

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR December 2020 SENATE**

FOR DISCUSSION

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY'S
WOMEN'S, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAMS (Major and Concentration)
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
DECEMBER 2020**

In accordance with the Laurentian University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian's response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; and who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations. The report also lists any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN
WOMEN'S, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES**

On December 21, 2018, the program submitted its self-study to the Interim Dean of Arts, of Laurentian University for external review.

The self-study presented an overview of both the Major and the Concentration programs in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and then reviewed the program's self-perception of the faculty, physical and financial resources, students, and program outcomes. It concluded with an overall assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. Appendices 1 – 13 provide the following information: IQAP Document 2018; Laurentian University's Strategic Plan; Academic Advising Forms; Thorneloe University's Strategic Plan; Survey Results; WGSX Course Enrolments by Institution, Instructor, Part time (PT), Full time (FT) and Mode of Delivery (Captured 2018-09-21); WGSX Courses; Faculty CV's; WGSX Degrees Granted 2013-2017; WGSX Program Enrolment Major and Concentration 2013-2017; Alumni, Laurentian University, examples of graduates who hold a BA Major, Minor, or Concentration in Women's and Gender Studies, 2003-2018; On-campus syllabuses; and online syllabuses.

On September 19 and 20, 2019, after reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The external reviewer was Dr. Lori Chambers, Research Chair in Gender, Law and Equity at the University of Toronto. In addition, the team consisted of two Laurentian professors, Dr. Aven McMaster from the department of Ancient Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Dr. Susan James of the Midwifery Program in the Faculty of Health. Finally, the team included two students in the program, Casey Sigurdson and Megan Lalonde.

During the visit, the external reviewers met with the Vice-President Academic and Provost, as well as with the President & Vice-Chancellor of Thorneloe University; the Associate Vice-President, Learning and Teaching and the Dean, Faculty of Arts. The entire review team met with the Chair and the University Librarian and with a group of students and graduates of the program. In addition, the team met with three community stakeholders: Marlene Gorman, Executive Director of YWCA Geneva House; Shelly Moore-Frappier, Director of the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre; and Tracy Gregory, SWANS Executive Director. In addition, the review team met with the Faculty members of the department and toured the facilities of the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program.

On October 4, 2019, the external reviewer submitted her report. In it, she commented, “The program is not only consistent with, but also integral to, the institution’s mission and academic plans.” and “I have completed many reviews, and have rarely heard such uniformly positive commentary from students.”

In addition, she noted that:

- The existing program is remarkably strong and vibrant DESPITE the failure of the university to invest in full-time faculty..
- The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and in alignment with the institution’s statement of undergraduate and/or graduate Degree Level Expectations. The Department invests significant effort and energy in renewing courses on a regular basis and developing new courses to meet the interests and needs of diverse students.
- As noted above, the courses are well designed, scaffolded, and the modes of delivery are appropriate and effective to meet with program’s identified learning outcomes.
- The quality indicators for this program are all excellent. Students who start in the program stay in it. Students complete their degrees in a timely manner and find work in their chosen fields shortly after graduation. The students with whom I spoke raved about the quality of their education, their access to professors, the variety and depth of the courses taught, and the personal commitment of the permanent faculty member.
- The methods used to assess student achievement are appropriate and effective. They are also creative and varied.
- Despite being desperately over-worked, the faculty members strive continuously to improve the quality of the program, to meet changing student needs, and to maximize the learning of their students.

On November 11, 2019, the Office of the Provost received the joint reaction of the Unit and Dr. Joel Dickinson, Dean of Arts. It forms the basis of what follows:

**SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS (R), THE DEPARTMENT’S (C)
RESPONSES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (D)**

R1: The university must immediately renew the 3-year contract, or create a similar new position, to ensure that there are two full-time faculty members to run the program in 2020-2021.

C1: We are pleased to note that after the Report was delivered to us in October 2019 we were able to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding between our Employer and the Laurentian University Faculty Association. This agreement extends Dr. Elia Eliev's limited term appointment for one further year to the end of 2021. We are very grateful to both Dr. John Gibaut and Dr. Fabrice Colin (LUFA) for this turn of events, as it will allow stability for at least one more academic year.

D1: This is good news for the Department and Faculty of Arts.

R2: This position (above) should, as soon as possible, be converted into a full-time, tenure-track, appointment.

C1: We have had no assurances that beyond 2021 there will be two full time permanent faculty in Women's and Gender Studies, as there have been in the past.

D2: I leave this for the President to comment on.

