



Major in Black Studies
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan
June 2024

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Arts and Humanities and Faculty of Social Science	
Degrees Offered	B.A.	
Date of Introduction	September 1, 2025	
New Module	Major in Black Studies	
External Reviewers	Dr. Carl James, Faculty of Education York University	Dr. Philip Howard, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Remus Tutunea-Fatan, Associate Dean (Academic) Faculty of Engineering	Alexandra Agyapong Undergraduate Student Management and Organizational Studies
Date of Site Visit	March 7 & 8, 2024	
Date Review Report Received	April 30, 2024	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: June 14, 2024 Faculty: June 13, 2024	
Evaluation	Approved to Commence	
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: September 18, 2024 ACA: October 1, 2024 Senate:	
Year of Next Review	2032-2033	
Progress Report	June 2028	

Overview of Western's Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the new program proposal, report prepared by external reviewers, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Major in Black Studies to be delivered by the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program's proposal brief;
- the external reviewers' report;
- the response from the academic unit; and
- the response from the Dean, Faculty of Arts

This FAR identifies the strengths of the proposed program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review - Undergraduate (SUPR-U), ACA and Senate. Following institutional approval, it is then submitted for approval to the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance.

Executive Summary

The Major in Black Studies is an interdisciplinary module within the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) with a focus on sociocultural aspects of Black lives and history as well as on Black culture(s) and creativity. It builds on the existing Minor in Black Studies, which came into effect September 1, 2023, and draws from courses across a variety of disciplines to provide students with a degree program that is both broad and flexible. The module, like the Minor in Black Studies, has been designed to allow students to acquire a wide- ranging background in and understanding of Black Studies, particularly in the Canadian context. As a result, courses for the module range over disciplines as widespread as Visual Arts, Political Science, Gender Studies, and History. Topics in the program offering include questions about the nature of race as a concept, the ways in which structural racism affects people's ability to live and thrive, the historical encounters between Black peoples and other races, the very long history of Africa and the more recent histories of the diaspora, the fraught issues of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the structural social factors that Black people often have to resist and/or overcome, but also the historical and current creative practices that have evolved in and from Black cultures, Black achievements in all fields, and the long Black intellectual tradition. Black Joy (which is a special topics course offered by the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies in winter 2024) is every bit as important as other aspects of Black life. The proposed Major in Black Studies aims to graduate 15 students by the end of the first four years of the program.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Black Studies Program Proposal. They offer three overarching recommendations (each with three sub-recommendations) for consideration as the program evolves.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- An avenue for discourse that would challenge stereotypical narratives, experience of Blackness and intersections of Blackness, and gender and sexuality. Mindful alignment with Western's strategic mission to create "a more equitable and inclusive Western".
- Positions Western at the cutting edge of social justice issues in Canada, and to take a leadership role in promoting Black Studies.
- Interdisciplinary and flexible program that allows students to pursue specific interests within Black Studies. Also allows students studying in other programs the ability to incorporate this modular offering into their degree.
- Experiential and community-engaged learning opportunities such as a collaboration with the Western Black Leadership University Experience program (BLUE) and engagement with the Black Londoners project.
- Exploration in cultural, social and political advocacy, including new forms of leadership and entrepreneurship, with the aim to build a more inclusive future;

connecting Black Studies materials to large social issues, such as climate change, migration, and sustainability.

- Potential to stimulate research and scholarship at every level and in all the interdisciplinary aspects of Black Studies.

Proposal Preparation and Review Process

Following preliminary research on Black Studies programs in Canada and the United States, an organizing committee was put together. The Black Studies Organizing Committee (BSOC), which included representation from Dean's Offices, faculty members and students, subsequently carried out consultations with Deans, Chairs, Undergraduate Chairs, graduate/undergraduate students and representative student groups, and the larger London community. A curriculum sub-committee met with Undergraduate Chairs, collected course outlines, created program level learning objectives, and began the process of curriculum mapping. More specifically, those consulted included:

- Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities Department Chairs
- Faculty of Social Science Department Chairs
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Faculty of Social Science Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
- Associate Dean Academic, King's University College
- Academic Dean, Huron University College
- Associate Academic Dean, Brescia University College
- Associate Dean, Undergraduate, Faculty of Information & Media Studies
- Consultations with the University and the London Communities:
 - African Students Association (ASA)
 - Black Future Lawyers (BFL)
 - Society of Graduate Studies (SOGS)
 - University Students' Council (USC)
 - Members of the London Community

