

Final Assessment Report
Academic Review
Gender Equality & Social Justice

A. Summary

- i. The Self Study was presented to the PPC on March 22, 2013.
- ii. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Dr. Ann Braithwaite, University of Prince Edward Island and Dr. Anne Forrest, University of Windsor and two internal reviewers, Dr. Larry Patriquin and Dr. John Long.
- iii. The site visit occurred on April 4 and 5, 2013.
- iv. The Reviewers' Report was received on May 21, 2013.
- v. The Department's response was provided on October 22, 2013.
- vi. The Faculty Dean's response was received on October 21, 2013.

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

BA Honours Specialization
BA Specialization
BA Major
BA Minor

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by the Nipissing University Senate on May 17, 2013, and ratified by the Quality Council on June 28, 2013.

B. Strengths

The Review Team noted the following regarding the strengths of the Department:

“The Department of Gender Equality and Social Justice (GESJ) is a strong and dynamic department that delivers well beyond its size in terms of teaching and pedagogy, in terms of curriculum design and delivery, and in terms of impact on students from across a range of majors and minors at Nipissing. GESJ models Nipissing University’s motto of “one student at a time” and its focus on flexible student-centered teaching and learning in its commitment to offering the most current versions of the discipline in innovative and exciting ways. The major strength of the department is its “value-added” role on the university campus, where its reach and impact extend well beyond the students majoring or minoring in the field. GESJ clearly positions itself as outward looking, and sees itself as part of an interdisciplinary Arts education broadly, rather than simply an education in a particular field. The review team strongly endorses the department and lauds its ability to do so much with what it has—attributed largely to the

strength and dedication of its faculty resources and their commitment to both the field and to Nipissing students.”

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The Review Team offered the following specific recommendations:

1: That the university administration convert the LTA2 position in GESJ to a tenure track position. This position would bring a needed stability to the department's 13 curricular offerings, expand its capacity to offer crosslisted courses, and further support the University's commitment to Aboriginal and First Nations students.

In its response, the Department advised that “the Vice President Academic has acknowledged that adequate resourcing is essential to the successful delivery of programming. While GESJ has and will continue to ‘deliver beyond our size’ we cannot accomplish what this actually entails—maintaining active research agenda, securing tri-council and other funding, regular cycling of course offerings, development of innovative and relevant new courses, development of innovative assessment and delivery models—without the conversion of the LTA2 position. The position was developed in response to the need to offer foundational courses in critical race, post-colonial, indigenous and settler studies. This is programming that is not only essential to a discipline like GESJ but is programming that has been designed in order to support other disciplines like Native Studies and Political Science as well as Social Welfare. At a time when the university is publicly declaring an increased commitment to first generation and Aboriginal Students, as well as to strategically internationalizing the curriculum and the campus, this kind of programming is essential to the university’s ability to deliver on those promises. Moreover, as the Faculty of Arts & Science moves ahead with the development of an interdisciplinary BA in Human Rights and State Violence, the courses offered through this position will complement those already being offered through the Human Rights and Social Justice stream in GESJ. One of the challenges of offering an interdisciplinary degree on the model of the new Human Rights BA is being able to consistently cycle courses in a way that makes the program viable. GESJ can significantly contribute to this kind of stability with the conversion of the LTA2.

It is worth noting that there are significant disadvantages to continuing with the LTA rather than converting to tenure track not the least of which is the compromise to research potential. Faculty in LTA positions are often burdened by a disproportionate degree of new course preparation which significantly compromises their research potential. Perhaps even more importantly, they are in a very poor position to apply for external and/or Tri-council funding. This is a structural barrier that affects not only the individual in the position but the department overall. Moreover, funds have largely already been committed to LTA positions making them close to budget neutral when it comes to conversion. We would urge the administration to support the Reviewer’s first recommendation to convert the existing LTA2 in Critical Race Studies in GESJ as a matter of priority.”

The Faculty Dean stated that “*it is a matter of priority that the LTA2 in Critical Race Theory be converted to a tenure- track position. The curricular and research contribution of the position links to the University mission, as well as the strategic aim of supporting aboriginal, First Nations and indigenous initiatives.*”

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the**

academic unit's use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)". In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation." Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.

2: That the university administration work with GESJ to advertise the ways in which the department reflects Nipissing University core values: i.e., that it is student-centered ("one student at a time"), that it has a demonstrated strength in pedagogy and pedagogical innovation, that it focuses on student experiential learning, etc. GESJ could be one of Nipissing's 'niche' programs used in advertising the university as a "destination."

