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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	October 14, 2025
FROM	Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President Academic, and Chair, SCUP	PAGES	1/36
RE:	External Review Report and Action Plan for the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (SCUP 25-48)		

At its meeting on October 1, 2025, SCUP reviewed and approved the External Review Report for the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies that resulted from its External Review.

The Educational Goals Assessment Plan was also reviewed and is attached for the information of Senate.

Motion: That Senate approve the Action Plan for the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies that resulted from its External Review.

C: Jen Marchbank, Chair, Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
Laurel Weldon, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Dilson Rassier, Chair, SCUP
FROM Peter Hall, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-
President, Academic
RE: External Review of the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies

DATE September 18, 2025
PAGES 2

Attached are the External Review Report and the Action Plan for the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. The Educational Goals Assessment Plan and constructive feedback from SCUTL are included for information only. The site visit took place at the Burnaby campus from March 31 – April 2, 2025. The external review committee met with students, faculty, staff, and senior administrators.

Excerpt from the External Review Report:

"Despite these external pressures, the GSWS program at Simon Fraser University is in a notably strong position. The program has over and over again demonstrated its stability and resilience due in large part to the concerted efforts of its faculty and leadership. Department members have worked diligently to restructure and strengthen curriculum at the undergraduate level, which has led to the increased coherence and strength of the program. The Unit has also seen consistent growth through strategic hiring of new faculty in collaboration with other Departments, programs, and faculties which has reinforced its capacity to deliver interdisciplinary and innovative curriculum."

Following the site visit, the report of the External Review Committee* for the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies was submitted in May 2025. The reviewers made a number of recommendations based on the Terms of Reference that were provided to them. Subsequently, a meeting was held with the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the chair of the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, and the vice-provost and associate vice-president, academic to consider the recommendations. An action plan was prepared taking into consideration the discussion at the meeting and the contents of the external review report. The action plan has been endorsed by the department and the faculty dean.

Motion:

That SCUP approve and recommend to Senate the Action Plan for the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies that resulted from its external review.

*External Review Committee:

Corinne Mason, Mount Royal University (Chair of External Review Committee)
Tina Chen, University of Manitoba
Krista Johnston, Mount Allison University
Evan Tiffany (internal), Simon Fraser University

Attachments:

1. External Review Report (May 2025)
2. Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Action Plan
3. Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Educational Goals Assessment Plan
4. Feedback on Educational Goals Assessment Plan

cc Laurel Weldon, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
 Jen Marchbank, Chair, Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies

**Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies
Simon Fraser University**

External Review Report

Submitted May 22, 2025

External Review Committee:

Dr. Corinne L. Mason, chair

Dr. Tina Chen

Dr. Krista Johnston

Dr. Evan Tiffany (internal)

Executive Summary

Across the country, gender, women's, and sexuality studies programs are facing a series of overlapping and compounding crises. These include increasing risks to the sustainability of programs because of budget cuts, shifting socio-cultural and political climates, the targeting of critical studies within the larger attack on higher education, and changing geopolitical contexts which have created new precarity for scholars, especially in the areas of research foci and travel safety. Moreover, these programs face challenges in maintaining safe and inclusive classroom environments as 'anti-gender' sentiments take root on university campuses.

Despite these external pressures, the GSWS program at Simon Fraser University is in a notably strong position. The program has over and over again demonstrated its stability and resilience due in large part to the concerted efforts of its faculty and leadership. Department members have worked diligently to restructure and strengthen curriculum at the undergraduate level, which has led to the increased coherence and strength of the program. The Unit has also seen consistent growth through strategic hiring of new faculty in collaboration with other Departments, programs, and faculties which has reinforced its capacity to deliver interdisciplinary and innovative curriculum.

At the same time, the program faces challenges in a few key areas. Workload issues were identified by GSWS faculty as a primary point of concern in the administration and sustainability of the Unit. As we explain in this report, GSWS occupies a critical interdisciplinary space, and this positioning is not always structurally supported or institutionally recognized. GSWS faculty face tensions between workload expectations and actual support, especially for those who hold cross and affiliate appointments where faculty are stretched thin between leadership elsewhere and Departmental expectations in the Unit. Faculty who are fully appointed to GSWS carry the burden of Departmental labour (i.e., chair positions) and are thus also overextended. Furthermore, teaching-stream faculty are overburdened with heavy teaching loads while they continue to excel in research and scholarship beyond their expected duties. Secondments to other offices and leadership positions throughout the university compound these challenges. In response to these pressures, the Unit has decided to only run a course-based Master's program. Currently, the MA is contingent on the supervisory labour of only one faculty member, with others supporting as secondary readers for projects. The lack of recognition for graduate supervision within Tenure and Promotion Criteria seems to be part of the larger issue of workload.

As outlined in this report, the strengths of the program are numerous and significant, and the challenges are primarily structural and financial. The current structure of the

Unit accelerates the risk of faculty burnout and may hinder sustainable program development, especially at the graduate level. Addressing the concerns outlined in this report is crucial for the long-term health of the Unit.

Outline of Site Visit

The reviewers conducted an in-person review of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program at SFU from March 31-April 2, 2025. Reviewers met with members of senior administration; the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; VP and Dean of Graduate Studies; ED, Research Services; SFU Librarians; the GSWS Department Chair; the GSWS Executive Team; Department Staff; GSWS Faculty (including those with joint or affiliate appointments); the Ruth Wynn Woodward Jr. Chair; Graduate Students, and Undergraduate Students. Reviewers were also provided with a comprehensive Self-Study, prepared by various members of the GSWS Department. We thank all members of the Department and of the SFU community for facilitating our work on this review.

Quality of Academic Programs

The GSWS academic program is vibrant and bursting at the seams. Across our conversations with students, faculty members, and administrators, and in the many different forms of data provided to us, it is clear that this is a very successful academic program, providing students with high quality educational experiences. It is evident that teaching is taken seriously by all members of the Unit, at all levels of instruction. The academic program demonstrates considerable breadth in course offerings, as well as areas of unique specialization at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Departmental focus on creative and experiential pedagogy, particularly in the undergraduate program, is also impressive. It is no wonder that several faculty have received SFU and FASS teaching awards in the last few years.

Undergraduate Program

The undergraduate program is strong by all indicators. Enrolments are healthy across the last 5 years, showing a significant increase of 22% in a period where many programs have not seen such robust growth. These increases are no doubt due to the careful revisions to course offerings in the undergraduate program, in both content and format as outlined in the educational goals assessment strategy undertaken since the last review. The measured introduction of online and blended offerings alongside in-person courses has also increased access and interest in GSWS courses. In addition, the work of clearly communicating the opportunities offered by the Department is clearly paying off. According to the enrolment figures provided to us, GSWS is among the top 5 highest enrolled Departments in FASS, with an AFTE enrolment ratio higher than the FASS and SFU averages (as indicated in the figures quoted in the Self-Study). This is particularly impressive given the relatively low number of CFL in the Department, especially when compared to other Departments in the faculty. Per course enrolments

are steady, and particularly strong in the first- and second-year course offerings, and the numbers of declared majors and minors remains robust.

