

Final Assessment Report

Gender and Social Justice

(BA, Minor, Diploma)

October 2023

Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Gender and Social Justice programs (BA, Minor, Diploma) delivered by the Department of Philosophy were in good standing.

“The program is academically sound despite being minimally resourced. The new learning outcomes provide a clear and inspiring vision for the program and are an excellent basis for its growth. The leadership abilities, commitment, and enthusiasm of the current GSJ Advisor are readily apparent. The faculty members who teach for the program, both sessional and full time, are dedicated teachers and scholars who are committed to the program.”

A total of 4 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding governance/administration, curriculum, teaching resources and faculty diversity, and partnering with other units. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2027-2028.

Enrollment over the past three years

	BA General	BA Honours	BA Co-op	Minor	Diploma
2022-2023 (CURRENT YR)	1	2	6	18	0
2021-2022 (LAST YR)	2	4	1	20	1
2020-2021 (THREE YRS)	2	2	1	21	2

*Based on Active Student Extract in Quest from October 26, 2023.

Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the Gender and Social Justice programs (BA, Minor, Diploma) delivered by the Department of Philosophy. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on June 23, 2021. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data

collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm's-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic: Dr. Laura Parisi, Professor of Gender Studies, University of Victoria, and Dr. Tracy Isaacs, Professor of Philosophy, University of Western.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on January 24-28, 2022. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Maud George, Professor of Systems Design Engineering, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President Academic; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Faculty Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Chair of the Department, as well as faculty members, staff, graduate instructors and TAs, and current undergraduate students. The Review Team also had an opportunity to meet with representatives from the library.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. Subsequently, the program responded to each recommendation and outlined a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Finally, the Dean responded to the external reviewers' recommendations, and endorsed the plans outlined by the program.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, in many cases verbatim, from the self-study, the external reviewers' report, the program response and the Dean's response.

Program Characteristics

Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses based on Self-Study

Strengths

- **Interdisciplinarity:** The way the GSJ curriculum is designed, students can take courses in a range of disciplines and departments, and the GSJ core course content is itself interdisciplinary.
- **Currency:** The GSJ program just went through a major revision that took into account not only current research but also the contemporary social and political landscape and the need for perspectives from marginalized groups. The revision reflects the importance of intersectionality and the ways that social justice includes but also transcends gender.

- **Community:** The program offers regular events where students can get to know their professors and one another; the program is small enough that students get individualized attention from professors and from the GSJ Advisor.

Challenges

- **Resources for teaching:** The program does not have a lot of resources for teaching core GSJ courses. While faculty from across campus are involved in teaching GSJ cross-lists, held-withs, and electives, Dr. Katy Fulfer is the only faculty member with formal teaching duties in the program. As noted, with Dr. Dea's departure, Dr. Fulfer and Dr. Jenny Saul are the only two faculty regularly teaching core courses in GSJ (and thus included in the discussion in section 2.2.1 above).
- **Diversity:** the program should have a more diverse staff, especially with respect to race, as the teaching of GSJ courses is predominantly done by white instructors. This is listed as a challenge rather than a weakness as hiring is beyond the direct control of the program.
- **Administration of the program in Philosophy:** As noted in section 1.1, the administration of the program in Philosophy brings with it a number of substantive advantages. However, this structure also constrains options for more interdisciplinary perspectives on decision-making on a day-to-day level.

Weaknesses

- **Coherence and organization of curriculum:** Because the courses are taught across faculties by instructors in different departments, it is difficult to organize material and content in an efficient and sensible way. Sometimes content is duplicated across the curriculum.
- **Organization, service roles, and scheduling:** The Gender and Social Justice Advisor performs some of the tasks for GSJ that the Associate Chair, Undergraduate performs for the Department of Philosophy; in some cases, the tasks are shared and it can be unclear how the duties are to be divided. Because the GSJ Advisor does not get any course release, the role doesn't allow for much time to spend on matters like curriculum planning and keeping in touch regularly with all the faculty who teach in the program. The sessionals who teach in the program often have restricted availability for times and days, which is difficult to take into account with the centralized University scheduling system.

- **Visibility/enrollment:** The program has a relatively small number of students as majors and minors. In general, it can be challenging to make sure students across the University know about GSJ programs and courses and know that GSJ is the program that used to be known as "Women's Studies."

Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

The Three-Year General, Four-Year General, Honours, and Honours Co-op offer a solid foundation in Gender Studies from a feminist intersectional perspective through the core GSJ courses. The program is less strong on transnational and global perspectives as there are no core GSJ courses on these topics at the 200/300 level. However, they make good use of resources from other units in order to round out their programs. The Advisor demonstrates outstanding dedication to the program and its success. As identified in the report, the main area for curriculum improvement is in more clearly articulating the cross-listed and approved non-cross-listed courses in relation to the programs' learning outcomes. The program would also benefit from a more well-defined governance structure.

Minor: While choice is a strength of the Minor, requiring some specific courses and/or including level-requirements would strengthen it. For example, the Minor could require one of GSJ 101 or 102, at least two GSJ courses at the 200-level, and at least two GSJ courses at the 300-level. This structure would include a sense of academic progression within the Minor while still allowing for a great deal of choice among the eight courses required to complete it.

Program Response to External Reviewers' Recommendations

1. **GOVERNANCE/ADMINISTRATION.** We recommend establishing a clear governance structure that enables the program to maintain (or acquire) distinctness and autonomy from Philosophy. This should include a document that articulates the composition, mandate, and authority of the GSJ committee, a process for making cross-appointments, and a clear statement of the responsibilities of the Advisor (which appear more in line with a Director and should be compensated as such with course release). We recommend looking at interdisciplinary programs in other faculties that are helmed by Directors as possible models. At present, the program is within the Department of Philosophy and its main faculty spokesperson/advocate is the Chair of Philosophy, not the GSJ Advisor. This creates a cumbersome administrative structure that prevents the person who knows the program best from having a strong voice for the program in the Faculty and gets in the way of the program's interdisciplinary mission.

Program Response

The reviewers make a helpful point that the role of the GSJ Advisor, their relationship to the Associate Chair, Undergraduate, and the role of the GSJ Committee are not defined in writing. The same person has filled the role of the GSJ Advisor since 2018, and having more clear documentation about the role will help future advisors, especially if they come from departments other than Philosophy.

The Philosophy Department Chair and the Undergraduate Chair (who also currently serves a dual role as the GSJ Advisor) will develop written documents describing the responsibilities of the GSJ Advisor, and especially how their work is distinct from the Undergraduate Chair in the Philosophy department. They will consult with the GSJ Committee on this document. The GSJ Committee and the Philosophy Department Chair will also collaborate on drafting terms of reference for the GSJ Committee and on writing down current GSJ Committee processes. This work will be completed by the end of August 2023.

The recommendation to create a Director position is outside the purview of the Department. We will be happy to consult with the Dean's Office about this recommendation and whether it makes sense for GSJ at this stage.

Dean's Response

The program response to this recommendation is helpful and feasible. Articulating the nature of the GSJ committee, the responsibilities of the Advisor, and the process for making cross-appointments are all of value in the present and in the future. I support the idea of the creation of a Director (rather than an advisor). At the same time, I note that the Faculty of Arts as a whole needs to reduce rather than grow its administrative/governance structures.

Program Update (2025)

We have developed a Terms of Reference for the GSJ Committee and a description of the GSJ Advisor's responsibilities. In combination, these clarify the governance and administrative structure of the GSJ Program within the Philosophy Department.

2. CURRICULUM: While we recognize that the GSJ curriculum has undergone a recent refresh, we have several curriculum recommendations. First, we recommend that the program clarify the relationship between core GSJ and cross-listed courses, including a careful review of cross-listed courses and the way they contribute to the program learning outcomes. As noted in our comments in 2.4, the content of cross-listed courses in relation to the program's learning outcomes is not always clear. For planning purposes, it may be helpful to review how frequently cross-listed courses and approved but not cross-listed courses are offered, and those that haven't been offered in several years should be

dropped from the list so that students have a more accurate list. Second, we recommend reconsidering the need for GSJ 101 and 102, and revising GSJ 101 as a general introduction that covers the curriculum of both. This change would create less reliance on the contested distinction between the “Global North” and the “Global South.” Moreover, there are no upper-level courses that build (in any obvious way) on content from 102. Dropping GSJ 102 would also free up resources for other teaching needs in the program. Third, the addition of core GSJ courses (at the 200, 300, and 400 levels) on masculinities, Indigenous feminisms, transnational feminisms, and Black feminist studies/critical race theory would round out the offerings to be more reflective of trends in the discipline. Finally, as outlined in the discussion of visibility and enrolment under program weaknesses (3.1), we recommend that the Minor be reconsidered to require that at least half of the course requirements be core GSJ courses at all levels. Not only would this assist with program enrolment, but it would also create a more coherent structure to the Minor, which right now has no structure at all.

