

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### **Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**

#### **MA in Gender & Social Justice Grad Dip (PhD) in Gender & Social Justice**

**Date of Review: March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the graduate programs offered by Gender and Social Justice. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it 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 entailed by those recommendations; 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.*

#### **Executive Summary of the Review**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Gender and Social Justice program submitted a self-study in February 2024 to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its program. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a virtual review to McMaster University on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The review included interviews with the Deputy Provost; Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research, Director of the program and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Director of the program and the Dean of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (July 2024). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

## Summary of Previous Review's Recommendations

The key recommendations of the 2019 reviewers' report were to replace faculty resources, to secure space for the program, and to engage in visioning around the prospect of an undergraduate major in social justice and a potential research center or institute. Dr. Dibavar's CLA position has brought a degree of time-limited stability to our teaching resources, supplemented by one course from Dr. El-Sherif's CLA contract and MOUs with other Humanities departments. The need for at least one permanent hire remains. The program now inhabits one wing of the 2nd floor of Chester New Hall, including office space for faculty and TAs. Our Academic Department Manager and Administrative Assistant, who are shared with ECS, are nearby on the 3rd floor of CNH. Longer term visioning was disrupted by the pandemic but should be able to resume in 2024-25 as we continue to develop partnerships with Wilson College.

## Summary of Program Current Program Review

### Strengths

The reviewers noted several strengths of the GSJ program, including:

- a unique structure that embraces and encourages lived experience as knowledge, promotes decolonial and transnational feminisms, and champions equity-based pedagogies through alternative course and program offerings and assessments.
- Cross-disciplinary engagement of faculty members from almost every other discipline in Humanities and in Social Sciences, as well as Health Sciences and the Wilson College of Leadership and Civic Engagement, who teach GSJ courses and/or supervise GSJ graduate students.
- These instructors and supervisors are nourished by commend the program's commitment to justice, interdisciplinarity, community-engaged knowledge and learning, and to a wide array of empowerment practices that they take with them to enrich their home units.

In particular, we are pleased with the reviewers' comment that, "The impact of the GSJ program far outweighs its size and constraints."

## Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement, including appropriateness of resources

### Recommendation #1:

Drs. Dibavar and El-Sherif are currently on 3-year contracts with GSJ, ending soon. We recommend finding ways to retain them on a permanent basis make concrete their responsibilities to GSJ. This could take the form of tenure-track positions cross-appointed with GSJ and another academic unit within the Faculty of Humanities.

### Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:

Our highest priority is to see the creation of a tenure-line position in Humanities that includes contractual responsibilities to GSJ. Ideally, the search would be for a scholar who combines experience in research and teaching in transnational feminist and postcolonial studies, with possible connected expertise in one or more of the following areas: feminist critical thinking, decolonial theories, queer and trans studies, performance art and aesthetics, and critical (dis)ability studies, related to questions of social justice, political activism, global south, displacement, and migration. The ideal candidate would also have a demonstrated ability to secure research funding that could support GSJ students. Such a hire would not only secure teaching and supervision resources for GSJ, but could also complement the teaching and graduate supervision available in the home department through reciprocal agreements between the two units

### Dean's Response:

I am always on the lookout for ways to shore up the teaching and supervisory resources of GSJ, and I am aware of the program's wishes for the same. The number of TT hires in the Faculty is expected to be very small over the next several years.

### Recommendation #2:

Faculty affiliations are based on MoUs between their home units and GSJ. We recommend streamlining and formalize the MoU process so that it is not reliant on frequent negotiations between the GSJ director and unit chairs/directors, which are rotational positions. This would provide improved recognition and strengthen institutional support for GSJ and ensure stability of course offerings, supervision, and participation in GSJ's community.

### Recommendation #3:

Create a GSJ Board of Studies to support and distribute the work of administering the program, which currently rests solely on the shoulders of the Director.

### Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:

We see these two recommendations as linked because they both have to do with the stability of resources for teaching, student supervision, and committee service, all of which currently have a high degree of annual churn. The Director will begin implementing these recommendations in Fall 2024

**Dean's Response:**

The MOUs were helpful, and my understanding is that they need to be renewed. I raised this with the ADGSR several months ago and the Director of GSJ during annual review. I welcome the prioritization of renewal (and potential expansion) in the coming year. My only suggestion on this item is that the Director team up with the ADGSR. When we last worked on MOUs, the acting director found her requests to chairs to establish MOUs were aided by having the ADGSR's support and participation.

It's not entirely clear to me what the Board of Studies would do. I know the director already relies on the counsel and service of those who teach in the program. Would this be a formal name for that collective? If the Director believes a more formal structure would assist, I would request that Terms of Reference for the group be established and incorporated into the governance rules of the program.

**Recommendation #4:**

Reconsider the current staffing solution to have a dedicated GSJ administrator to address issues of workload and enhance administrative support for the director, affiliated faculty, and students.

**Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:**

It is obvious that our staff are over-extended. The fact that every faculty member has responsibilities to at least one other program/department often exacerbates confusion and inefficiencies. Furthermore, the fact that GSJ's staff share responsibility and space with the ECS department means that their duties sometimes spill over onto ECS staff. An increase of staff capacity would make the Director's work more practicable.

**Dean's Response:**

GSJ has never had a full-time staff administrator, as far as I am aware. Up until 2019, the staff role was shared with GPSJ. Unfortunately, I cannot invest in a full-time staff FTE in a program of this size. There are larger programs in the Faculty (including one Dept) that do not have a dedicated FT staff person.

I would recommend, however, that since ECS has a new ADM, it may be a good time to review the duties and structure of the team. I encourage the director to speak with her and share her concerns. I will also raise this issue with the Faculty's Director of Finance and Administration. She may also have some advice.

**Recommendation #5:**

Promote and support GSJ plans to nurture further institutional and curricular interactions with Wilson College and the Health Sciences Social Medicine and Global Health program to stabilize the program.

**Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:**

The Director has engaged in initial conversations with the Director of WC about a graduate seminar in community-engaged work that would serve both GSJ and WC. We will continue those conversations in the coming weeks. We are also keen to grow connections with Global Health and Social Medicine and will pursue this opportunity.

**Dean's Response:**

I have had some initial discussions with Dr. Anderson about both Wilson College and the emerging Social Medicine and Global Health initiative coming out of FHS. I would be happy to see connections grow. Dr. Anand in FHS is open to working with us, as she designs her new graduate diploma in Global Health and Social Medicine. When I last spoke to Dr. Anand, I mentioned GSJ as an interested and able partner. The two associate deans will be willing to help connect or explore these possibilities.

**Recommendation #6:**

Consider the creation of a Combined Honours in Social Justice Studies to bolster the undergraduate courses offered and open a different pathway for faculty renewal.

**Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:**

We have been daydreaming about this idea for several years. Rather than creating a new program, it might be more feasible to reorient the existing GPSJ program. The current GSJ Director has just started a term as Acting Director of GPSJ, which provides an opportunity to deepen familiarity with that program and explore potential expansions of synergies across the programs.

**Dean's Response:**

As Dr. Anderson notes, this idea has been floating around for a few years. She and the Director of GPSJ have worked on some recent curricular reform that brings their undergraduate offerings in closer contact, which I have supported.

I am anxious to see how the Wilson College Combined degree in Leadership and Civic Engagement fares. If we are able to attract 75 additional students a year to Mac who are interested in social change, that may help strengthen the rationale for a new Combined degree in Social Justice Studies. Unfortunately, comparator programs remain quite tiny at Ontario universities, as our recent environmental scan ahead of Wilson College planning illustrated.

#### Recommendation #7:

Address the gap in community-based learning expressed by students due to the cancellation of a core course that was unsustainable by adding an internship option to the MRP alternatives.

#### Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:

Our initial wariness is that building relationships with internship sites would be nearly as time-consuming as the unsustainable 707 partnerships were. The Director will seek advice from staff in the Humanities Careers & Experience office and from colleagues in the Office of Community Engagement to explore the feasibility of this recommendation.