As enrolment continues to grow, there is increasing labour from managing courses, from demands to support students in academic and other ways, and from diversifying course formats to include online, blended, and in-person teaching. While the Department is managing to staff and support these high enrolment numbers, **we suggest that the Unit continue to carefully consider course caps and offerings** with an eye to strategizing around teaching at the first- and second-year levels in particular. Perhaps paring down GWS 100 level offerings so that they can be taught by a number of different instructors within the program would be a way of ensuring teaching capacity and workload is being spread across the Unit. At the middle- and upper-year level, it seems that undergraduate students can access the courses they want and need to complete requirements for the major and minor. Advising provided by Department staff is a crucial support identified by students and faculty. In addition to strategizing around offerings in first and second year courses, **perhaps cross-listing more upper year courses** will provide a further way of spreading teaching labour across GSWS and the other units in which affiliate and jointly appointed faculty are teaching. In order to balance the shifts in curriculum foci that such cross-listing might create, **we endorse the idea presented in the Self-Study to create a common curriculum among faculty teaching GSWS and cross-listed courses**. The work of developing such a resource could also generate important conversation about core readings, concepts, and skills being offered across the expansive course offerings in the Department, dovetailing nicely with ongoing internal processes of curriculum mapping and educational goals assessment.

Faculty identified some issues with structural support for accessibility and inclusion in teaching, particularly in the development of online and blended courses. For instance, support in captioning videos for online and blended courses seems to have been an obstacle. Faculty also identify that **educational technology (currently run through the IT Department) needs to be better integrated with the Accessible Learning Centre**. Given changes among cohorts, faculty also identify the need for more writing support for students across all GSWS programs; this is discussed in greater detail below.

Graduate Programs

In the Self-Study, the Unit expressed concerns about the growth and maintenance of the MA and PhD programs, particularly considering barriers to international applicants imposed by the federal government and the responsibility to meet new minimum funding

requirements. In the Self-Study document, it is noted that the program has been working to address issues identified in the previous external review, including time to completion in the PhD program, and focusing on the course-based (CI) option for the MA program. Both shifts seem to be working well and **GSWS will need to have some careful internal conversations about their MA and PhD program offerings in light of significant changes to the landscape in recent years.** Three interrelated issues surface across the MA and PhD programs: funding, supervision, and course offerings.

Overall, there are some important changes taking place in the GSWS Graduate programs and in the new Faculty of Graduate Studies at SFU. The creation of the BASS funding model is an important step toward providing some sustainable support for MA and PhD students. Centralized record-keeping regarding funding and time to completion will also provide GSWS with clearer information about their students. The Unit expressed some concern about the ways that the new BASS funding model will increase their financial commitments to PhD students, indicating that this will mean that the Department can only support 2 PhD students at a time. The funding issue is compounded by the stretched capacity for mentorship and supervision. However, data provided by the Faculty of Graduate Studies indicated GSWS already meets the required minimum; so evidence-based engagement that considers current and future funding sources is needed.

Capacity for graduate student supervision is stretched, particularly given the significant commitments to undergraduate teaching and service work (often to multiple units) that comes from having a large number of faculty in the Unit holding either joint or affiliate appointments. **We recommend that the Department map out the capacity of faculty for supervision in the MA and PhD program;** more clarity in terms of capacity will also help with recruiting graduate students. **We recommend that the Unit consider recognizing graduate student supervision through defining normative expectations, possible provision of a course release for supervision beyond normative expectations, or a bump in the TPC process,** as outlined in greater detail in the next section. We recognize that this alone will not fully address the shortage of faculty supervisors for the graduate program, and that teaching faculty are not eligible to supervise graduate students.

Course offerings for MA and PhD students were also identified as a challenge for students, faculty, and GSWS admin. Students indicated that there are limited graduate course options, with a reliance on upper year undergraduate add-on courses. When asked if they had to choose between more options (including undergrad level add-ons) or more graduate student only courses, the group was divided. While some felt strongly that they wanted more course options in any format, others indicated that they would

rather see more graduate-only courses. When the issue was raised with faculty and the program executive council, enrolment issues (i.e. the requirement that there be at least 6 students enrolled in order for a course to run) were also raised. We make further recommendations regarding course offerings in each program below.

While the changes being implemented in response to the last review are showing good results, continued attention to the reorganization of the MA program is necessary. Time to completion and cohort issues are both showing improvement, and the changes implemented have clearly been deeply student-centred. We were surprised to learn that MA students do not have designated supervisors, but rather the graduate program chair serves as program coordinator and first reader on all of the MA field exams. This is unsustainable for the Graduate Chair and is not meeting the mentorship needs of those in the MA program. While some MA students expressed the sentiment that they have been well supported in the program, many told us that they need more mentors, connection to the GSWS faculty, and community-based career development. **We recommend that the Unit develop a way to spread the work of supervising MA students across faculty in the Department for equitably.** As part of this process, we recommend that the Unit consider formulating explicit normative expectations with respect to graduate supervision in their TPC guidelines. As part of this process, **we recommend that the Department add a third stream in the MA program: course-based (CI) and Master's Research Project (MRP)/Thesis (both of which are technically already program options), as well as a Co-operative education option. The creation of a co-op pathway in the MA program can address student interests in workplace readiness, career connections, and networking.** A specific co-op pathway for GSWS could potentially also assist in supporting the work of mentoring MA students. Eventually, once community and organizational connections have been fostered through the MA pathway, this might also lead to more co-op opportunities for students in the undergraduate program.

Providing these options will make it easier to identify supports needed by students in the program, as well as supervisory potential. While some faculty may not be willing to step forward as second-readers for CI Master's students because of the current TPC, supervising the MRP option may prove more enticing and easier to recognize via the TPC process (see further recommendations below).

At the MA level, the program has been considering a capstone course, and we think this is also an idea worth pursuing. The **creation of an MA capstone course for the MRP/Thesis options** could help to connect the professional development training provided in the first year of the program to the community-based concerns raised by students at the end of the program. While we understand and respect the Department's

commitment to the two professional development courses, **we also recommend that one of these courses be moved to the second year of the program** as students indicated to us that this is the time when professional development is most crucial to advancing through the final stages of the MA. This transition might further assist in establishing a co-op pathway. In addition, moving one of the professional development courses to the second year of the program, might facilitate **the creation of a fall term course, online module, or workshop series focused on the fundamentals of gender studies analysis** to address any potential gaps or unevenness among students in the group, while still fostering the growth of a cohort.

Several faculty members expressed concerns about the level of preparation of incoming graduate students in the MA and PhD programs and the creation of such a course - or, alternatively, the intentional refocusing of the Feminist Theory course - might serve to build a sense of community among the incoming cohort as well as establishing foundational skills and knowledge. Some faculty members similarly mentioned that there has been conversation within the Unit about the creation of an online module on gender studies fundamentals which could identify key readings and skills for students to review before the beginning of the graduate program. If this idea is pursued, **we recommend providing someone with a course release in order to develop this module.** Whether provided as a stand-alone course, in workshop format, or as an online module before students arrive on campus, such innovations will foster a greater sense of coherence within the program as well as improving the quality of TAs in the program, which could in turn prove beneficial to balancing faculty workload.

