

**Senate Committee on University Planning**

**Academic Unit Review Summary: WOMEN’S & GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM**

<b>Site Visit</b>	<b>March 19-20, 2012</b>
<b>Informal Response to Planning</b>	<b>June 15, 2012</b>
<b>Formal Response to Planning</b>	<b>November 1, 2012</b>
<b>Implementation Update</b>	<b>April, 2014</b>
<b>Midterm Review</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>

**Summary of Program Self-Study:** The Women’s & Gender Studies (WGST) Program was established in 1999-2000. Originally focused on women-centred curricula and approaches, the program shifted its orientation and was renamed to Women’s & *Gender* Studies in 2010-2011. Courses now reflect a broader perspective, including an emphasis on gender analysis, and an interdisciplinary approach to the study of women and gender.

At present, a minor in WGST is offered. Although only a small number of students declare a minor in WGST, the enrolments in the entry level course in WGST are healthy and have increased in the last few years. Less than 1% of total student registrations are in WGST.

Mount Allison’s WGST Program is small in terms of a dedicated faculty complement (the program has a director and one faculty member with a cross-appointment). Other faculty members in numerous departments serve on the WGST Steering Committee or have an affiliation with WGST. At present, the WGST Program offers a set of core courses (WGST 2001, 3001, 3021, and 4001) which are supplemented by courses offered in 16 departments and programs in the Faculties of Arts and Social Science.

**Summary of External Reviewers’ Report:** The external reviewers offer praise for the WGST program. They describe the program as being “high quality and academically rigorous,” but they acknowledge that the program has yet to realize its full potential. In a thorough review containing recommendations for the short- and long-term, the reviewers outline strategies for program revision and forward planning. The recommendations focus on the broad areas of curriculum, outreach and profile of the program, human resources, governance, and succession planning, and program resources. The external reviewers recommend also that the program organize an annual half-day retreat for the purposes of building “a more coherent and integrated interdisciplinary WGST minor program.” The reviewers recommend that:

***Curriculum***

1. In order to recruit students into the WGST minor, the foundational core course,

- WGST 2001, should be renumbered as an entry-level 1000 course.
2. A review of second- and third-year course offerings should be undertaken (including an examination of prerequisites, the rotation of offerings, and the development of courses designed to encourage the retention of students beyond the introductory course).

### ***Profile of the Program***

3. The curriculum revisions noted above and associated profiling should be broadly communicated (via the program's website, and via promotional materials) to engender interest in WGST.
4. Faculty mentoring and assistance should be offered to help revive the student-led WGST Student Society.
5. A graduation prize honouring Grace Annie Lockhart, the first woman to receive a degree at Mount Allison University, should be established and awarded at Convocation.

### ***Human Resources, Governance, and Succession Planning***

6. Interdepartmental dialogue should occur regarding the teaching responsibilities of WGST faculty.
7. Planning is necessary to ensure the smooth transition of the leadership of WGST at the conclusion of the current director's appointment.
8. A review of the terms of reference, membership, and functions of the WGST Steering Committee should be conducted.
9. A review of the WGST Associates should be conducted, with a view to using the Associates to increase the profile of the program, and to strengthen the links between WGST and other departments/programs.

### ***Program Resources***

10. Additional resources would be of benefit to the program (i.e., academic and non-academic personnel, supplies and expenses to support instruction and research, etc.). Additional resources might be secured through fundraising.

**Summary of Program Response:** The program is generally supportive of the recommendations in the external reviewers' report. Members of WGST (including the Steering Committee) have already begun to respond to the recommendations of the external review. Several curricular and scheduling changes are being contemplated and/or implemented. Specifically, WGST plans to take a proposal to the Academic Matters Committee to renumber the introductory course (WGST 2001). As well, a second-year, theme-based course is being proposed.

A retreat is being organized, and other opportunities for engaging the members of the Steering Committee and the Associates of WGST are planned. This type of activity is seen by the program as an important vehicle for communicating with interested members of the program and university.

The program is seriously considering the various recommendations relating to succession

planning and governance of the program. The recommendations with respect to the student society, a convocation prize, and the desirability of securing an endowment for WGST are all endorsed by the program. In its response, the WGST Program indicates “the recommendations are already assisting our goals in strengthening and extending the Women’s and Gender Studies Program.”

**Planning Committee and Provost Response:** The Planning Committee found the external review to be helpful as a platform to strengthen the WGST program. The Planning Committee encourages the WGST Program to consider regular retreats as a vehicle for long-range planning, rather than simply as a response to the 2012 external review. By periodically arranging a retreat of interested and involved academic staff, it will be possible for the program to regularly assess the quality and effectiveness of its program offerings, and make modifications as necessary.

Staffing of the WGST is clearly a significant issue, and the matter of succession planning should be carefully considered by the program (in consultation with the Dean of Arts). Reservations were expressed about maintaining the current division of responsibilities within WGST. Specifically, the director’s view was that the individual who does the core teaching in the program should not be the director. The Planning Committee and the Provost believe that there should be no necessary exclusion of any candidates who have the qualifications and interest in serving as the director of WGST (at the conclusion of the term of the current director).

Strategies to raise the profile of the program should be actively pursued by the program.

Consideration of the resource requirements of the program will be considered as part of the budget process in 2013-2014 and in the years ahead.