The Department stated that it *"has again taken the initiative to develop a poster campaign on campus to raise the profile of the program with existing students. This is something we have done in the past in recognition of the fact that few students entering university know what they could expect from a program like GESJ. This is in fact true of many university level programs but is a significant disadvantage that has to be managed when compared with what students perceive to be vocational programs like Nursing or Business, bracketing for a moment whether or not they actually are vocational. We have decided to engage in a year long campaign which began with highlighting the Introductory course in particular but will move on to focus on drawing student's attention to what courses might help them accomplish their goals. One poster might highlight law and list the various courses in GESJ that would help someone interested in policing, criminal justice, or becoming a lawyer. Others will focus on different professions. The goal of this campaign is to begin to help students see the pragmatic face of the studies they undertake in the Arts and Humanities. This strategy will to some degree address recommendation #4 as well. The final stage of the campaign will focus on next year's courses.*

We believe GESJ is very well positioned to function as a destination program for Nipissing and we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Media unit and advancement on creating a campaign should this be an option. While we understand that the university is challenged to create a 'brand identity' for itself overall, we believe that "selling" individual programs is consistent with this goal. For example, we have, in the past, suggested that GESJ could spearhead a contest for Year 12 students across the province. The contest would be to submit a proposal for a social justice campaign relating to a list of possible issues that we would provide. The contest could potentially be judged by distinguished and qualified Canadians - Margaret Atwood, David Suzuki, someone from Greenpeace and/or Edward Burtynsky? These are just some of the possible names we could suggest. The university would need to contribute the carrot - free tuition! Not only would an event like this provide numerous media opportunities to profile the university, it would also profile the program itself. We are aware that tuition could not be tied to the winner undertaking the GESJ program. That wouldn't be necessary to gain the publicity advantage of an opportunity like this. GESJ has many ideas for promotion of the program and indeed the university."

The Faculty Dean advised that *"GESJ has taken to heart elements key to pedagogical innovation and student experience. It is a student-centred program with exceptional instruction and experiential opportunities. I would encourage other departments in the Faculty of Arts and Science (and across the institution) to examine and reflect on what GESJ has done, particularly*

with respect to interdisciplinary and its philosophy of cross-listing (the impetus here seems to run counter and, in fact, provides a counter-model to the territoriality which Dickeson cautions against). I would encourage Marketing and Advancement to promote GESJ, among other Arts and Science programs, as exceptional.”

PPC response is as follows: **PPC considers this recommendation to be somewhat outside the scope of the program review. However, PPC recommends that the relevant University units (Recruitment, Marketing and Communications) continue to consult with all academic units and the Deans in the development of their marketing/recruitment/communications strategies.**

3: That GESJ become central to the discussion in the Faculty of Arts and Science about its own self-definition. In our discussion with the Dean of Arts and Sciences, he noted that he wanted the Faculty to identify a few “key things” it does really well, that would act as a type of “brand” for the Faculty. We believe that GESJ can and should be at the forefront of this endeavour, given the breadth of its programming and the scope of its reach to students. The key now is to get to the forefront of that discussion and ensure that its focuses (such as that on human rights) are well reflected on that list.

The Department advised that “we are at the mercy of the administration on this recommendation. The faculty in GESJ have long expressed a willingness to be part of the discussion about ‘branding’ Arts and Science and we continue to embrace being part of that discussion. There is a genuine need to put structures in place that will facilitate this kind of endeavor - structures that go beyond the existing Faculty Council, which at this time is a pale shadow of what it could be as a forum for faculty to engage with strategic planning in Arts and Science. A more effective use of faculty resources, of late, can be found in the smaller sub-committees which have been given very specific mandates—the Spring/Summer subcommittee and the Outreach Committee are examples. What we in GESJ do exceptionally well is interdisciplinary, student-centred curriculum development and delivery that is relevant, and meaningful to students, that has an applied and practical dimension, and that can be a model of and for transferrable skills for students as they move into the workplace. We would welcome any opportunity to deliver this message.”

