

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

FOR DISCUSSION

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAM in WORKPLACE AND LABOUR STUDIES**

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, November 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; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; 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 WORKPLACE AND LABOUR STUDIES AT
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY**

Background

Workplace and Labour Studies is an interdisciplinary program, with its program offerings spanning nine programs and departments across the university. Initially founded in 2000 as a program based in the Department of Sociology, since 2013 it has gained greater program autonomy within the School of Northern and Community Studies, and has seen substantial increases in full-time and course enrolment over the past six years.

Currently the program offers several degree options:

- Bachelor of Arts (4 year) Specialization in Labour Studies (120 Credits)
- Bachelor of Arts (3 year) Concentration in Labour Studies (90 Credits)
- Major in Labour Studies (42 Credits)
- Minor in Labour Studies (24 Credits)
- Minor in Labour Studies – Human Resources (24 Credits)
- Minor in Occupational Health and Safety – Health and Policy Stream (24 Credits)
- Minor in Community Leadership (24 Credits)

- Certificate in Labour Studies (30 Credits)
- Certificate in Community Leadership (30 Credits)

The Review

On January 15, 2019, the program submitted its self-study to the Dean of Arts, the Office of the Vice-President, and Provost of Laurentian University.

As with all IQAP program self-studies, the program reviewed: its degree offerings, faculty complement, physical resources, program enrollments and graduates, current course offerings and student evaluations, as well as considerations for long-term planning.

On October 23-24, 2019, a review team conducted an in-person assessment. The external Reviewer was Dr. Richard P. Chaykowski, Queen's University. In addition, the team also included Mr. Ashley Thompson, (Librarian, Laurentian University), and Dr. Patrick Julig (Department of Anthropology). Student representatives included Ms. Lindsey Giroux and Mr. Ken Ransom.

Others involved in the on-site review were:

- Dr. Shelley Watson, Interim Vice-President, Academic and Provost
- Dr. Joel Dickinson, Dean of Arts
- Dr. Stephen Meyer, Director, School of Northern and Community Studies
- Mr. Charles Daviau, Coordinator, Workplace and Labour Studies

In their report, the reviewers were positive about the Workplace and Labour Studies Program (WLSP).

The external reviewer's final report noted that "Stakeholders were all supportive of the WLSP, recognized its academic and societal contributions and achievements, and demonstrated commitment to its further development and success." The key Findings of his review are listed below.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2019 IQAP REVIEW

General

- "The WLSP mission statement and academic program is clearly aligned with the mission and academic plans of Laurentian University." This is through its:
 - Innovative Solutions

- Leadership Development
 - Experiential Learning
 - Interdisciplinary Knowledge
- “The stakeholders emphasized that the WLSP contributed to society by preparing students for future employment and ... the value of the program in supporting progressive social values in Canadian society.”
 - “... interaction with external stakeholders provides the WLSP with an opportunity to maintain and further develop their social and community service.”
 - “The degree programs offered by the WLSP have an appropriate emphasis on the academic qualifications of applicants.”
 - “As a multidisciplinary field of study, labour studies may appeal to students with a broad range of disciplinary interests ...”
 - “... Labour Studies also lends itself to appealing to students who would wish to obtain a Minor in Labour Studies as a complement to their Major ...”

Course Offerings, Pedagogy, and Enrollments

- “The WLSP is somewhat unique insofar as it has established a Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition program. This program facilitates the entry of mature students, who do not have the normal required academic background to enroll in the program ...”
- “This program appears to be successful in increasing ... the entry of qualified mature students into the WLSP academic programs; thus furthering the mission to enhance the well-being of populations of the North.”
- “Perhaps the most significant innovative feature of the WLSP, relative to other programs, is the work-integrated learning component of the program.”
- “Overall enrolments in the WLSP have grown incrementally over the past several years.”

Faculty

- “The qualifications of the WLSP core faculty are good, and well-matched to the labour studies field; and tenure-stream faculty hold good research and scholarly records ... Similarly, the qualifications of cross-appointed and other instructors ... are also good; and appropriate to the labour studies field.”

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2019 IQAP REVIEW

The report also noted several areas where the Workplace and Labour Studies program may look to improve.

These issues include the need to:

- Improve the clarity of curriculum and learning outcomes
- Streamline degree, certificate, and course offerings
- Identify key program pillars
- Build upon its current experiential learning offerings by including full-term co-op work placements
- Add an additional full-time appointment as the program is currently to precariously staffed
- Ensure all classrooms have up-to-date technologies (e.g., related to computers and online access; audio-visual equipment).
- Collect more robust metrics regarding student progress

In conclusion, the reviewer wrote:

“The WSLP has a positive development trajectory, including enrolment growth in a number of key courses; and in terms of the development of several areas of concentration (including labour studies, human resources, and health and safety), each of which is supported by a strong suite of courses.”

