

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

PROGRAM	SENATE APPROVAL DATE	PREPARED BY
Gender Equality and Social Justice	July 14, 2023	Provost and Vice-President

A. SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS & LISTING OF PROGRAMS UNDER REVIEW

SELF-STUDY REVIEW TIMELINE	DATE
1. Self-Study Presented to AQAPC	Nov. 25, 2021
2. Site Visit Conducted	April 4, 6 and 8, 2022
3. Reviewer's Report Received	May 16, 2022
4. Internal Reviewers Response Received	May 31, 2023
5. Dean's Response Received	May 31, 2023

The members of the review committee were:

- Dr. Abigail B. Bakan, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
- Dr. Margot Francis, Brock University

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

- **Bachelor of Arts**

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP re-ratified and approved by the Quality Council on April 26, 2019.

B. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

We believe the GESJ program, inter alia, uniquely exemplifies Nipissing University's mission, with its focus on student experience, academic research excellence and community engagement as mapped out in the Strategic Plan (2015-20). The department challenges students to think critically about systems of gendered, racial, and colonial power. The department's curriculum and pedagogy are grounded in a commitment to decolonization, antiracism, and gender justice. Faculty and students also indicated sustained links to the region, including with diverse Indigenous nations. Students are encouraged to develop interdisciplinary approaches to debates among and with various communities,

including gender and sexual minorities, racialized and Indigenous communities, and to attend to local, national and global contexts. Further, GESJ goes well beyond the Nipissing Strategic Plan in the department's commitment to fulfilling the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the contributions to substantive approaches to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in course content and delivery.

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

[List the specific recommendations from the Review Committee. The Department and Dean will also have an opportunity to comment on each recommendation]

External Reviewers Recommendation #1: *We recommend the conversion of one LTA in GESJ to a tenure-track position.*

Unit's Response: The GESJ faculty fully support this recommendation and strongly concur with the reviewers. We recognize that any 'conversion' of an existing LTA to tenure track is not budget neutral, however, this position has been renewed for more than eight years, (6 years at the North Bay campus and 2 years before that at Muskoka). We have clearly demonstrated consistent and ongoing need. As currently configured the position provides extraordinary value to the university – by anchoring the high impact Interdisciplinary courses which have, for more than a decade, represented the kind of teaching innovation that is central to Nipissing's identity and brand. The recruiters consistently inform us that describing these courses to prospective students is an engaging and important part of their 'selling' strategy. This longstanding LTA has also provided essential and crucial teaching support to the Child and Family Studies Program, one of the key growth areas in Arts & Science. Given that CHFS has been increasingly resource challenged in terms of faculty and that there is a desire to provide a tenure-track appointment on the applied psychology side of that program to allow for future student recruitment, the conversion of this shared position is even more vital to the ongoing stability of the existing CHFS program. As currently structured CHFS is made up of nearly 72% Concurrent Education students whose curricula interests are broad. Year over year since 2014 the CHFS enrolment in Con Ed has been steadily increasing – something that cannot be said for many other programs in Arts and Science. It is clearly a very attractive program to students who imagine a future in teaching. The fact that CHFS is not an externally accredited program allows for considerable latitude in terms of future program development that might attract new students while also protecting and enhancing the experience and appeal of the current program to existing concurrent education students. In recognition of the critical financial need to stretch existing faculty resources as far as possible, GESJ is well positioned to develop complementary curriculum for CHFS, especially in light of our existing cross-listed courses as well as our track record of cross-listing and/or cross-coding as much of our program as possible. It also bears repeating, we have partnered with CHFS for many years in sharing a position. Additionally and crucially, the research and teaching expertise of our current incumbent allows us to develop curriculum spanning not only INTD, CHFS and GESJ but also the new environmental studies BA as well as the Masters in Environmental Studies. We strongly believe it is in the financial interests of the university to continue to support this position by converting it to tenure-track as soon as possible.

Dean's Response: I acknowledge receiving the request for a tenure-track position within Gender Equality and Social Justice. However, I note that requests for faculty positions are subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

Provost's Response: Tenure track positions have been requested and considered within the institutional processes.

External Reviewers Recommendation #2: *We recommend that GESJ faculty consider a pilot mentorship program for GESJ Majors in their graduating year.*

Unit's Response: We appreciate the spirit in which this recommendation was made and agree wholeheartedly that for many students majoring in smaller programs, the challenge of finding themselves in classes with students who have vastly differing disciplinary backgrounds can be frustrating and even restrictive. It is not surprising that students can have a sense of being held back and of 'missing out' on what would otherwise be the opportunities they might have if their classes hewed more closely to a disciplinary cohort. The common degree structure, along with Nipissing's size,

generally prevail against this possibility. We also acknowledge the structural problem that all programs not well represented in high schools have – that they are simply not on the radars of incoming first year students. This is a systemic problem – not unique to GESJ. While the creation of a 4th year mentorship program may go some way towards supporting students who do find themselves interested in undertaking further study in GESJ, we would like to see the university develop better communication strategies regarding program and even course opportunities throughout the student experience – from recruitment through new student orientation and beyond to course enrolment. As it currently stands, existing students largely find out about new courses/programs by word of mouth or via Web Adviser at the time of enrolment.