Following approval to proceed with an external review, a review committee was struck comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and one student reviewer. Reviewers were provided with program proposal brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Associate Vice-President of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)

- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Undergraduate Chair
- Black Studies Organizing Committee
- Associate Chief Librarian
- Program Faculty
- Administrative Staff

Following the site visit, the external reviews produced a comprehensive review report with recommendations which was sent to the academic unit and the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities for review and response. These formative documents, including the new major proposal document, the external reviewer report, and the Program and Faculty responses, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of the proposed Major in Black Studies.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

The external reviewers shared that find *“the proposed Black Studies program to be solid and well-conceived, with a strong emphasis on community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and experiential learning. The program is poised to meet the needs and interests of the university, the local community, and the student body, equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge for academic and professional success.”*

Strengths and/or Unique Aspects of the Program

- Faculty associated with the Major in Black Studies are highly qualified, with a track record of scholarly achievements, awards, and research grants.
- Curriculum incorporates 1) interdisciplinary approaches; 2) experiential and community-engaged learning; 3) black scholars and students' ideas; 4) varied assessment methods; 5) flexible and adaptable; which foster a learning culture that is both mindful of values and responsive to new challenges and opportunities.
 - Interdisciplinarity allows students to explore the complexities and intersections of race, gender, class, and other social categories, providing a comprehensive understanding of the Black experience.
 - Emphasis on community engagement and experiential learning aligns with the current trends in the field and helps students gain an appreciation of research and resulting data to be used as evidence for community action or to inform needed changes in community.

- Effective prerequisites prepare students to succeed in this interdisciplinary area of study that requires critical analysis and promotes accessibility; structure and regulations effectively support student progression.
- Flexible admission requirements accommodate students from different academic backgrounds.

Opportunities for Program Improvement Mentioned by Reviewers

- Consider curriculum concerns, including: 1) of the 55 courses in the Major, only 15 courses have 85-100% Black Studies content; 2) potential issues regarding flexibility and options for students to pursue specific focuses within the program in their 3rd and 4th year; 3) ensure the Major remains anchored in Black Studies. *(Associated with Recommendation #1)*
- Greater focus on the Canadian context would help to strengthen the program and in doing so, the history, lives, and experiences of African/Indigenous Canadian should be incorporated into, and appropriately positioned within, the curriculum. *(Associated with Recommendation #1)*
- Ensure that all instructors have a comprehensive understanding of Black studies, its disciplinary foundations, and Black identity. *(Associated with Recommendation #1)*
- Further emphasize strategies for recruiting and supporting a diverse student body and faculty. Initiatives such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and targeted recruitment efforts could enhance the program's measured impact. *(Associated with Recommendation #2)*
- Develop a comprehensive plan for public engagement and visibility. *(Associated with Recommendation #2)*
- Establish formal collaborations with local organizations, cultural agencies, and educational institutions. *(Associated with Recommendation #2)*
- Monitor resource allocation. For instance: 1) maintain balanced workloads for existing faculty members and administrative staff; 2) increase workspaces as required by a growing program as this could hinder program growth and sustainability. *(Associated with Recommendation #3)*
- Implement mechanism to monitor and assess the long-term impact of the program on students' careers and contributions to the field of Black Studies. *(Associated with Recommendation #3)*
- Careful assessment of the program's viability based on evolving student demand.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers' Recommendations	Program/Faculty Response
<p>Recommendation #1 Strengthen Program Structure and Academic Rigour</p> <p>Theme a. Content and Curriculum Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increase the minimum threshold for Black studies content in courses. ii. Integrate a more robust focus on the Canadian context and global perspectives within Black studies. iii. Expand the disciplines that might be included in the program. 	<p>Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Program will work with other departments to produce more courses wholly dedicated to Black Studies, while retaining commitment to produce GSWS courses for the Major and Minor modules (note that the Minor was approved in 2022). The Program will also make efforts to increase Black Studies content in courses that are not wholly dedicated. ii. The Program agrees wholeheartedly with this recommendation and intends to strengthen both global and Canadian content, while acknowledging dependence on what other departments are willing to offer. iii. The Program agrees with this recommendation but acknowledges present limitations. Including courses in the Sciences, among other disciplines would be ideal; the Department will explore including Music, which seems a potentially important area for students, many of whom are interested in a variety of forms of creativity and cultural production. <p>Faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minimum threshold for Black Studies content is expected to be increased as the program gains traction with students, develops more courses that are specific to the program, and gains in enrolments. ii. More Canadian context and global perspectives are desirable; the program is encouraged to seek these out. iii. Reaching out to Music seems an especially fruitful possibility. More generally, the program is open to contributions from across the University to further diversify its offerings.
<p>Recommendation #1 Strengthen Program Structure and Academic Rigour</p> <p>Theme b. Faculty Development and Hiring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Implement targeted hiring practices to increase Black faculty representation within and beyond GSWS. ii. Continuous program review to ensure interests, expectations and aspirations 	<p>Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Program hopes that the Faculties and the university as a whole will be supportive of the growth of the Major. ii. Plans are in place to create an advisory board that would, in part, function as a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee; this would enable continuous review of undergraduate modules regularly, over and beyond meeting the cyclical review requirements. <p>Faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Hiring requests are part of the budget process and depend on numerous factors. Within those constraints, the Dean's Office supports hiring as the program grows. ii. The program's plan for an advisory board would allow it to meet this recommendation, and regular curricular review is part of the mandate of all Departments and programs.