“The challenge, and the goal, for the WLSP will be to convert interest in courses related to workplace and labour studies into students declaring a labour studies degree as either their major or their minor degree concentration ... but if the WSLP can successfully undertake a review of its course offerings, update course-level and degree-level learning expectations, outcomes and objectives, (with a view to streamlining course and credential offerings), establish an additional co-op work placement, and define the key WSLP academic pillars (e.g., labour studies, human resources; health and safety), then the WSLP would be well-positioned to increase enrollments. Achieving this will require additional tenure-stream faculty resources.”

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS (R), THE PROGRAM'S RESPONSES (P) AND THE DEAN OF ARTS (D)

R1. The WLSP should undertake an Internal Program review of course and program learning objectives with a view to ensuring that each course offered by the WLSP has clearly defined learning objectives and expected learning and skills outcomes.

P1. We agree. The WLSP has developed as best as possible given faculty complements and resources available for sessional faculty. We have revised, updated, and expanded our curriculum in the past few years. Our next step is to ensure that all courses provide clear objectives, learning and skill outcomes, and that these build in a sequential manner throughout the degree.

Over the next academic year, our program will undertake a curriculum review and assess all courses, and seek to ensure that all have clearly defined learning objectives and expected outcomes. We have already started internal discussions on how to build key skills from one year to the next.

D1. I agree that this would be a valuable exercise. I recommend that the Dept invite the Program Outcome specialist from the CAE to aid in this exercise.

R2. The WLSP should assess whether it would be beneficial to reduce the number of degree/certificate offerings.

P2. We agree. The WLSP program has grown in response to various requests by Laurentian administration and other associated programs to expand course and degree offerings. WLSP has also changed in response to fluctuating faculty resources.

Over the next academic year, we will reassess our degree offerings and seek to streamline degrees and certificates in order to provide students with a clear roadmap for their studies in WLSP. We anticipate putting forward a request to CELP in order to change these in the fall of 2021.

D2. Agreed

R3. The WLSP is strongly encouraged to review the existing placement program, strengthen it as needed, and expand the program to include a broader range of private and public sector enterprises, as well as by establishing an additional student co-op work placement program.

- P3.** We agree. WLSP has long supported experiential learning, and our Field Research placements are integral to our program.

WLSP faces two key challenges in expanding its experiential learning opportunities. First, we have limited faculty and administrative resources. Second, the labour/not-for-profit/and employer organizations that we work with also have limited financial and administrative resources.

We believe a co-op program would be a strong supplement to our current placement program. The problem is how to build and maintain this over time.

Over the next year, we will experiment with a pilot co-op experiential course. We will also approach our current partner employer organizations to gauge their interest, resources, and schedules in establishing co-op placement programs. If there is interest, we will seek to adopt a co-op program for students by 2022.

- D3.** While in theory this would be advantageous. I agree with the Dept that there are both barriers and potential non-intended negative consequences to this approach. I agree with the approach the Department is suggesting.

- R4. The core faculty complement should be further enhanced by at least one FTE in the form of a tenure-track position, preferably, and the Assistant level. This increase is needed if the WSLP is to attain its goals, objectives, and aspirations.**

- P4.** We agree. The addition of another FTE to WLSP is essential for the development of the program.

The program currently lacks capacity to support the three core, inter-related, academic activities of teaching/research/program administration. There are additional difficulties for when the program must cover for members on sabbatical, those seconded to other administrative duties, or on sick leave.

As has been the case in each of the past five or so years, the Labour Studies program collectively agreed to do our part in order to assist with the budgetary shortfalls. Unfortunately, the program had to cut several courses which are necessary for students wishing to complete the program requirements. In 2016-17, this action exacted an additional 3 credit cut from the LBST course offerings, for a total of 9 credits worth of cuts. Further cuts to our sessional overloads will jeopardize the survival of the program.

- D4:** I encourage the dept to submit a well thought out and positioned FTE request. The request should indicate potential enrollment growth and how the role would fit into the Faculty of Arts as a whole. However, the dept is well aware of the budget constraints we are currently experiencing.

R5. The WSLP should undertake a review of the marketing of the degree offerings, with a view to increasing awareness of the focus, content and value of the program degrees.

P5. We agree. Over the past few years, we have sought to raise the profile of the program both within and outside the university.

However, a major challenge for WSLP is that as an interdisciplinary program, the program is often overlooked by the wider university community, and has little profile within Laurentian advancement.

The program also lacks basic financial resources to improve the marketing of its degree offerings. A simple measure – such as the addition of audiovisual resources in the Arts hallway – is not currently viewed as economically feasible.

Without further resources, the program will not be able to improve its marketing.