We understand that the PhD program can likely support a maximum of 2 PhD students per year, given the new funding model. **We recommend that the Unit consider staggering admissions: admitting PhD students every two to three years to create a cohort of PhD students.** This will help to ensure sufficient enrollment levels to run stand-alone graduate classes and provide the opportunity for available funding to accumulate over a two- or three-year period, thus bolstering Departmental resources to support PhD students. This may also provide an expanded timeline for the application to and securing of immigration documents where needed. It may also address issues related to graduate student supervision in slowing down the pace of requests for supervisors.

PhD students indicated that they have had more one-to-one support from supervisors than Master's students reported, but also shared that they have had more professional development around alternative-academic job preparation than preparation for the academic job market.

Overall, the academic programs in GSWS at SFU are strong, vibrant and inspiring. Attending to some of these specific issues in the MA and PhD programs, as well as faculty teaching and supervisory capacity, will ensure that these programs continue to thrive without accelerating faculty burnout.

Quality of Faculty Research

GSWS has a very strong research culture, and faculty are incredibly successful in terms of both publications and grant capture. Since 2018, GSWS faculty have held numerous external grants from diverse external funding agencies, including Mitacs-Accelerate, Canadian Institute of Health Research, SSHRC-Knowledge Synthesis Grant, SSHRC Connection Grant, SSHRC-Partnership Engage Grant, SSHRC Insight Grant, and SSHRC-Insight Development Grant, Multi-site Interdisciplinary Research Grant (Hong Kong Baptist University), and the Women and Gender Equality Fund.

GSWS faculty have also made good use of smaller pots of funding from the university including the SSHRC-SFU, SFU University Publications Fund, SFUVPR-VPR Grant Bridge Funding, SFUVPR-VPR Travel Grant, the University Publications Fund, Faculty of Environment Spark Grant Award, FASS Kickstarter Seed Grant, David Lam Seed Grant, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Project Plan (Transforming Inquiry into Learning + Teaching).

While the faculty's journal article and book chapter publications are too numerous to account for here, it is particularly commendable that 7 books have been published or are forthcoming by GSWS faculty since 2020 (1 under review, 2 under contract, 1 in progress).

Beyond quantitative success, the research produced by GSWS faculty is both interdisciplinary and novel. Faculty in GSWS are publishing quality research and creative projects with clear impacts in their fields, some of which has been recognized by national boards and associations (e.g., Ruth Benedict Book Prize for Outstanding Monograph, Association for Queer Anthropology; PROSE Book Award in Anthropology/Sociology).

In GSWS, faculty members' research is quite diverse with a few key threads connecting their work. Faculty in GSWS share interests in transnationalism, empire and colonialism, queer and trans studies, diasporic life, global health and illness, and media and cultural studies. One thing that we heard from faculty— especially from early career scholars in the department— is that the burden of service and leadership in other programs, institutes, and offices makes it difficult for GSWS colleagues to connect

around research and scholarship. **We suggest that the Department create some kind of opportunity for faculty members to regularly share their ongoing research projects.** While time and capacity are limited, it might be possible to shift how many administrative/committee meetings are held per term to allow GSWS faculty to build and sustain a generative and stimulating Departmental life with an ongoing event such as a 'brown bag' lunch series.

The faculty's specialization in Global Asia, Health, and Indigenous Studies is particularly unique to GSWS at SFU. As outlined in the Self-Study, GSWS has worked diligently to increase the quantity and quality of its communications, which is impressive and well supported by dedicated and talented staff. **We suggest that they continue in this direction by further fleshing-out what makes GSWS at SFU different from other women's, gender and sexuality studies programs in B.C., and in Canada more generally.** Better understanding and communicating these threads of specialization in the department would be especially helpful for graduate student recruitment, including PhD and Postdoctoral students who could support the faculty's intensive research programs.

The Ruth Wynn Woodward (RWW) Chair, supported by the RWW Endowment, is an important position in the Department for creating and sustaining a robust academic environment. This position is community-engaged and aims to nurture both social justice research and the university's connection with equity-deserving communities. From our understanding, the RWW Chair has recently shifted from a prestigious visiting faculty chair to a limited term faculty position because of financial constraints related to sessional/contract faculty. **We suggest that the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FASS) find a way to ensure that GSWS is receiving enough funding to cover the teaching load required to run their Undergraduate and Graduate programs in order to free-up the RWW Chair position to once again host thought leaders in women's, gender and sexuality studies.** And the Unit should commit to supporting the RWW Chair by regularly attending their events and initiatives. This endowed chair is aligned with SFU's Strategic Research Plan to bolster "Engagement with Partners or Communities." If supported fully, the RWW chair will be able to support visiting scholars' community-engaged research, which will lead to a greater impact at SFU and in the broader community. If this chair position continues to be used to support the research of early career scholars, we suggest that the Unit think about the possibility of using this chair as a pathway to hire new members into the Department.

We also recommend that the Unit hire a Canadian Research Chair (CRC). This is a department with significant research strength. A CRC in GSWS would amplify the robust research in the Unit and help to bring GSWS into the larger research ecosystem

at SFU and beyond. This CRC should contribute to the existing research specializations of the Unit to strengthen the work already being done, and to make possible collaborative external funding grants as a way to fund graduate students. In addition to reinforcing the research culture of the Unit, this CRC would ensure the future strengths of the graduate program because the faculty member in this position could focus their teaching efforts in graduate supervision. A CRC in GSWS would also serve as FASS and SFU recognition of the sustained and historic leadership of GSWS in advancing equity, diversity, inclusion at SFU.

Administration & Service

As a small Department, GSWS faculty are overburdened with administration and service. While this may also be true of other small Departments at SFU, there are particularities in the workloads of GSWS faculty that have created a pronounced and unsustainable administrative and service burden.

One piece of this larger puzzle is the workload allocations of cross-appointed and affiliate faculty. GSWS currently has 8 continuing faculty lines (CFL) who are fully appointed in the Department, but 2 of those faculty have 50% affiliate appointments in non-Departmental programs (i.e. Labour Studies and Global Asia), and 3 of those faculty are jointly appointed with other Departments (i.e., Indigenous Studies, Urban Studies, and Geography), 1 of whom is jointly appointed to a different Faculty (i.e., Faculty of Environment). In our assessment, the GSWS Department has made some important and strong hires, but it has done so often at the expense of their own program. By sharing hires with other Departments, programs, and faculties, GSWS has illustrated its willingness and ability to collaborate across disciplines and to engage in creative pathways to grow the Department. However, the Department is now navigating the impacts of sharing its faculty and their workloads with other Departments, programs, and faculties.

In our assessment, the outcome of this collaborative and creative Departmental culture in GSWS is unsustainable workloads. Each fully-appointed GSWS faculty member is too often serving as Chair of the Department, Graduate Chair, or Undergraduate Chair, in addition to serving on the Department's Tenure and Promotion Committee. Faculty's teaching workloads (including developing new courses, new modalities for ongoing courses, and graduate programming in other Departments) and their service workloads are taking a toll on their ability to focus on research. Without reprieve, we expect to see increased faculty burn-out. **To support the GSWS faculty and to avoid administrative and service burn-out, we suggest that the Department consider seeking an external Department Chair (and Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs**

in the future) who holds the values and understands the future direction of the GSWS Department. GSWS might look to larger Departments in cognate disciplines (such as Sociology) to solicit support for the administrative and service burden in the Department.

