recruitment while also ensuring that advising support for WGST was consistent with established practices in FOSS and across Brock University. Going forward we will continue to invest in various communication platforms and advocate for continued support for our student liaison position.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean's office notes that requests for additional departmental resources are subject to the budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

An additional newly-appointed social media person in the Dean's office can assist the WGST program in updating and maintaining its website and increasing its media visibility on and off-campus.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation that the Centre continue its work in promoting WGST and enhancing its visibility on campus to be accepted. It is expected that the Centre will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for staff resources.

#### Implementation Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Centre
Responsible for resources:	Centre
Responsible for implementation:	Centre
Timeline:	Dean of Social Sciences to report by the end of academic year 2019/20



## D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendation #1

Second Priority:

Recommendations #2,4

Not Accepted

Recommendation #3