Program Response

The reviewers’ comments have identified ways in which the GSJ curriculum can be made more cohesive which, ultimately, should lead to a better experience for GSJ students.

With respect to the first recommendation, the GSJ Committee will review the current list of cross-listed courses and approved electives and engage in curriculum mapping to connect these courses with program level learning goals (or, if appropriate, to recommend these courses be removed from GSJ plans). The GSJ Committee will seek support from the Centre for Teaching Excellence as needed.

With respect to the second recommendation, we recognize some administrative and pedagogical challenges to the current 101/102 breakdown, yet given the newness of these curricular changes and the importance of foregrounding Global Southern activism and theory, we will not immediately seek to return to one introductory course. We will seek to identify upper-year courses which clearly build from 102 and make this explicit, or seek to develop courses or topics for our 302/472/473 offerings which clearly do so.

In addition, with respect to the third suggestion, we will take the suggestions for topics for upper-year courses into consideration when assigning special topics courses and developing new courses (if within the teaching competence of faculty members). In addition, we will actively seek to partner with other programs that may already be offering these courses (e.g., **BLKST 230 Black feminisms**).

With respect to the fourth recommendation, the GSJ Committee will review the current minor and have a plan for revision that can be submitted to the Undergraduate Affairs Group by the end of December 2023.

The Undergraduate Chair (who is also the GSJ Advisor and chairs the GSJ Committee) will be responsible for overseeing these revisions.

Dean's Response

The Dean endorses the program's responses to the reviewers' suggestions, and recognizes that the curriculum of a field such as GSJ, in which both the methodologies and the real-world problems it addresses are complex and dynamic, may often need re-shaping and innovation. The recent revision of the core curriculum for GSJ shows that the leadership is capable of envisioning the future of the discipline and bringing significant changes through the curricular process. The Dean supports the particular initiatives described above.

3. **RESOURCES FOR TEACHING AND FACULTY DIVERSITY.** Resources for teaching are clearly an issue for a program that has just one full-time faculty member with only part of her teaching requirements in GSJ. To increase teaching resources without new hires (which we understand are not likely), we recommend multi-year teaching buy-outs of cross-appointed faculty members for a portion of their teaching responsibilities to be in GSJ. In order to increase faculty diversity and address resources at the same, partnering with Black Studies and/or Indigenous Studies is a possible route. There should also be consideration of converting a long-term sessional into regular teaching stream faculty (cross-appointed with another department), when and if this option becomes available at the university.

Program Response

The GSJ Program will continue to seek cost-neutral ways of increasing the number of tenure-stream faculty who teach core GSJ courses. Since the external visit from the reviewers, a cross-appointment was successfully negotiated to include one GSJ core course per year. This was cost-neutral in the sense that any additional sessional required by the home department was balanced by the reduction of a sessional position in GSJ. This responsibility will primarily fall to the Chair of the Philosophy Department.

The addition of tenure-stream lines and their allotment to departments is outside of the purview of the Department, as such decisions are made by the Dean's Office. During previous rounds of faculty complement planning, requested by the Dean's Office, the GSJ Program has highlighted areas of expertise where we would most like to hire tenure-stream faculty members. Further, to increase the teaching complement in GSJ with multi-year teaching buy-outs would require support from the Dean and from the home departments of non-GSJ appointed faculty members. The Chair will consult with the Dean's Office about these recommendations by the end of August 2023.

Dean's Response

The Dean endorses creative, cost-neutral strategies for addressing the changing needs and opportunities of the GSJ program, and applauds the initiatives taken to add diversity to both content and instruction. The Dean looks forward to consultations but can offer no guarantees at this time. We are moving away from the notion of reliance on course buy-outs and hiring of sessionals (a course buy-out for a faculty member teaching a GSJ-approved course in a department other than Philosophy would necessitate the hiring of a sessional in that other department). That said, as we move more and more in the direction of interdisciplinary programming, we do need to find effective ways to collaborate across disciplines and departments.

Program Update (2025)

We have made considerable progress in this area in the past year and a half. Most significantly, the Philosophy Department hired Professor Laura Mae Lindo as part of the University's Black Excellence cluster hire initiative. Prof. Lindo's was appointed to Philosophy in part to support the GSJ program, and the expectation is that her undergraduate teaching will contribute to GSJ. In 2023-24, her first year as a member of the Department, two of her three courses were in GSJ. In 2024-25, three of her four scheduled classes are to be in GSJ.