<p>of the students, faculty members, and community are met.</p>	
<p>Recommendation #1: Strengthen Program Structure and Academic Rigour</p> <p>Theme c. Student Engagement and Success</p> <p>i. Ensure prerequisites and course requirements enhance learning and engagement.</p> <p>ii. Develop marketing strategies emphasizing the program's critical thinking and problem-solving focus.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. This is already being done with existing modules, including the Minor in Black Studies.</p> <p>ii. GSWS has an excellent track record with marketing courses and programs. This is clearly supported by the history of the department, which increased overall enrolments from 645.5 FCEs in 2011 to 2,400 FCEs in 2023. In addition, through students, faculty, and the Equity Office, the Program has excellent connections with the London community and are committed to engaging with them to keep the program relevant locally, as well as nationally and globally.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. These elements have been at the forefront of the Department's development of the program and will continue to guide it as it reviews the program.</p> <p>ii. Dean's Office prioritizes effective communication regarding all programs and will continue to work with the program to ensure that its strengths are advertised widely. The Minor has featured prominently in recent recruitment efforts, and the Major will be similarly highlighted.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: Enhance Community Engagement and Program Relevance</p> <p>Theme a. Local and Global Community Ties</p> <p>i. Strengthen partnerships with local Black communities and organizations.</p> <p>ii. Establish collaborative networks with other institutions offering Black Studies.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. The Program will be working intensively with the Equity Office and with student groups to ensure the development of strong partnerships. Students in the Minor are already engaging, among other things, with the Black Londoners Project, an important oral history of the Black community in London. In addition, one faculty member has created several community engagement exercises within courses, it is expected that more faculty will follow this lead.</p> <p>ii. The Program has been networking informally at talks, conferences, and other events. However, the importance of establishing more formal collaborative networks is recognized and will be undertaken.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. Faculty members teaching in the program have begun to make strong community connections and plan to continue to deepen those.</p> <p>ii. More initiatives, similar to those identified above (i), will be explored and expanded upon as the program develops.</p>