P5: I am not sure that I agree with the expression that WGSX has been "fiscally abandoned". The departure of the second full-time tenured faculty member was that person's option. The replacement of that faculty member by an LTA signals a commitment to two full-time faculty members. While Thorneloe's fiscal future is both constrained and unclear, there is a commitment to two full-time faculty members in WGSX, and to its cadre of sessional lecturers. However, the problem is not just the barriers of financial constraint. I regret that the reviewer has taken as a given the low number of students who are majoring (FTE) in WGSX. At the time of the review, levels of university funding in the Province of Ontario were, and remain, heavily based on numbers of students enrolled in programs as majors, concentrations and specialization. SMA3 will take some years to reduce funding based on program enrollment. Of all of Thorneloe University's departments, it seems to me that the one most strategically able to raise its numbers of majors is WGSX. This represents a change in the culture of Thorneloe University.

R3: The long-term objective must be to hire a third full-time faculty member within 3-5 years to support the exceptionally strong work of this Department. This was recommended over 10 years ago and is necessary for the growth potential of the program to be realized. (I note here that some discussion should take place about how joint appointments between Thorneloe and Laurentian might be operationalized, since ultimately it might better serve student needs, and the diverse needs of multiple departments, to hire 2 joint appointees in WGSX and 2 other disciplines rather than one stand-alone appointment in WGSX. My

understanding of the current situation is that this would be difficult, but bureaucratic red tape should not preclude best practices or work against the interests of students).

C3: The Report suggests that joint appointments between Thorneloe and Laurentian University could be a way to meet these goals, based on the extensive interests of students in other programs in the subjects of gender, sexuality, race, and equity, and in the specific areas of expertise of current faculty. The Report asks that all parties consider how two joint appointments to other Laurentian programs with WGSX could help realize a third full time appointment to Women's and Gender Studies. We are open to this type of suggestion and would like to hear further whether the administration thinks this will be possible.

D3: I support this recommendation in theory but fully understand the current barriers that are in place. Dr. Gibaut and I are in discussions to try to recommend a solution to the University at large.

R4: Thorneloe should immediately provide training for all contract faculty (and any others who wish) on D2L to maximize efficiency in the absence of a technical support person (and to reduce the load on the Chair in responding to technical difficulties from contract workers);

C4: Academic services in the form of technical support for our online programs continue to be our most urgent need. Technical support for between 5-7 courses per semester was lost in July 2019 and have yet to be replaced. Initial meetings have since been held with the current Director of Laurentian Online (through which the BA Concentration and BA Major in Women's and Gender Studies are supported and advertised on behalf of Laurentian University). Unfortunately, they are unable to provide us with service due to the limitations of their own budget and current mandate.

D1: I support this recommendation and commend the actions that have been taken in the interim.

P2: With the valued assistance of the chair of WGSX, Thorneloe has engaged on contract both an instructional designer and a manager of Thorneloe's distance education offerings.

R5: The program and faculty should encourage the creation of a student association in order to further publicize the existence and accomplishments of the program;

C5: Conversations are underway to bring together likely core members of a renewed and active WGS student association with a new launching at the annual undergraduate student symposium in March 2019.

D2: I am currently working on ways of bringing the student associations together to provide better supports from my office. Please ask the head of the student association to contact me so that I may connect them with our student who is working toward this goal.

R6: The university should provide technical support to encourage the efforts to create an online Majors program. The online Major, or four-year degree, would represent a unique program offering not only in the north of the province, but in Canada more widely (apart from Athabasca), and has the potential to attract significant new student numbers;

C6: The Major in Women's and Gender Studies Online at Laurentian is now in place. The Laurentian University web page for Laurentian Online now reflects this change. Students can register for the Major in the usual way, alongside any of the other existing program options. The Major has been listed with the Ontario Universities Application Centre. The Major has also been listed at E-Course Ontario, the other major online platform through which students find our courses.

D3: I commend the work of the departments involved to make this possible.

R7: Further discussions should take place between WGSX and other departments on the Laurentian campus with regard to possible cross-listings, collaborations, and, ultimately, cross-appointments; and

C7: Since the Report, Dr. Dickinson, Dean of Arts, has led important discussions at the Faculty of Arts Council, and will do so again in collaboration with the Presidents of Thorneloe University and the University of Sudbury again at an upcoming Town Hall on the future of Arts Programs at Laurentian University. Faculty are ready to consider all options to enhance our students' experiences at Laurentian in the field of Women's and Gender Studies. Colleagues in other departments/programs outside of Thorneloe have approached us regarding the possibility of cross-appointments and the double-coding or cross-listing of courses which would ensure even wider access to our courses. We believe these approaches are genuine, and represent a shared interest in our areas of research and teaching strengths.