The Faculty Dean noted that “*the Faculty is moving forward with an exercise to define what it does well, in preparation for an Academic Plan. Part of the process of capturing an “academic snapshot” will be determining key areas of strength, along with what we do well. As well, discussions about a Human Rights major are currently underway.*”

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes that any comment on the centrality of GESJ in any self-definition of the Faculty of Arts and Science would be premature, given that the Faculty has yet to finish that process.**

4: *That GESJ work to identify (with student input) and advertise the ‘skills’ GESJ (and Arts students more generally) acquire in the department – as way for students and faculty to talk about the value of this program and field, and that can aid in the above recommendation about “branding.”*

The Department advised that *“this recommendation is tied to the one above but is also part of a much broader problem with the way Arts and Sciences are currently engaging with the specific challenges of the contemporary university culture as it turns more and more towards vocational language. We are very interested in initiating discussions with students, graduates, and others who can contribute to developing strategies to more effectively communicate the essential nature of the kinds of skills taught in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.”*

The Faculty Dean noted that *“they look forward to reading the Department’s work at defining ‘skills’ in Arts programming.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC recommends that the Department undertakes a review of its curriculum to identify the core skills and competencies acquired by students as part of their studies in GESJ.**

5: That the administration, along with GESJ, continue to work to build interdisciplinary connections and possibilities for students, especially across Faculties: i.e., by more departments now cross listing or cross coding GESJ courses for their own curricula too, by expanding into other Faculties to continue to challenging the tendency to “silo” knowledge and knowledge production in the university. Making these connections material/official makes evident the added value of this department and its relevance across a range of fields/interests, and demonstrates the interdisciplinary and the ‘team player’ quality of the department.

The Department advised that it *“was significantly involved in the planning, development and execution of the interdisciplinary Spring (2013) course, UNIV 2005: Dirt. We will again be closely involved with the development of the second iteration of the same course for 2014. Beyond these specific courses there is considerable interest from some faculty in continuing to develop and integrate team taught interdisciplinary courses at other year levels. UNIV 2005 is a second year course; there is room to consider what such a course might look like as a first year entry level course and also as a 3rd year upper level course.*

GESJ is very interested in developing interdisciplinary Professional Certificates in Sexuality Studies, something we think would be of value not only to existing students in degrees like Nursing, Psychology and Social Welfare but also for professionals already working in the field. GESJ alone has a significant number of appropriate classes already in regular rotation and there are numerous courses offered in other disciplines which could contribute to a rich and challenging opportunity for students who would like to develop greater specialization.

GESJ would welcome the opportunity to discuss the ways in which we can facilitate foundational learning for students already committed to other programs. For instance, many courses in GESJ would be of significant value to students in Criminal Justice. We are interested in opening a conversation with Criminal Justice around a: developing courses that their students could take as electives and b: signposting to students existing courses that would complement their studies. The same opportunities exist in other professional programs - namely Nursing and Business. The Reviewers suggested that one way of embedding this kind of cross-faculty learning is for the Calendar to list recommended courses in other programs. This is something we are intending to pursue more explicitly over the coming year.

As always, we will continue to develop new programming that can serve other programs via cross-listing. We continue to be very interested in collaborations with the sciences. One way forward with this might be to develop a Dialogue course.

Finally, we continue to work on developing our role at the Muskoka Campus. As of this academic year we have a faculty member on a 10 month LTA contract splitting teaching between North Bay and Muskoka. She is teaching some of our highest enrolment media courses on both sites (courses that consistently max out enrolment and do double duty for English and Education students) at the same time as she is involved in piloting alternative/blended delivery methods at the Muskoka campus. We are very keen to see these opportunities continue and they are key to the strategic direction of the university but without ongoing faculty dedicated to this work the possibilities for innovation are significantly compromised. With this in mind, we are requesting that the 10 month LTA between North Bay and Muskoka be converted to a 2 year LTA, commencing July 2014.”

The Faculty Dean noted that “*interdisciplinary/interdepartmental collaboration provides a way for the Faculty to build on strength and develop coherent curricula, research partnerships, and a collegial (rather than a competitive) environment for resources.*”

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes that curriculum development is driven largely by the academic unit in question. Having said that, PPC encourages the use of cross-listed and cross-coded courses. As a result, PPC recommends that the Faculty of Arts and Science reviews the existing list of cross-listed and cross-coded courses within its Faculty with the aim of increasing the number of such courses.**

D. Specific Recommendations

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or unit identified as the being responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken.

PPC Recommendations	Responsible	Projected Date
(1) That the Department undertakes a review of its curriculum to identify the core skills and competencies acquired by students as part of their studies in GESJ.	Department	June 2017
(2) That the Faculty of Arts and Science reviews the existing list of cross-listed and cross-coded courses within its Faculty with the aim to increase the number of such courses.	Dean	October 2017