<p>Recommendation #2: Enhance Community Engagement and Program Relevance</p> <p>Theme b. Student and Community Involvement</p> <p>i. Engage potential students and community members in program development.</p> <p>ii. Promote the program's relevance to contemporary Black experiences and challenges.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. The Black Studies Subcommittee of the GSWS Undergraduate Studies Committee is considering developing an advisory board for the Black Studies program. An advisory board would include students (both current and potential) and community members.</p> <p>ii. The Black Studies program will be reviewed annually to ensure that the program offerings are current and relevant to Black experiences and challenges. The Program will also work on promoting courses (and individual events, such as talks and conferences) that are relevant to the experiences of Black students (and faculty, staff, and community members).</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. The Dean's Office fully endorses the program's thoughtful response, considering the possibility of an advisory committee that would allow students and community members to be active participants.</p> <p>ii. The regular review of the program (at Departmental meetings and retreats and through a possible advisory committee – see above) will ensure its continued relevance.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: Enhance Community Engagement and Program Relevance</p> <p>Theme c. Visibility and Outreach</p> <p>i. Increase the program's visibility through targeted outreach and engagement initiatives.</p> <p>ii. Highlight the program's unique contributions to Black studies and its relevance to societal needs.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. GSWS is working with the Communications Specialist in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities to develop an outreach strategy to increase awareness of the program. Black Studies faculty and students attended various open house events to speak with potential students about the modules. Individual faculty members have also given public facing talks about their research; at such talks, they have also discussed the program. For 2024-25, the Program plans to reach out to the Thames Valley District School Board to discuss ways of engaging with the students.</p> <p>ii. Promotional materials will highlight the program's uniqueness and the ways in which the program specifically responds to the needs and interests of Black students. These materials will also highlight that this is the first major in Black Studies at a Canadian university. They will also highlight the deeply interdisciplinary nature of the Major and its flexibility in allowing students to tailor the degree to their own interests.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. The Black Studies Minor has been promoted by the Faculty and the Department at outreach events since its inception, and the Major will be similarly supported. The Dean's Office will work with the communications and outreach team to ensure that this program highly visible.</p> <p>ii. The program's relevance to societal needs is one of its most distinctive features and will figure prominently in all promotional events and materials.</p>

<p>Recommendation #3: Secure Institutional Support and Ensure Sustainability</p> <p>Theme a. Resource Allocation and Support</p> <p>i. Secure administrative commitment for necessary resources, including faculty positions and library support.</p> <p>ii. Promote the program's alignment with university priorities, emphasizing its role in addressing historical relations with Black and racialized communities.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. GSWS has secured administrative commitment to develop the major and will continue to advocate for support to maintain and further develop the module. The department's ability to request faculty positions is limited but will continue to request new hires to support this module. Thus far, the library has been very helpful in terms of securing new materials, and the Program is confident of its continued support.</p> <p>ii. GSWS saw developing the Black Studies major and minor as integral to the university's priorities. The Program 1) has communicated with members of London's Black community about the modules and will continue to do so; 2) is developing partnerships with community organizations to ensure students have community engaged learning opportunities and to continue strengthening the present connections.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. The Western libraries have always been extremely responsive to requests for materials from the Faculty; this strong relationship will help the Black Studies Major. While faculty positions must go through the regular budget process, with final approval from the Provost, the Dean's Office is committed to supporting the program as it grows.</p> <p>ii. The Major responds directly to the University's plans to diversify the curriculum and to engage with communities.</p>
<p>Recommendation #3: Secure Institutional Support and Ensure Sustainability</p> <p>Theme b. Program Review and Adaptation</p> <p>i. Establish a regular review process to assess the program's structure, content, and outcomes.</p> <p>ii. Adapt the program based on evolving field developments, student feedback, and community needs.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. As discussed in response to Recommendation #2, GSWS has an Undergraduate Curriculum committee, and to maintain the integrity of the program, this committee will develop a subcommittee focused on Black Studies. Working with the Undergraduate Chair of GSWS, this subcommittee will assess the program's current structure and make changes as needed.</p> <p>ii. GSWS has an active student led organization known as the Gender Studies Student Collective. In the GSSC, there are student elected representatives for each module offered by GSWS. The Undergraduate Chair of GSWS will work with the GSSC to ensure that such a representative for Black Studies is elected. This representative may be a member of the Black Studies subcommittee. The GSSC periodically surveys GSWS students about their interests, and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee takes these responses into consideration during curriculum revision.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. GSWS's plans to establish a Black Studies subcommittee (of the Undergraduate Curriculum committee) will ensure that the program is reviewed regularly.</p> <p>ii. With the above subcommittee and regular input from students (gathered from undergraduate student collective members and from surveys) and the community (see above), the program will be able to respond to changes in the field and in student and community interests.</p>