We also suggest that the next CFL hire in GSWS be fully appointed in the GSWS Department and should be in the teaching, scholarship, and service stream. The excellence of the GSWS undergraduate program, research productivity of faculty, and administrative leadership of Departmental members needs to be supported by a CFL hire with a full workload (teaching, research and service) in GSWS. This is especially important for GSWS to grow and strengthen its graduate programs by providing fulsome support for graduate teaching and supervision. The GSWS Department has supported FASS and other faculties with their hiring needs, and it is now time for the Department to strengthen its own ranks. We agree with the GSWS Self-Study that the hiring focus should be experiential learning and community-engagement, especially since we have recommended that the MA program include a Co-op stream in the future because students articulated their interest in community-connected and service learning opportunities.

Another means to avoid burnout, and to share the labour of administrative and teaching loads, is to better disburse the teaching and mentoring of students at the Surrey campus. Currently, this labour falls onto one person, which also means that Surrey-based students do not have access to the entire faculty complement. **We suggest that the Unit discuss how teaching in Surrey can be rotated among GSWS faculty.** We understand from the Self-Study that the future medical school will be located in Surrey, and we think strengthening the Unit's connection to the campus will also strengthen the ties between GSWS and the medical school, especially if courses in health and embodiment can be offered at Surrey on occasion.

GSWS has a long list of Associate faculty who are asked to serve on Tenure and Promotion committees. **We suggest that GSWS discuss the possibility of further refining roles and responsibilities of Associate faculty to the GSWS Department.** Perhaps, Associate faculty could serve a 3-5 year term in which they commit to sitting on 1 Tenure and Promotion Committee, 1 other Departmental committee and/or supervise 1 graduate student from GSWS. Clearly, there is university-wide support for the feminist, queer, trans, Indigenous, and social justice work happening in the GSWS Department, and Associate faculty benefit from being 'associated' with it. In return, Associate faculty might be asked to contribute more to the Department in order to be listed.

The other piece of this larger puzzle is related to the secondment of GSWS faculty (cross-appointed and affiliate) to leadership roles in other programs, offices, and institutes (e.g., Dean's Office 2020-23, Faculty Teaching Fellow 2022-24, Global Asia Studies 2022- present, Urban Studies, 2025+).

Importantly, **we suggest that FASS ensure that the teaching workloads of all GSWS faculty who are seconded to other offices, programs, and institutes are backfilled with appropriate funding for limited term teaching.** When faculty are seconded for a longer term, GSWS should be granted multi-year limited term appointments (including any administrative leaves following a secondment).

In addition to these secondments of GSWS faculty, all faculty members currently serve or have recently serviced on significant and labour-intensive university-wide committees including the Medical Arts and Social Sciences committee, the Chair's Advisory Council (CAC) to the Dean, University's EDI Advisory Council, and Senate Standing Committees.

In our assessment, the GSWS Department has a competency issue—faculty in the Department are strong, thoughtful, and diligent colleagues who are too regularly 'tapped' for administration and other service. **We suggest that the GSWS Department use a focused meeting or retreat to map-out who is doing what service, where, and why in order to consider how faculty time, energy, and labour might be returned to the Department.** Right now, faculty are very busy building, sustaining, and bettering the other programs and Departments, FASS, and SFU-at-large. Taken together, this is having a negative impact on GSWS being able to build, better, and sustain the Department, especially its graduate studies programs.

In relation to graduate studies programs, we noticed an issue in the Department with supervision. In the Self-Study, and in conversation with Departmental members, it was made clear that the current organizational structure of the course-based Master's program is a response to the capacity limitations of the faculty to supervise major research projects and theses. And, Departmental members communicated to us that they struggle to create committees for PhD students because of the small size of the Department. **As we suggested above, Associate faculty should commit to graduate supervision to be listed in order to support the graduate programs.**

A major concern that came up over and over again is that there is no recognition for graduate student supervision in tenure and promotion. **The Department's Tenure and Promotion Criteria should include graduate studies supervision in GSWS.** Currently, the language in the TPC criteria under Teaching is "openness to graduate

supervision.” **We suggest that this language be altered to “evidence of effective graduate supervision” and outline normative expectations.** The Unit could hold conversations with similar sized Departments in FASS (such as Philosophy) about how their TPC recognizes graduate supervision. In the section on Faculty Workload in C.A., the Chair is meant to take into consideration a number of factors when assigning teaching workloads. In the case of a faculty member with a high graduate supervision workload, the Chair can and should offer amendments to teaching workloads, such as assigning courses with lower enrollments or assigning courses that do not require new course preparation. Where appropriate, teaching workload should be reassigned. The Chair might also consider a reduction in expectations for Departmental service for members with high graduate supervision workloads. **In the area of Service, the Department should also consider adding TPC criteria for graduate supervision over and above normative expectations. We also recommend that there is ongoing collegial review and discussion about graduate supervision loads so that teaching at all levels of the program is equally shared.**

Some of the environmental issues for work in the GSWS Department are complex. We understand that the issues with washroom malfunctions are due to old piping throughout the building that is expensive to fix. **We suggest that FASS work diligently to ensure that the issues in the washroom are addressed as soon as possible and to keep the Department informed of progress and timelines.**

The issue of safety and security could be more easily and readily addressed. The corridor that houses the GSWS Department is not a space conducive to welcoming non-SFU community members. That is, the hallway where GSWS is located is long, narrow, filled with faculty and staff offices. It does not hold offices for graduate students or TAs and does not have space for community or student congregation (with the exception of a small lounge dedicated to the Department and its members). **We suggest that the GSWS Department be open only when at least two front-line staff are working together (e.g., 9am-5pm). The corridor should be locked and only accessible by an employee swipe-card or key in the early morning, late evening, and overnight.** These hours of availability could be openly and transparently communicated to students in the program wishing to use the lounge, and arrangements could be made for access to the lounge outside of these hours on an as-needed basis, perhaps via the Department staff.

While SFU aims to be an open campus, the ongoing threats against and hostilities toward gender studies faculty, students, and staff (especially QTBIPOC individuals) have to be taken seriously. **We recommend robust administrative consultations with GSWS faculty and staff about safety measures, arrangements for working**

alone, potential threats in offices and classrooms, and responses to other emergencies so that the specific experiences of GSWS faculty and staff can inform SFUs safety and security measures.

The major safety and security issues raised by GSWS faculty are related to international travel, especially the recent and rapid changes to crossing the border into the US. Not only have faculty in GSWS, like their colleagues in other Departments, lost access to national funding via the US, faculty no longer have access to international conferences with their faculty associations and other opportunities to connect with research partners and peers. This changing geo-political context is not only US-based; other geographies have become more hostile to researchers or have become 'high risk', which has challenged the research programs of some GSWS faculty. Given the precarity of faculty in GSWS because of the locations and topics they study, and because many GSWS faculty are racialized and/or 2SLGBTQIA+, **we suggest that the administration hold robust consultations with GSWS faculty about their concerns for research and conference travel and take seriously their recommendations via an Action Plan. We also suggest that the administration and faculty union consult with GSWS faculty about the impact of geo-political changes to research programs to better understand and account for the impacts on timelines toward tenure and promotion.**

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Decolonization

At both Department and individual levels, GSWS is rooted in applying equity, social justice, and anti-oppression practices. GSWS is particularly attuned to the needs of students, colleagues, and SFU staff members from marginalized and minoritized sexualities and genders. They have an appreciation of the ways in which intentional self-reflective everyday practices and interpersonal relationships are necessary foundations for their work.