We agree to undertake further conversation about how we might develop a mentorship program for GESJ students that would suit the specific needs of Majors while also making room for others who may have taken GESJ courses as electives or as a Minor. It seems especially crucial to speak directly to our existing students regarding their ideas about what might best meet their needs. As part of this process we will also explore more ways in which, especially senior students, might provide increased support in recruitment and retention.

Dean's Response: While I agree with the External Reviewers and Internal Committee members' sentiment that students entering university may not be familiar with Gender and Social Justice programs, the enrollments in the first and second year are healthy. Although this has not translated into program majors. The Gender Equality and Social Justice Student Collective helps with recruiting by connecting students with social justice campaigns. The faculty and students are active on social media promoting the program initiatives and opportunities. The Dean's office can help extend the reach of the social media posts. The university recently added a Manager of Digital Media and Strategies to develop a more comprehensive and targeted marketing strategy for the university. However, the recruitment and marketing department are responsible for promoting all degree programs at Nipissing University.

Provost's Response: If faculty choose to develop a mentorship program as part of their service, they are certainly welcome to consider doing so. I agree with the Dean that the recruitment and marketing department are responsible for promoting all degree programs at Nipissing University.

External Reviewers Recommendation #3: *We recommend that GESJ faculty, in collaboration with other units at Nipissing University, consider what would be necessary to support sustainable, high quality, online teaching, including innovative approaches to learning and pedagogy, as part of the ongoing planning of curriculum and outreach.*

Unit's Response: Post the Covid 19 emergency teaching measures, GESJ had already committed to providing some online programming each year as part of the normal program delivery. We are carefully monitoring enrolments to determine which are the most effective courses to offer online, in what format (synchronous/asynchronous) and at what times (Fall/Winter/Spring/Summer).

GESJ faculty are also involved in the re-development of the BA Liberal Arts, which is being configured as an online degree. We anticipate we will continue to develop high quality online courses.

Dean's Response: I agree with the External Reviewers that a mix of in person, synchronous and asynchronous courses can help different cohorts (e.g. 101 and 105) of students complete the degree requirements. However, if the aim is to permanently offer more than 30% of the GESJ courses online then I would recommend a major modification to the existing GESJ program. The student survey indicates that the faculty members offer innovative learning opportunities. I recommend that faculty members work with the Teaching Hub staff to develop innovative approaches to learning and pedagogy. The goal should be to develop more majors within the Gender Equality and Social Justice program.

Provost's Response: Innovative teaching is a goal whether online or onsite.

External Reviewers Recommendation #3: *We recommend that the Registrar 's Office review their systems to ensure that GESJ (and other) students who request changes in their name/gender have their wishes respected immediately, and across all university platforms.*

Unit's Response: Faculty from GESJ were involved in early conversations with the Registrar's Office some years ago regarding a preferred name policy. It came as something of a surprise to us that the students were still experiencing challenges around this issue. However, faculty have noticed and commented in various fora on the number of students who affirm a name notably different from that on the enrolment lists/Web Advisor. As noted by the reviewers this is another structural problem that will not be unique to GESJ students but, nonetheless, we wholly support the students in expressing their ongoing concerns about barriers around preferred names. If indeed we continue to be challenged around either the policies or systems necessary to make such requests happen quickly and with as few barriers as possible then we would urge the University/Registrar to treat this as an important priority.

Dean's Response: I agree with the expressed concerns of the External Reviewers and Internal Reviewers. However, there is a process within the Office of the Registrar for students to declare a preferred name or pronoun. A student can make the request by emailing the Registrar's office or completing a form available in the Registrar's office. The preferred name will replace the legal name on the following Nipissing University internal systems: Student ID card; email display name; class lists; Blackboard Learn, and WebAdvisor. The preferred name may not be reflected on transcripts, enrollment verification, tax forms, and various other internal systems. External institutions including, but not limited to OSAP, RESP providers, Revenue Canada, police record checks and student health insurance providers. Student Development Services is working with the University Technical Services (UTS) to develop an online portal for students to request a preferred name or pronoun.

Provost's Response: This is an institutional policy and process, and we will explore ways to ensure that students are made aware of the possibility and the process.

External Reviewers Recommendation #5: *We recommend support for GESJ to take steps towards advancing the profile and reach of the program through its online and web-based presence.*

Unit's Response: This is a recommendation about recruitment and in particular about the role GESJ could play as a destination program in online as well as in-person recruitment initiatives. We have repeatedly commented on this recommendation in Annual Academic Plans. It's worth noting that this is also a recommendation made in the previous review and indeed in the one before that – thus now spanning nearly twenty years. We regularly participate in all the recruitment efforts made available to us – OUF, the Fall and Winter Open House, New Student Orientation and various other ad hoc events. We have pitched the media and communications staff on numerous occasions with ideas regarding branding and marketing GESJ as well as other programs with little to no take up. This is not an issue GESJ can resolve. The best we can do is what we have always done which is to engage in guerilla marketing campaigns of our own wherever that is possible and wherever it doesn't conflict with the strategic goals of marketing the university overall. The work we have consistently done on developing and delivering the INTD courses goes a long way towards contributing to marketing by highlighting the extraordinary teaching and innovation across the university as a whole. The data we have tracked from these courses also demonstrates that GESJ itself enrolls 25% more students from those who take an INTD course.