<p>Recommendation #3: Secure Institutional Support and Ensure Sustainability</p> <p>Theme c. Infrastructure and Recognition</p> <p>i. Work towards the program's recognition as a stand-alone department or unit.</p> <p>ii. Develop infrastructure to support the program's long-term vision and sustainability.</p>	<p>Program:</p> <p>i. GSWS plans to work with faculty teaching in Black Studies and administration to develop a stand-alone program or unit in time. GSWS began as a program, so the department has experience and the institutional knowledge to aid in such development.</p> <p>ii. As the modules grow, GSWS will assess the administrative needs of Black Studies and request additional administrative support. GSWS will request that the module have its own undergraduate assistant to alleviate the workload on the GSWS undergraduate assistant and to dedicate time to the module.</p> <p>Faculty:</p> <p>i. The Dean's Office supports efforts to enhance the program's recognition which should enhance its viability as a stand-alone unit. This would require, not least, significant growth in both course and program enrolment.</p> <p>ii. The program might, in time, require more administrative oversight – a dedicated Director, for example.</p>
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Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Program Chair, and the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

Recommendations	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1a Content and Curriculum Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Increase the minimum threshold for Black studies content in courses. ii. Integrate a more robust focus on the Canadian context and global perspectives within Black studies. iii. Expand the disciplines that might be included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with other departments to develop more courses wholly dedicated to Black Studies as well as to increase Black Studies content in courses that are not wholly dedicated, with a focus on both global and Canadian content. • Explore the possibility of including Music into program offering. 	Department Chair	By June 2028
Recommendation #1b Faculty Development and Hiring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Implement targeted hiring practices to increase Black faculty representation within/beyond GSWS. ii. Continuous program review to ensure interests, expectations and aspirations of the students, faculty members, and community are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor faculty resources to ensure program's sustainability and growth. • Create an advisory board that would function as a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider consultation with the Offices of Faculty Relations and Office of EDI • Craft a plan to regularly review the program modules. 	Department Chair Advisory board	By June 2026
Recommendation #1c Student Engagement and Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure prerequisites and course requirements enhance learning and engagement. ii. Develop marketing strategies emphasizing the program's critical thinking and problem-solving focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the ongoing evaluation of pre-requisites and course requirements. • Leverage community connections to market courses and programs. 	Department Chair	By June 2028

Recommendation #2a Local and Global Community Ties i. Strengthen partnerships with local Black communities and organizations. ii. Establish collaborative networks with other institutions offering Black Studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue collaborating with the Office of EDI, student groups and present community connections with the aim of strengthening relationships. • Establish more formal collaborative networks. 	Department Chair	By June 2028
Recommendation #2b Student and Community Involvement i. Engage potential students and community members in program development. ii. Promote the program's relevance to contemporary Black experiences and challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure engagement of students and community members in the eventual program advisory board. • Conduct review annually to ensure that the program offerings are current and relevant to Black experiences and challenges. 	Department Chair	By June 2026
Recommendation #2c Visibility and Outreach i. Increase the program's visibility through targeted outreach and engagement initiatives. ii. Highlight the program's unique contributions to Black studies and its relevance to societal needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working with the Communications Specialist in the Faculty to develop an outreach strategy to increase awareness of the program. • Highlight the program's uniqueness and the ways in which it responds to the needs and interests of Black students in promotional materials. 	Department Chair Dean's Office	By June 2026
Recommendation #3a Resource Allocation and Support i. Secure administrative commitment for necessary resources, including faculty positions & library support ii. Promote the program's alignment with university priorities, emphasizing its role in addressing historical relations with Black and racialized communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for support to ensure program's sustainability and growth. • Promote the modules with members of London's Black community. • Strengthen partnerships with community organizations to ensure students have community engaged learning opportunities. 	Department Chair	By June 2028
Recommendation #3b Program Review and Adaptation i. Establish a regular review process to assess the program's structure, content, and outcomes. ii. Adapt the program based on evolving field developments, student feedback, and community needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the development of an advisory committee. • Continuously assess the program's current structure and make changes as needed. • Ensure that a representative of Black Studies is elected on the GSSC. • Revise curriculum based on feedback obtained by the GSSC regarding students' interests, field developments and community needs and input. 	Department Chair Advisory board	By June 2028

Recommendation #3c Infrastructure and Recognition i. Work towards the program's recognition as a stand-alone department or unit. ii. Develop infrastructure to support the program's long-term vision and sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with administration and faculty to develop a plan for a stand-alone program or unit.• Monitor program growth to assess infrastructure needs.	Department Chair	By June 2028
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