Institutional accountability for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives is often tracked in terms of who is represented and who is under-represented. Through intentional hiring – including identifying areas of scholarship where hiring of individuals from systemically marginalized groups who are historically underrepresented in academia– GSWS strongly contributes to faculty diversity at SFU. This includes individuals with lived experience of various intersectional systemic marginalizations, including race, gender, sexualities. Students shared that the diversity amongst faculty contributes to their sense of belonging. GSWS has also demonstrated success in retention of diverse faculty members. **Given GSWS success in these areas, and the superb research record of the unit (as mentioned above), we strongly support**

SFU working with GSWS for a Canada Research Chair. As we heard from the ED, Research, SFU is still working to meet EDI requirements of the CRC Program. Strong equity-based practices should identify units with long-term track records in meaningful recruitment and retention of scholars with lived experience of systemic marginalization, and GSWS is one of these units.

At the Department level, we encourage GSWS to continue addressing equitable distribution of workload, as discussed above in relation to Tenure and Promotion guidelines. GSWS is a small Department with strong collegial interpersonal relationships and culture of mutual support and respect. This can mean, however, that within the Department, agreement and consensus for problem solving takes precedence. GSWS may want to consider how power dynamics within and between Department members, particularly across career stages, can be more directly addressed for key discussion, as this will have long-term benefit for the strength of the Unit. Where appropriate, this might include external facilitators. **GSWS may also want to work with FASS to strengthen mentorship opportunities for pre-tenure faculty.** Mentorship from individuals outside the Department who will not participate in tenure or promotion decisions broadens networks, provides individuals with an understanding of the workload, practices, and procedures of FASS and SFU beyond GSWS, and supports career-advancement.

Finally, FASS and other central units are encouraged to review and track reliance on GSWS faculty for committees and key positions. We were not sure if the amount of service beyond GSWS reflected an 'equity-burden' to meet representational aims of committees, or if the service loads were commensurate with members of other Departments. Where individuals or Departments are required to take on service duties beyond normative expectations to ensure diverse representation, this should be recognized in Tenure and Promotion guidelines, as well as through adequate resourcing (as appropriate). **GSWS members demonstrate a strong willingness to participate in FASS and SFU-wide collegial governance; but as recommended above an equity-based review of these commitments is necessary for sustainability at the individual, Department, and FASS level.**

The commitment to decolonization is most evident in course content, including recently introduced courses and faculty research specialization in Global Indigeneity. This is an important first step, and we encourage GSWS to continue to collaborate with Indigenous Studies, particularly to familiarize students with offerings in each unit that may further their interests. This may include identifying courses in GSWS that would be accepted for the Indigenous Studies minor, and vice versa, and making this clear on web pages about the Minor programs in each Unit.

Decolonization and Reconciliation, however, extends beyond course content and programs. While FASS and SFU Strategic Plans name advancing reconciliation, statistics on Indigenous student enrolment, retention, and graduation rates, or for Indigenous scholars, were not readily available. The information provided indicates a very low number of Indigenous students in FASS (21 in 2022-23, 22 in 2023-24, 52 in 2024-25), with no self-identified Indigenous undergraduate or graduate students in the Unit the previous 5 years. The FASS Interim Reconcili-Action Plan identifies various commitments to Indigenous students, staff, and faculty. However, these measures, actions, and programs were not mentioned directly in any meetings with staff at various levels (central, FASS, Department), students, or faculty during our visit. **We recommend that greater effort at all levels take place to identify how the work for Reconciliation and Decolonization will be practiced, coordinated, resourced, and supported in future years.** This will be important as GSWS builds courses and specialization in Global Indigeneity; and is also necessary to meet goals of increasing recruitment and success of Indigenous scholars, students, and staff in the Department, FASS, and SFU.

In the current context of attacks on equity, diversity, inclusion –including gender diversity and inclusivity– it is important that FASS and SFU Senior Leadership listen to impacts on faculty, students, and staff. Gender, sexuality, and women’s studies programs are at the forefront of social justice scholarship, teaching, and community engagement. When this aligns with institutional and societal goals, they are often featured as is seen in various SFU publications. However, GSWS has been active in these spaces long before they were institutional priorities and will continue to be even if public and institutional discourse shifts. As such, **clear and consistent messaging and action from senior leadership about academic freedom, human rights protection, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, which is essential for GSWS to continue social justice, community-engaged, intersectional work and part of their research and teaching.** GSWS speaks from a position of strength and expertise, and the Unit should embrace this position as they contribute to FASS and SFU actions.

Future Directions

In our view, the future plans of the unit are both appropriate and manageable. Recent expansion toward research areas in Global Indigeneity, Data Science, and Health and Embodiment make good sense given the strengths and focal points of faculty in the Department. We understand that the Department has identified a need for a new position in experiential and community-based learning. As indicated in the Self-Study,

this could provide further support to FASS One, align well with the strategic priorities of the Department, FASS and SFU. We think this could serve the program well and **reiterate our position that this should be a CFL to GSWS** (not an affiliate or joint appointment) and be hired in teaching, research and service. We note that such a position could also respond to the need for more mentorship and community-based opportunities identified by MA students. Additionally, this position could be an ideal bridge between the Department and the co-op program, in time leading to new opportunities for co-op placements at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Faculty also indicated that they have been **considering participation in or creation of an EDI certificate, either as a 1 credit course (a micro credit) or as a bundling of currently existing courses**. This seems to be an initiative worth considering, if faculty capacity and interest can support it.

In addition to the vision outlined in the Self-Study, other areas for future planning mentioned during the review include **the potential creation of an accelerated pathway from the MA to the PhD program, collaboration with the new medical school at SFU, and a new online section of an introductory course**. These are all ideas worth further consideration and exploration, but only to the extent that they can be balanced with faculty capacity and program integrity.

As the program reflects on the impressive work they have undertaken since the last review and charts their course forward, we reiterate that the program is impressive and stable, and that further expenditures of faculty time and energy should be strategic and balanced to maintain the integrity of the Unit and protect faculty workload.

Summary of Recommendations

Undergraduate Program

1. We suggest that the Unit continue to carefully consider course caps and the number of offerings especially at the first- and second-year levels to decrease faculty's teaching capacity and workload.
2. To provide more courses in the third and fourth year, we suggest cross-listing upper year courses to better spread teaching labour across GSWS and the other Departments in which affiliate and jointly appointed faculty are teaching.
3. We endorse the idea presented in the Self-Study to create a common curriculum among faculty teaching GSWS and cross-listed courses.
4. To support faculty who are developing and teaching online and blended courses, educational technology (currently run through the IT department) needs to be better integrated with the Accessible Learning Centre.

