



Women's Studies and Feminist Research Draft Final Assessment Report

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Arts and Humanities
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Women's Studies Honors Specialization, Women's Studies Specialization, Women's Studies Major, Sexuality Studies Major,
External Consultants	Dr Ann Braithwaite, Professor, Diversity and Social Justice Studies, University of Prince Edward Island Dr Annalee Lepp, Associate Professor, Gender Studies, University of Victoria
Internal Reviewers	Dr Erika Chamberlain, Faculty of Law (no student reviewer)
Date of Site Visit	13 March 2017
Evaluation	Good quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: September 6, 2017 SCAPA: September 13, 2017 Senate: September 22, 2017

Executive Summary

The review of the undergraduate programs in Women's Studies and Feminist Research (WSFR) concluded that the modules are pedagogically strong and highly relevant to the intellectual and personal goals of their students. In an era when many Arts and Humanities programs are struggling to maintain enrolment, WSFR has experienced substantial enrolment growth. The curricula are thoughtfully planned and are delivered by talented, dynamic, and committed faculty.

However, due in part to its historical evolution and in part to the research and administrative commitments of its full-time faculty, WSFR relies disproportionately on Limited Duties faculty members to teach its undergraduate courses. This has placed it in a vulnerable position with respect to the Faculty-wide cuts to such instructors. If the programs are to continue to thrive, WSFR will need to either hire more full-time faculty or, more likely, work creatively to find ways to more effectively use existing faculty resources.

Significant Strengths of the Program

WSFR provides, by all accounts, a critical and highly engaging set of undergraduate modules. Led by the Undergraduate Chair, the Department has undertaken a thorough review and mapping of the curriculum; learning outcomes are well-articulated and assessed through a wide range of traditional and non-traditional methods. The full-time faculty are active researchers whose expertise spans an array of disciplines, and several of them have won major teaching awards.

Specific strengths noted by the reviewers include:

- rigorous academic courses, which critically engage with current scholarship in the field;
- particular depth of faculty expertise in feminist theory and sexuality studies;
- strong sense of student identification with the Department; and
- opportunities for experiential and community-engaged learning.

Suggestions for Improvement & Enhancement

The self-study and some members of the Department expressed anxiety about the lack of “coverage” of the full range of topics that might be taught in a WSFR Department. The external reviewers found this anxiety to be misplaced. They suggested that the Department should instead emphasize the fields that it covers well, and thus differentiate itself from other similar programs in Canada. The Department’s curriculum mapping efforts provide a solid foundation for identifying and building on program strengths.

The reviewers also noted the limitations of the Department’s physical space, which is near to or exceeding capacity. This issue will become more urgent as the student body grows.

As indicated above, the primary challenges facing the Department of WSFR relate to faculty complement. In this vein, the external reviewers suggested that the Department consider the following:

- appoint another full-time faculty member, perhaps in a Social Science discipline or a joint appointee with Indigenous Studies;
- review the perceived necessity for maintaining full-year courses, and consider splitting some into half courses (to increase student choice and improve faculty flexibility);
- explore ways to more fully utilize affiliate faculty members; and
- consider cross-listing courses with other academic disciplines at Western.

The Department recognized its difficulties in terms of faculty resources; at the same time, it noted its past challenges with cross-listed courses and use of affiliate instructors. In particular, the latter requires cooperation from the home units of those instructors, which may have their own reasons for closely guarding faculty teaching commitments.

The Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities endorsed the Department’s thoughtful and ongoing response to the above suggestions.

Recommendations Required for Program Sustainability

Recommendation	Responsibility		
Explore the possibilities of appointing another full-time faculty member and/or explore ways to more effectively utilize existing faculty resources	Department, Faculty		