D7: I'm excited about exploring the possibilities.

P3: I agree. Cross appointments would be to the mutual flourishing of both Thorneloe's WGSX as well as other departments within the Faculty of Arts.

R8: While it would be desirable to create a degree in French, Thorneloe is an English University, and funds are currently very limited. Although a French degree cannot be created immediately, it is important to have on-going conversations about how to expand options in French. This conversation must always include Midwifery, as the Francophone stream of that

program receives targeted funding for these services. Some online options might be useful to attract a broader base of students, but any such change/expansion must be mindful of this connection with Midwifery and funding from CNFS.

C8: Funding from the Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS) has been obtained to ensure the continuity of first year offerings to French-language learners from Sage-femmes. We understand that this funding will be in place for a period of five academic years, to help offset the cost associated with offering WGSX 1005 FL. Because this course would also benefit French-language learners in other health-related disciplines on campus, we would like to promote it with the School of Nursing (French) and health promotion (French). In terms of a longer-term commitment to francophone learners, we remain open to the possibility of collaborating on any and all French-language programs, provided that teaching resources can be a shared responsibility.

D8: I support this recommendation and the approach the department is taking.

ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN endorses the recommendations of the Review Team but notes the Unit and the Dean will not follow up the following recommendations as they are either redundant or outside of their current scope of focus:

R1: The university must immediately renew the 3-year contract, or create a similar new position, to ensure that there are two full-time faculty members to run the program in 2020-2021.

C1: We are pleased to note that after the Report was delivered to us in October 2019 we were able to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding between our Employer and the Laurentian University Faculty Association. This agreement extends Dr. Elia Eliev's limited term appointment for one further year to the end of 2021.

R4: Thorneloe should immediately provide training for all contract faculty (and any others who wish) on D2L to maximize efficiency in the absence of a technical support person (and to reduce the load on the Chair in responding to technical difficulties from contract workers);

C4: Academic services in the form of technical support for our online programs continue to be our most urgent need. Technical support for between 5-7 courses per semester was lost in July 2019 and have yet to be replaced. Initial meetings have since been held with the current Director of Faculty Engagement (through which the BA Concentration and BA Major in Women's and Gender Studies are supported and advertised on behalf of Laurentian University). Unfortunately, they are unable to provide us with service due to the limitations of their own budget and current mandate.

Since the writing of the report the following activities have been undertaken to ease the training needs: an online course design specialist helps with updating the online courses; part

time and full time faculty have been directed to approach IT Services with all requests about basic maintenance of the D2L web platform. Faculty have been made aware that they can access regular professional development workshops offered by Laurentian IT, and that they can access other pedagogical support through the regular activities and workshops offered by the Teaching and Innovation team in the Centre for Academic Excellence.

R6: The university should provide technical support to encourage the efforts to create an online Majors program. The online Major, or four-year degree, would represent a unique program offering not only in the north of the province, but in Canada more widely (apart from Athabasca), and has the potential to attract significant new student numbers;

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R8: While it would be desirable to create a degree in French, Thorneloe is an English University, and funds are currently very limited. Although a French degree cannot be created immediately, it is important to have on-going conversations about how to expand options in French. This conversation must always include Midwifery, as the Francophone stream of that program receives targeted funding for these services. Some online options might be useful to attract a broader base of students, but any such change/expansion must be mindful of this connection with Midwifery and funding from CNFS.

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM
In WOMEN’S, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES (Major and Concentration)**

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline
R2: The 3-year contract position should, as soon as possible, be converted into a full-time, tenure-track, appointment; and	Convert contract position into a full-time, tenure-track appointment	President of Thorneloe University	January 2021
R3: The long-term objective must be to hire a third full-time faculty member	Hire a 3rd full-time faculty members within 3-5 years	President of Thorneloe University and Dean of Arts	July 2021

within 3-5 years to support the exceptionally strong work of this Department.			
R5: The program and faculty should encourage the creation of a student association in order to further publicize the existence and accomplishments of the program;	The student association should be revitalized and plans for a symposium are underway	Chair of Department and Dean of Arts	January 2021
R7: Further discussions should take place between WGSX and other departments on the Laurentian campus with regard to possible cross-listing of courses, collaborations, and faculty cross-appointments.	Hold consultations about possible collaboration and cross-appointments and follow up with necessary course revisions via CELP, etc.	Chair of Department and Dean of Arts	January 2021

The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean’s Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University’s web site.

CONCLUSION

The Program in **WOMEN’S, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES (Major and Concentration)** is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2026.