Graduate Programs

5. GSWS should undertake careful internal conversation about their MA and PhD program offerings in light of significant changes to the landscape in recent years.
6. We recommend that the Department map out the capacity of faculty for supervision in the MA and PhD program.
7. We recommend that the Unit develop a way to spread the work of supervising MA students across faculty in the Department for equitably. As part of this process, we recommend that the Unit consider formulating explicit normative expectations with respect to graduate supervision in their TPC guidelines (see Administration & Service recommendations below).
8. We recommend that the Department consider adding a third stream in the MA program: course-based (CI) and Master's Research Project (MRP)/Thesis, as well as a Co-operative education option. The creation of a co-op pathway in the MA program can address student interests in workplace readiness, career connections, and networking.
9. We recommend creating an MA capstone course for the MRP/Thesis options that could help to connect the professional development training provided in the first year of the program to the community-based concerns raised by students at the end of the program.
10. We recommend that one of the two professional development courses be moved to the second year of the program when students are thinking more seriously about their post-graduate careers.
11. We recommend that the Unit create a fall term course, online module, or workshop series focused on the fundamentals of gender studies analysis to address any potential gaps or unevenness among students in the group, while

still fostering the growth of a cohort. If this idea is pursued, we recommend providing someone with a course release in order to develop this module.

12. We recommend that the Unit consider staggering admissions: admitting PhD students every two to three years to create a cohort of PhD students.

Quality of Faculty Research

13. We suggest that the Department create some kind of opportunity for faculty members to regularly share their ongoing research projects to grow the intellectual community within the Unit.
14. We suggest the Unit spend time fleshing-out what makes GSWS at SFU different from other women's, gender and sexuality studies programs in B.C., and in Canada more generally, to improve graduate student recruitment and to better communicate the research strengths within the Unit.
15. We suggest that FASS ensure that GSWS is receiving enough funding to cover the teaching load required to run their Undergraduate and Graduate programs in order to free-up the RWW Chair position to once again host thought leaders in women's, gender and sexuality studies.
16. We recommend that the Unit hire a Canadian Research Chair (CRC) to contribute to the existing research specializations of the Unit, to strengthen the work already being done, to make possible collaborative external funding grants to fund graduate students, and to sustain the leadership of the Unit in advancing EDI at SFU.

Administration & Service

17. To support the GSWS faculty and to avoid administrative burn-out, we suggest that the department consider seeking an external Department Chair (and Undergraduate and Graduate Chairs in the future) who holds the values and understands the future direction of the GSWS Department.
18. We recommend that the next CFL hire in GSWS be fully appointed in the GSWS department and be hired into the teaching, scholarship, and service stream.
19. We suggest that the Unit discuss how teaching in Surrey can be rotated among GSWS faculty to more robustly support the campus and to sustain connections with the future medical school.
20. We suggest that GSWS discuss the possibility of further refining roles and responsibilities of Associate faculty to the GSWS department, including commitment to graduate supervision.
21. We suggest that FASS ensure that the teaching workloads of all GSWS faculty who are seconded to other offices, programs, and institutes are backfilled with appropriate funding for limited term teaching.

22. We suggest that the GSWS Department use a focused meeting or retreat to map-out who is doing what service, where, and why in order to consider how faculty time, energy, and labour might be returned to the Department.
23. The Department's Tenure and Promotion Criteria should include graduate studies supervision in GSWS. We suggest that this language be altered to "evidence of effective graduate supervision" and outline normative expectations. In the area of Service, the department should consider adding TPC criteria for graduate supervision over and above normative expectations. We also recommend that there is ongoing collegial review and discussion about graduate supervision loads so that teaching at all levels of the program are equally shared.
24. We suggest that FASS work diligently to ensure that the issues in the washroom are addressed as soon as possible and to keep the department informed of progress and timelines.
25. We suggest that the GSWS department be open only when at least two front-line staff are working together (e.g., 9am-5pm). The corridor should be locked and only accessible by an employee swipe-card or key in the early morning, late evening, and overnight.
26. We recommend robust administrative consultations with GSWS faculty and staff about safety measures, arrangements for working alone, potential threats in offices and classrooms, and responses to other emergencies so that the specific experiences of GSWS faculty and staff can inform SFUs safety and security measures.
27. We suggest that the administration hold robust consultations with GSWS faculty about their concerns for research and conference travel and to take their recommendations seriously via an Action Plan. We also suggest that the administration and faculty union consult with GSWS faculty about the impact of geo-political challenges to research programs to better understand and account for the impacts on timelines toward tenure and promotion.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization

28. We recommend SFU Research Office and FASS work with GSWS to identify a Canada Research Chair that will further contribute to diversity at SFU, and that they do so in recognition of the success of GSWS in recruiting and retaining diverse faculty members.
29. We encourage GSWS and FASS to explore ways to address power-relations and institutional knowledge in decision-making, particularly related to career-stage. This may include mentorship programs or use of external facilitators, where appropriate.
30. We encourage FASS to implement a system to track faculty service workload, with attention to equity-burdens and need for diverse representation and, where

such equity-burdens exist, to develop –in consultation with impacted Units – mechanisms for recognition and support for Units and individuals.

31. We recommend greater effort at all levels –department, FASS, SFU– to identify how the work for Reconciliation and Decolonization will be practiced, coordinated, resourced, and supported in future years.
32. We recommend clear and consistent messaging and action from senior leadership to support academic freedom, human rights protection, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of SFU scholars, which is essential for GSWS to continue social justice, community-engaged, intersectional work as part of their research and teaching. We further recommend this be done in consultation with GSWS faculty and based on needs as articulated by GSWS faculty.

Future Directions

33. We reiterate our recommendation that GSWS hire a CFL in the Unit within the teaching, research, and service stream in the area(s) of community-engagement and experiential learning to support the graduate programs, especially a coop pathway in the MA program.
34. If there is capacity and interest, GSWS could consider the creation of an EDI certificate either as a 1 credit course (microcredit) or as a bundling of currently existing courses.
35. The Unit might consider the creation of an accelerated pathway from the MA to the PhD program.
36. GSWS might consider a formalized collaboration with the new medical school at SFU.
37. The Unit might develop a new online section of an introductory course.



External Review Action Plan

Section A

To be completed by the Responsible Unit Person, e.g., Chair or Director

Unit Under Review: Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies (GSWS)

Date of Review Site Visit: March 31 – April 2, 2025

Responsible Unit Person: Helen Leung (until August 31) and Jennifer Marchbank (Sep 1 onwards)

Faculty Dean: Laurel Weldon

Notes

- 1. It is not expected that every recommendation made by the External Review Committee be covered by this Action Plan. The major thrusts of the report should be identified—some consolidation of the recommendations may be possible while other recommendations of lesser importance may be excluded.*
- 2. Attach the required plan to assess the success of the Educational Goals as a separate document (Senate 2013).*
- 3. Should any additional response be warranted, it should be attached as a separate document.*

1. PROGRAMMING

1.1	Action(s) (description of what is going to be done)
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Undergraduate:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 1.1.1. | Review large-enrolment First- and Second-year course offerings to identify the optimum course cap for each to ensure a balanced workload amongst faculty members. |
| 1.1.2. | Review upper-division courses with reference to the curricular themes to develop a resource for students that signposts core concepts, readings, and skills being offered across the expansive course offerings in the department. |

Graduate:

1.1.3. Undertake an annual review of faculty members' upcoming capacity for graduate supervision, including associate faculty members' willingness and capacity to serve on supervisory committees, and clearly communicate who will be able to supervise incoming PhD students in recruitment communication.