D5. I am happy to help the Dept with marketing strategy that could be done through my office with the help of our Social Media accounts as well as providing Liaison with more information regarding recruitment strategy.

R6. Further consideration of the relevant qualitative and quantitative skill sets required; including the development of a statistics course geared to applications related to workplace and labour issues.

P6. We agree. However, the faculty resources are not currently available for such a specialized course.

Currently, for Concentration and Specialization students, our program has a mandatory STAT 2126E Introduction to Statistics and SOCI 2127E Research Methods and Data Analysis.

D6. The dept could also evaluate other methods / analysis courses offered by other depts within the faculty and outside to see if their needs could be met elsewhere.

R7. Reviewing the cycling of courses to allow students to better plan out the three-year study path to degree completion; including reviewing course sequencing requirements.

P7. We agree. However, given recent reductions in sessional overloads – and annual uncertainty about available overloads, as well as the availability of teaching faculty for these specialized courses – longer term planning is difficult.

D7. I am hopeful that over the next year or 2 we can stabilize resources to make long term planning easier and more predictable.

R8. It would be useful for the WLSP administration to inventory the reading lists available in the library, at the beginning of each term, and forward this to the library each semester, in the form of an E-collection of syllabi or reading lists.

P8. We agree. WLSP already regularly consults with Desmond Maley at the university's library to ensure material is updated. Again, the problem is current budgetary constraints and the lack of financial resources to keep the collection up to date.

D8. Agreed.

R9. The university and/or WLSP should identify key variables and metrics of student progress and graduate labour market outcomes; and the University central administrative should support the tracking and reporting of such outcomes for purposes of program planning and development.

P9. We agree. The WLSP already collects data on recent graduates.

However, we lack the resources to track other metrics, and the University's Tableau system does not track those students taking courses as 24-credit minors or the 30-credit certificate.

Our understanding is that under the new Strategic Management Agreement, the university will provide greater tracking and reporting for programs. WLSP welcomes such developments and looks forward to using the data for longer-term program planning.

D9. Agreed

Concluding Remarks (Program)

The WLSP faculty believes in continuous improvement and we are prepared to evaluate and consider the recommendations listed above that are within are control.

This will include a review of WLSP courses and degree offerings. We will also review course learning objectives and learning outcomes to ensure that they exist in all courses. and that they are aligned with program learning goals as suggested. We will discuss with the School Director, Dean, and University Administration as appropriate those recommendations that are above the program level.

Our intent is to complete our review of the program recommendations by June 2021. But other recommendations – such as developing a coop work placement or securing a tenure-track FTE – will require more time. Approved WLSP changes will be implemented as quickly as possible.

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM IN
WORKPLACE AND LABOUR STUDIES**

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Follow-up	Timeline
1. Internal Program review of course and program learning objectives	The WLSP faculty will undertake a review of course and learning objectives starting in the fall of 2020.	WLS Program faculty	Review 2020-21. Revisions completed May 2021
2. Streamlining of degree/certificate offerings	The WLSP faculty will undertake a review of degree and certificate offerings.	WLSP program	Revisions to ACAPLAN Fall 2021
3. The establishment of a student co-op work placement program	WLSP faculty will contact current employers to gauge interest in co-op placements. Interested employers will be offered the opportunity to employ co-op students in spring 2021.	WLSP and Co-op coordinator	Pilot program course offering for 2021. Re-evaluation in 2022 for further implementation of coop placements
4. Hire one tenure-track FTE	The WLSP will propose to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts the hiring of one new tenure-track FTE.	WLSP and Dean of Faculty of Arts	Request Fall 2021
5. Improve the marketing of the WLSP	The WLSP can assess with the Faculty of Arts and the School of Northern and Community Studies how to improve its marketing. Limited funds for the program and the school limit such marketing.	The WLS Program can discuss with Academic Advising, Liaison Services, and the Dean of Arts, options to improve the marketing of the program and all Arts programs.	Discussions Fall 2021/Winter 2022

6. Review the current cycling of course offerings	The WLSP faculty will undertake a review of the current cycling of courses given limited faculty and sessional resources.	WLS Program	Already undertaken on annual basis by the WLS Program
7. Offer a special statistics course for WLSP	The WLSP at this time cannot justify the establishment of a separate statistics course.	WLS Program	Not applicable at this time.
8. Inventory current course reading lists and forward to library	The WLSP faculty can initiate an inventory and forward these to the library.	WLS Program	Fall 2021
9. Identify key variables and metrics of student progress	The WLSP faculty already collect data on graduating students. WLSP – like all arts programs – require coordinated meetings with Institutional Planning and the Faculty of Arts to ensure standardized variables and metrics.	The WLS Program, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Institutional Planning and Research	TBD

CONCLUSION

The program in Workplace and Labour Studies is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2027.