In addition to hiring Prof. Lindo, we have also agreed to a renewable cross-appointment for Prof. Kim Nguyen (Communication Arts). As part of the cross-appointment, Prof. Nguyen typically teaches one core GSJ course per year. We also continue to seek out opportunities to run 'held with' sections with partners across campus.

The combination of hiring Prof. Lindo and cross-appointing Prof. Nguyen has increased the regular faculty resources available to teach core GSJ courses, and so has reduced the program's reliance on sessional instructors to teach those courses. In a typical year, we can expect them to combine to teach between two and four GSJ courses, including core courses. These two appointments have also added much-needed racial diversity to the faculty affiliated with GSJ.

4. **PARTNERING WITH BLACK STUDIES AND/OR INDIGENOUS STUDIES TO ESTABLISH A DISTINCT ACADEMIC UNIT.** Recognizing that this is a structural consideration that probably oversteps our task, we do suggest a re-think of housing interdisciplinary programs within disciplinary departments. Partnership GSJ with Black Studies and/or Indigenous Studies is one way to promote and protect the interdisciplinary essence of GSJ (and for that matter of Black Studies and Indigenous Studies), increase its visibility, and in all likelihood position it more effectively to recruit students into both courses and programs.

Program Response

We will not take specific steps in 2022-2023 with respect to this recommendation. Black Studies and Indigenous Studies are in the earliest stages of development. We believe it is too soon to pursue the kind of partnerships suggested by this recommendation, as it would radically alter the structure of these units. The GSJ Committee members and the Philosophy Department will seek to build good relationships with Black Studies and Indigenous Studies as these units develop at the University of Waterloo, and look forward to partnerships and collaborations as these programs become established.

Dean's Response

I respect the program response to this recommendation. I am at the same time wanting the Faculty to reconsider its own structural arrangements over the long term with a view to operating more effectively and establishing academic programming as the key factor in our organizational arrangements.

Recommendations Not Selected for Implementation

We will not be taking concrete steps to implement the suggestion in recommendation 1 to create a Director. We will consult with the Dean's Office if they believe this recommendation is important to implement, as they would need to provide budgetary resources to create such a position. However, the suggestions about reviewing the structure of other interdisciplinary programs may be helpful in the future as GSJ grows and its administrative needs change.

Note from the Dean: I am open to the discussion of creating a Director position. Determination of budget resources to support administrative positions across the Faculty is overdue, and I can make no immediate guarantees around specifics of the resources available. Nevertheless, I believe that an interdisciplinary program such as GSJ should have a Director.

We will not be pursuing the creation of a new academic unit that would house GSJ and related programs, such as Black Studies and Indigenous Studies, as each of our programs is too new to make such substantive structural changes. However, we absolutely affirm the shared pedagogical goals between these programs and will seek to build strong relationships with them. Please see response to recommendation 4 above.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	GOVERNANCE/ADMINISTRATION	Create descriptions of GSJ Advisor role Create Terms of Reference for the GSJ Committee	Department Chair GSJ Advisor	Complete
2.	CURRICULUM	Curriculum mapping for electives and cross-listed courses, with suggested revisions to the GSJ plans drafted for UGAG submission. Review of minor, with suggested revisions to the minor drafted for UGAG submission. This work is ongoing: The GSJ committee has made significant progress through the course of the Winter term of 2025.	GSJ Advisor	Ongoing
3.	RESOURCES FOR TEACHING AND FACULTY DIVERSITY	Consult with Faculty of Arts Dean's Office about resources. We have hired Prof. Laura Mae Lindo as part of the Black Excellence cluster hire and have cross-appointed Prof. Kim Nguyen (Communication Arts) to GSJ.	Department Chair	Appointment of Prof. Laura Mae Lindo: Complete 2023. Further advocacy: Ongoing.

4.	PARTNERING WITH BLACK STUDIES AND/OR INDIGENOUS STUDIES TO ESTABLISH A DISTINCT ACADEMIC UNIT	No concrete actions for 2022-2023. To be revisited, as these programs develop. Any formal co-ordination between these programs depends on Faculty of Arts reorganization. The said, Prof. Laura Mae Lindo, who teaches in GSJ, has recently been appointed as Director of Black Studies, and so that suggests the possibility of fruitful future collaboration.	N/A	TBD
----	---	---	-----	-----

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.



Date of next program review

2027-2028

Date

Signatures of Approval

March 3, 2025

Chair/Director

Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (*For AFIW programs only*)

Date

March 14, 2025

Faculty Dean

Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.

Jan.26, 2024

Associate Vice-President, Academic
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Date