Cyclical Review

Executive Summary

Cyclical Review of the Graduate Program in Women’s Studies

Degrees:

Master of Arts with Specialization in Women’s Studies (Collaborative)
Master of Arts Women's Studies
Doctorate in Philosophy Women's studies

Submitted to the:

Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

January 27, 2016

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Senate of the University of Ottawa

September 6, 2016
Executive Summary

Graduate Program in Women’s Studies
Cyclical Review Year 2015-2016

Approved by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Meeting of January 27, 2016

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<tr>
<th>Name of Program Reviewed</th>
<th>Women’s Studies</th>
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<td>Degrees</td>
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<td>• Master of Arts Specialization in Women’s Studies (Collaborative)</td>
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<td>Responsible academic unit</td>
<td>Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences</td>
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<td>Fields</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gender, Power and Representations</td>
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<td>• Women, Rights and Citizenship in a Globalized World</td>
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<td>Final Evaluation</td>
<td>Good quality</td>
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Significant Strengths of the Program

Overall, the program is considered to be of good quality. It is truly interdisciplinary, and the highly collegial faculty and student body show a strong appreciation for, as well as a deep commitment to, diversity in all its forms. The bilingual and multicultural nature of the program is a distinguishing feature, and this is fully operationalized, not only by offering courses in both official languages, but also by incorporating elements from diverse intellectual traditions. Moreover, the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies (IFGS) takes full advantage of its location in the bilingual National Capital Region to invite guest speakers with relevant professional and international experience, as well as to facilitate access to archival and library collections at other institutions in the region, which serve to complement the University of Ottawa’s own well-developed collection in feminist and gender studies.

The program provides welcome opportunities, in both theory and methods courses, for students to explore the connections between the course material and their own research topics, which assists with the timely formulation and completion of their theses or final projects. Additionally, the program incorporates a range of pedagogical approaches both within and beyond standard formats (including the production of creative works).

Students express a high level of satisfaction with faculty support, regarding both comprehensive exam preparation and thesis supervision. They are well prepared to pursue independent research and are indeed publishing and disseminating their work at national and international conferences. Graduates go on to take up opportunities not only in teaching and research, but also in a range of governmental and NGO positions that draw directly on their training in feminist and gender studies.

Areas for Improvement and Enhancement

The diversity of the program offering is not well reflected in its current name (Women’s Studies). The name of the institute was recently changed from the Institute of Women’s Studies to the Institute of...
Feminist and Gender Studies (IFGS). A next logical step would be to change the name of the program to correspond to the name of the institute.

The IFGS has recently reconfigured its undergraduate program to reflect the most contemporary developments in feminist and gender studies. As a further step, the IFGS may wish to evaluate whether the two fields that are currently specified for the graduate program best reflect faculty strengths as well as the interests and needs of graduate students.

With two fully-appointed faculty members and eight cross-appointed faculty, the IFGS is currently able to deliver a quality program; however, it is operating at capacity and opportunities for growth are therefore limited unless additional faculty can be hired. A significant opportunity for program development lies in the area of de-colonization/indigenization. A faculty hire in this area would aid the IFGS considerably, both in terms of developing this area in particular, and supporting program growth more generally. More explicit recognition for faculty contributions to the interdisciplinary collaborative MA would also be welcome and would help to make clear the volume of work involved in delivering the overall graduate program in women’s studies.

Some students expressed the opinion that they do not have many opportunities to have a “voice.” Although the students are represented on the IFGS Council, their own student association appears to be largely defunct. The program would benefit if the students, with support from the IFGS, were to reanimate their association. Additionally, students expressed a desire for an increase in other types of support, such as additional workshops on preparing scholarship applications and professional development workshops.

The program offers the possibility for exceptional students to fast-track from the MA to the PhD; however, the fast-tracking process would benefit from clarification, particularly with regards to who makes the recommendation to fast-track (the supervisor, the Graduate Studies Committee or both).

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the graduate program in Women’s Studies:

1. Change the name of the program to Feminist and Gender Studies and reflect on whether it would be beneficial to modify or eliminate existing fields of study.
2. Pursue an additional faculty hire, potentially in Indigenous feminist scholarship, while also finding ways to recognize more explicitly faculty contributions to the collaborative program.
3. Support students in reanimating the graduate student association, and continue to build on efforts to provide students with professional and academic development opportunities.
4. Clarify the process by which exceptional students can fast-track from the MA to the PhD so that this process includes a joint recommendation from the Graduate Studies Committee and the supervisor.

**Implementation Plan**

**Calendar and Deadlines**

All noted recommendations should be addressed in the next cyclical review, which should be completed...
within seven years and no later than 2022.

Authorities

The authorities who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the recommendations include the Director and the Associate Director and Graduate Studies Coordinator of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, in collaboration with the Dean and Vice-Dean (Graduate Studies) of the Faculty of Social Sciences.