1.1.4. Review departmental expectation and recognition of graduate student supervision; clarify different types and workload expectation of supervisory roles including senior supervision of PhD students, service on thesis committee, and mentorship of MA students.

1.1.5. Develop a Work-In-Progress (WIP) Series which requires graduate students to participate in monthly seminars with faculty members to discuss and present specific issues in relation to their work in progress. Associate faculty members will also be invited to participate. The WIP Series addresses several of the external reviewers' suggestions, including spreading supervision and mentorship of MA students amongst faculty members, advancing professional development beyond the required PD courses in the first year, providing more opportunities for students and faculty members to connect with each other and with Associate faculty members.

1.1.6 Create an on-line module GSWS 810 on the fundamentals of GSWS analysis to address any potential gaps or unevenness among incoming MA students which can be recommended or required for students.

1.1.7. Incorporate the suggestion of a co-cop element in the MA program in a proposed CFL position focussed on experiential learning and community engagement in our Faculty Renewal Plan.

1.2	Resource Implications (if any)
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Support from the Dean's Office will be necessary to assist the Graduate Chair and Graduate Curriculum Committee members to develop 1.1.5 and 1.1.6.

1.3	Expected Completion Date(s):
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1.3.1 The WIP Series will be developed in 2025-26 and piloted and reviewed in 2026-2027, with a plan to formalize it as requirement starting in Fall, 2027.

1.3.2 GSWS 810 will be explored and developed in 2025-26 in consultation with faculty members and current MA students, with a pilot ready to go online in 2026-2027.

2. RESEARCH

2.1	Action(s) (description of what is going to be done)
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2.1.1 Integrate the suggestion for faculty members to regularly share their research into the WIP Series, where faculty members use issues from their ongoing research as points of discussion and intellectual exchange with graduate students. Associate faculty members will also be invited to participate if they are available.

2.1.2 Regularly update the GSWS website with stories and interviews about faculty members' research and teaching, interviews with faculty members, and other innovative ways to highlight GSWS's distinctiveness and unique strengths.


2.1.3 Review and develop creative ways to use the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowment funds, such as adding an additional visiting research fellow position to attract prominent researchers on sabbatical to come to SFU for research collaboration and graduate student mentoring.

2.2	Resource Implications (if any)
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2.3	Expected Completion Date(s)
2.3.1 The WIP Series will be developed in 2025-26 and piloted and reviewed in 2026-2027, with a plan to formalize it as requirement starting in Fall, 2027.	
2.3.2 Ongoing.	
3. ADMINISTRATION	
3.1	Action(s) (description of what is going to be done)
3.1.1 Host a focus session at the upcoming Annual Planning Meeting to review (1) the distribution of departmental service, (2) teaching responsibilities in Surrey, and (3) administrative service outside of GSWS and discuss (4) whether there is balanced energy and focus on GSWS service and (5) what additional resources and mentorship opportunities would further support faculty members in their service responsibilities.	
3.2	Resource Implications (if any)
3.3	Expected Completion Date(s)
3.3.1 These issues will be reflected in the agenda of the 2026 Annual Planning Meeting.	
4. WORKING ENVIRONMENT	
4.1	Action(s) (description of what is going to be done)
4.1.1 Continue consultation with the FASS office on hygiene, safety and security in our work area.	
4.2	Resource Implications (if any)
4.3	Expected Completion Date(s)
Ongoing.	
5. OTHER: _____	

5.1	Action(s) (description of what is going to be done)
<p>5.1.1 Strengthen mentorship opportunities for pre-tenure faculty by encouraging faculty members to participate in (1) the new university-wide mentorship program developed by the VP-A's office to be piloted in January, 2026 (2) mentorship resources provided by Academic Women (AW).</p> <p>5.1.2 In addition to ongoing departmental work on Reconciliation and Indigenization including developing our research and teaching field in Global Indigeneity, recruiting Indigenous community leaders as adjunct faculty to collaborate on outreach work, and developing a faculty renewal plan that aims to recruit scholars working on Indigenous issues, we will continue to consult with and contribute to the many ongoing initiatives developed by the FASS Reconciliation Working Group.</p>	
5.2	Resource Implications (if any)
5.3	Expected Completion Date(s)
Ongoing.	

The above action plan has been considered by the unit under review and has been discussed and agreed to by the Faculty Dean.

Unit Leader (signed)	Date
Name Helen Leung 	August 19, 2025
Title Professor and Department Chair	

Section B

DEAN'S COMMENTS AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

We are gratified that the external review committee judged our GSWS programs to be of such high quality, seeing it as “a very successful academic program, providing students with high quality educational experiences.” (p.3). The GSWS Action plan is a solid response to the recommendations, and we support this constructive approach. We support the external review committee’s recommendations for strengthening the graduate program, but also share the Department’s concern that changes to graduate student funding will weaken the graduate program, making it more difficult to respond, though the details of a new funding model have not yet been announced. In the interim, we believe the Department has crafted a realistic and responsive approach. We also appreciate the suggestion to ensure dedicated GSWS positions in our FRP (as opposed to joint appointed) and also the suggestion of locating a CRC in GSWS. CRCs are allocated by the VPR, but it may be that GSWS is a particularly appealing tenure home (jointly or alone) for such a position. We are also keen to support the Department’s use of the RWW Chair to advance vitality and visibility of the program and Department.

The Dean’s Office understands the importance of the problems that inadequate facilities (such as Washrooms in the AQ) present, and though facilities are not under our jurisdiction, we have raised this issue with Central Administration even before this ER took place. We are pleased to report that the new AVP for facilities has developed a plan to improve washroom access, and the washrooms are currently being renovated to address these problems, originally expected to be completed by April 2025, we have been assured these will be completed soon. In terms of safety, the Dean’s office will raise the issues and proposals as framed with the VPFA and with the Chief Safety and Risk office to explore possible avenues of response to concerns about safety in the AQ after hours and safety while traveling for research purposes.

The Dean’s Office hopes there is an appetite to take up some of the other areas of suggested action, including efforts to work closely with the new Medical School and develop a pathway for an accelerated MA. The Dean’s Office is also supportive of the suggestion to develop a micro-credit or other credential in the area of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The Dean’s Office has already supported the development of a class in this field, and would welcome more proposals from GSWS faculty or any other Department interested in developing such a micro-credential or program.

We appreciate the call for an explicit commitment to academic freedom, equity and human rights and to safety and wellbeing of our faculty and students. FASS’ strategic plan includes all of these commitments and we look forward to working with both faculty and student themselves as well as senior leadership team to further these goals across the University.

The Dean’s Office was surprised to see the claim that FASS has a “very low” number of Indigenous students. In fact, FASS has the most indigenous students in any Faculty at SFU by a wide margin and leads the province in many areas with respect to both the recruitment of Indigenous Students and excellence in Indigenous Studies (e.g. Indigenous Language instruction, Indigenous approaches to the environment). Further, FASS plans specifically prioritize reconciliation, in keeping with the *What’s Next* strategic plan for the University. It is hard to understand how the ER committee could have missed this important commitment of our Faculty.