#### Dean's Response:

I echo the director's hesitation here, though I think we all agree that it would be terrific for our graduate students to have internship opportunities. Our Humanities Student Experience Office is still trying to build a robust undergraduate internship option for students and has not ventured into graduate internships. What might be more fruitful is to wait for the report that is to be issued in August/Sept 2024 on graduate degree reform in Humanities. That report may give us some direction on internships. Funding/staff support will be an issue, as Dr. Anderson is well aware, but first I'd like to see what is recommended.

I know there are also discussions about graduate internships in SGS, though that unit also is limited by the current financial climate. In sum, this recommendation is something we aspire to, but at present we do not have the capacity to realize it. That may change as the conversations underway in Humanities and elsewhere on campus develop.

#### Recommendation #8:

Clarify and require student attendance at a select number of core unit events, such as public lectures, workshop, and colloquia to stabilize and foster the wider GSJ community and promote connections with the wider McMaster community.

#### Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:

This recommendation makes good sense. The Director will raise this with the affiliated faculty. Once we decide upon the appropriate way of implementing this requirement, we will make the appropriate program changes through the curriculum process.

#### Dean's Response:

I believe some graduate programs in Humanities have created a 'milestone' in their program structures that is based on participation in certain co-curricular events or trainings. Perhaps something similar could be done in GSJ to formalize attendance. That said, I also believe the previously mentioned Humanities grad reform report that will arrive in the next few months may have something to say about public lectures and professionalization workshops. I am hoping we will be able to consider some Faculty-wide initiatives that will build community without taxing each program with the responsibility of planning, hosting, staffing as many events on their own, which often draw small numbers.

#### **Recommendation #9:**

Provide all GSJ members (faculty, students, and staff) with feminist-principled anti- violence safety training on a regular basis that can be promoted widely to encourage further connections with the unit..

#### **Department's Response and Actions to be Taken:**

The GSJ program is keenly in favour of this recommendation; in fact, we made this request within our self-study.

The Director will connect with SVPRO with two goals: (1) determining whether SVPRO is able to provide some component of this training from within their resources (e.g. "responding to disclosures of sexual violence"); (2) identifying possible other providers of such training for the purpose of seeking a cost estimate.

#### **Dean's Response:**

I would second Dr. Anderson's suggestion that we try to use campus resources for such trainings. External consultants can be quite costly.

### **Implementation Plan**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action(s) to be Taken</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading Action</b>	<b>Timeline for Completing Action</b>
Hire a tenure-track colleague		Dean	
Formalize MOUs for teaching, supervision, and committee service	Map out teaching & service needs. Identify capacity of affiliated faculty. Complete MOUs.	GSI Director and ADGSR, in consultation with GSI-affiliated faculty and Humanities department Chairs	Fall 2024
Reconsider staff responsibilities	The concerns around inefficiencies should be raised with the Dept Manager of ECS and the Faculty's Director of Admin.	GSR Director in consultation with the Faculty DoFA and ADM in ECS	2024-25
Create and Expand partnerships with WC and Social Medicine programs	Firm up plans for WC graduate seminar on community-engaged work.  Reach out to Social Medicine to begin exploring potential partnerships.	Director, in collaboration with OCE (K. Balcom) and WC (D. Abelson)  Director, in connection with relevant FHS colleagues.	Fall 2024  2024-25
Consider Combined Honours BA in Social Justice Studies	Identify potential synergies within GPSJ, WC, other interdisciplinary minors	Director and Director of GPSJ with assistance if plans develop from the Associate Dean Undergrad St.	Fall 2024
Consider adding internship alternative to MRP	Initiate exploratory conversation with OCE and other relevant stakeholders	Director and ADGSR	Winter 2025
Clarify non-course requirements for graduate students	Consult with other grad directors, especially in light of pending report on graduate education in Humanities. Decide how to revise requirements. Make relevant curriculum changes.	Director and GSI Faculty	December 2024



Offer regular safety training	Identify providers and seek cost estimates. Secure funds for this training.	Director  Dean / SGS ?	August 2024
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**Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation:**

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the October 17, 2024, meeting. The committee recommends that the **MA in Gender & Social Justice** and the **Grad Dip (PhD) in Gender & Social Justice** graduate programs should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than eight years after the start of the last review.