Dean's Response: I agree with the External Reviewers' recommendation to advance the reach and profile of the GESJ program. All Arts and Science programs should have a prominent online and web presence for the purpose of marketing and recruitment. The university recently added a Manager of Digital Media and Strategies to develop a more comprehensive and targeted marketing strategy for the university. Also, the Dean's office can help support promoting GESJ initiatives through social media to increase the profile of the program externally. As mentioned above, the first and second year GESJ courses are well enrolled, but it is not translating into majors.

Provost's Response: Work with the Dean's Office and marketing to highlight the program.

External Reviewers Recommendation #6: *We recommend that GESJ initiate a process to form a committee - including other departments, and with central administrative support - to assess the possibilities of a new MA program in Interdisciplinary Social Justice (or some similar name), that would include an online as well as in person curriculum.*

Unit's Response: The GESJ Faculty are keen to pursue the potential of an Interdisciplinary Social Justice Masters although we believe the success of such a program would also require the official securing of LTA positions in Social Welfare as well as the GESJ/CHFS/INTD cross appointment.

We have pitched this idea in previous Academic Annual Plans and see it as having the potential to generate new enrolments especially if offered in an online format. Nipissing has a significant number of faculty teaching and researching in the areas of social justice across programs in all faculties. It would not be difficult to generate a Masters Level program in this area.

In light of the recent interest in creating Post Baccalaureate degrees targeted towards international students, it may be more strategic for us, in the short term, to launch an interdisciplinary Social Justice Post Bac.

Dean's Response: The faculty of Arts and Science has an existing interdisciplinary Master's program in Environmental Studies. I recommend that GESJ faculty members apply for membership in the Master's of Environmental Studies (MES) program. The GESJ faculty members areas of research are within the scope of the MES graduate program. There is an expectation that graduate faculty members apply for external research grants to help fund graduate students and their research. I agree with the Internal Committees' recommendation to create a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in the area of Social Justice; this could help increase enrollments. Faculty members in GESJ are working with the Manager of International Recruitment and Admissions to develop a program.

Provost's Response: Work with the International Office and the RO to consider the possibility of a Post Bac.

External Reviewer's Recommendation #7: *We recommend that Nipissing University consider a targeted hiring program for a cluster of Indigenous scholars to increase the number of Indigenous faculty at the university. We trust that this hiring initiative for a new cohort would be just one of a multi-prong approach to decolonization and creating a safer cultural space for Indigenous students. Given GESJ's position as a leader in the development of curriculum in the area of decolonization and Indigenization, we recommend that one of the positions in the targeted hiring program for Indigenous scholars be allocated to GESJ.*

Unit's Response: While we acknowledge and unquestionably support the spirit and the intention of this recommendation, we note that the Reviewers may not have been aware of the recent cluster hire of Indigenous faculty undertaken at Nipissing, nor the ongoing commitment to further hire Indigenous faculty in the future.

Relatedly, while we fully support the hiring of Indigenous scholars who hold doctorates, we also believe that genuine commitment to Indigenization, reconciliation, and especially decolonization, requires a more innovative approach to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge keepers within academia. We ask that Nipissing University (in consultation with NUICE) create one or more full-time permanent positions specifically for Anishinaabe "community-based educators" who may or may not hold Western academic credentials. In the spirit of equity, such positions should be comparable in remuneration to that of an LTA position.

More specifically, we ask that such a position be created for an individual who is a member of Dokis First Nation with family and community ties to Nipissing First Nation, a community-based researcher, and who has taught at NU for almost a decade. Through their award-winning teaching for the departments of Gender Equality and Social Justice, History, and Indigenous Studies, they have been at the forefront of educating students in Indigenous knowledge systems, land-based pedagogies, and anti-colonial studies. Their work has indeed enabled NU to fulfil its commitment to Indigenization and decolonization, and yet they remain a precarious part-time faculty member.

Dean’s Response: I agree with external reviewers’ recommendation and internal review committee’s response; it is compatible with University’s goal of hiring more Indigenous and under-represented faculty. However, hiring faculty is subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

Provost’s Response: Tenure track positions have been requested and considered within the institutional processes.

D. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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 has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE PROVOST	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	PROJECTED COMPLETION
Based on Recommendation #5, I agree that the Chair should work with the Dean’s Office and marketing to highlight the program.	Chair, Dean’s Office, Marketing	ongoing
Based on Recommendation #6, the Chair and Dean should work with the International Office and the RO to consider the possibility of a Post Bac.	Chair, Dean’s Office, International Office, RO	September 2025