Faculty Dean (signature)



Date

Sept 14 2025

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION:	Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies; SCUP; Senate
FROM:	Paul Kingsbury, Associate Vice-President Learning & Teaching <i>pro tem</i> and Alice Campbell, Senior Consultant, Program Assessment, Learning Experiences Assessment and Planning
RE:	Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Educational Goals Assessment Plan
DATE:	September 17, 2025



The Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies has recently submitted its Educational Goals (EG) assessment report and plan to SCUTL following its recent External Review. We have reviewed your assessment plan in conjunction with the external review report and draft action plan.

We note the External Reviewers' comment that GSWS' undergraduate program is "strong by all indicators," and experiencing growing enrolments. We also note and are happy to see their appreciation of your Educational Goals assessment strategy and the careful revisions GSWS has made to its undergraduate courses since the previous external review. Indeed, we strongly appreciate how prominent your Educational Goals are on your department website, and the careful work you have done there to put your curriculum maps online. These have been showcased to the NWCCU, our institutional accreditor, as exemplary in communicating to students what they can expect to learn in their GSWS program.

Your Educational Goals assessment plan details plans to assess each of the Goals over the coming years, using various measures in various courses. It appears to be a manageable plan, and we hope that it will be helpful for the department. We appreciate that a team of six faculty are involved, ensuring that the workload is well distributed, and that reviewing Educational Goals assessment is a standing item in your annual planning meetings. This indicates that the work is baked into department operations, is viewed as a collective project, and there is space for dialogue about the Goals and what you learn through the assessment process. As you carry on with work in the years ahead, we will be interested to know how these insights may translate into course and program-level changes.

The assessment plan indicates that you plan to assess all Goals on an annual basis, within a variety of courses. We appreciate that you have identified particular assignments. It appears that your key metrics are largely quantitative in nature, looking at the proportion of students who attained a grade of B- on an assignment, or who agree/strongly agree on a survey. The exception to this is the fifth goal, where you plan to convene a focus group of faculty members to discuss a sample of student assignments on experiential learning. It will be interesting to learn GSWS' reflections on the value of these different approaches. We do wonder if the relatively coarse measure of student assignment grades will yield the most valuable insights for the program. However, the high-level overview it would provide may reveal interesting avenues to pursue in greater depth, time and necessity permitting. Please know that we always encourage programs to refine and revise their assessment plans as needed to ensure they remain useful and sustainable. And as we frequently note, more data is not necessarily better data.

To continue to enhance the undergraduate program, GSWS' action plan indicates that you will review upper-division courses to develop a resource for students that outlines core concepts, readings and skills. This is a wonderful and promising idea that will provide students with additional clarity about the laddering of concepts and skills across the program. We anticipate it will also be helpful to faculty to gain greater visibility into what students learn in different courses. One hopes that, for students and faculty alike, it may spark conversations, even casual ones, about learning and teaching across courses. This helps to enhance a cohesive learning experience across the program. It strikes us that it may be worthwhile to find a way to connect this work to your program-level Educational Goals. This would more concretely demonstrate to students which concepts and skills are aligned with which Educational Goal, and offer a helpful view into the Goals' coverage across the program.

As you begin to carry out your Educational Goals assessment, staff in the AVPLT portfolio are well equipped to support you and want to help ensure it is meaningful and manageable for the Department. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with Alice Campbell (alice_campbell@sfu.ca) or Paul Kingsbury (avplt@sfu.ca) for guidance or support.

Educational Goals Assessment Plan Template

Unit/Program: Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies (GSWS)

Contact name: Helen Leung (Until Aug 31, 2025), Jennifer Marchbank (From Sep 1, 2025 -)

Date: July 6, 2025

This template is designed to help units implement assessment of Educational Goals after receiving feedback from their External Review. Units are not expected to assess every Educational Goal every year. *(Textboxes will expand as you type)*

1) Who were the members of your Educational Goals Assessment team? Outline who has worked on the assessment.

Helen Leung, Jennifer Marchbank, Tiffany Muller Myrdahl
Coleman Nye, Vaibhav Saria, Carman Fung

2) Are your program’s Educational Goals current, or do any of them need to be revised?

In some cases, Educational Goals may need to be revised to keep apace with changes in the discipline or in the program’s course offerings, or to ensure they continue to align with a unit’s mission and values. Feedback from the External Review may inform revision of Educational Goals.

Yes, the Educational Goals have been reviewed and are current.

3) Is your program’s curriculum map up to date?

A curriculum map may need to be updated to reflect any major changes to the program’s course offerings (i.e. new or substantially revised courses, courses that have been removed).

Minor adjustments to the map will be needed as we add new courses proposed by recently hired CFL to the map.

4) Assessment Plan

For each Educational Goal, outline what data you will use to assess student learning. Indicate what direct evidence you will draw on - which key courses you will sample from and, if possible, the course-based assessments you plan to use. These can be described in general terms (e.g. research paper, final exam questions targeting a particular Educational Goal). Indicate also whether or not you plan to gather indirect evidence (e.g. surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.). The same indirect evidence method (e.g. a survey) can be used for multiple Educational Goals. Describe what would indicate to you that students had met the Educational Goal. Add or delete rows as needed.

Educational Goal 1:			
Description of Assessment Methods: (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) Direct Student Survey on Canvas for GSWS 100, GSWS 101	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Over 50% of students who agree or strongly agree that goals have been met.	Is this direct or indirect? Direct	When do you plan to collect the data? Annually
Educational Goal 2:			
Description of Assessment Methods: (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) Term Paper from GSWS 399, GSWS 398	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Over 50% of students who receive B- or above on the assignment	Is this direct or indirect? Indirect	When do you plan to collect the data? Annually
Educational Goal 3:			
Description of Assessment Methods: (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) Direct Student Survey on Canvas for GSWS 100, GSWS 101, GSWS 200, GSWS 204	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Over 50% of students who agree or strongly agree that goals have been met.	Is this direct or indirect? Direct	When do you plan to collect the data? Annually
Educational Goal 4:			
Description of Assessment Methods: (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) Midterm for GSWS 433, Final Paper for GSWS 332, Implosion Project for GSWS 316	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Over 50% of students who receive B- or above on the assignment	Is this direct or indirect? Indirect	When do you plan to collect the data? Annually
Educational Goal 5:			
Description of Assessment Methods: (e.g. Term paper from Course X, will randomly sample 20% of student work; exit survey of graduating students) Collect sample experiential learning assignments from GSWS 315 and GSWS 399	What would indicate that students had met the EG? Faculty members will convene a focus group to discuss the sample assignments to determine if EGs were met	Is this direct or indirect? Indirect	When do you plan to collect the data? Annual

5) How do you plan on sharing your findings within your unit?

Educational Goals Assessment is a standing agenda item in our Annual Planning Meeting where findings will be shared, reviewed, and discussed.

6) Assessment Timeline

Next Mid-cycle Review: 2028

Next External Review: 2032