

# External Review Report of Gender Studies Department

May 2024

## External Review Committee

Dr Tracy Isaacs, Western University, Chair

Dr Leonora Angeles, University of British Columbia

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## Executive Summary

The Department of Gender Studies at the University of Victoria has a venerable history as a national leader in Women's and Gender Studies in Canada. It has evolved and adapted with the shifts and tides of a fast-changing discipline since its early days as a program, and then since 1995 a Department. Today, the Department continues to offer strong, relevant undergraduate programs (Honours, Major, and Minor) that make a disproportionate (to the Department's size) contribution to the Faculty's and University's strategic goals and priorities concerning Indigenization, equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization. The expertise, care and concern of the faculty members in the unit, and the Department's mission to "actively pursue social justice" in its work with "an ethics of care and accountability," create a first-rate student experience. Students report a positive learning experience, a sense of belonging, and an opportunity for community amongst like-minded people.

At the same time, in recent years, particularly leading up to, during, and since the pandemic, the Department has faced a number of challenges. These circumstances have put pressures on its resources and capacity, and put it in a state of "catch-up" that is not conducive to the development of strategic vision and planning that was tradition until then, with the Department routinely undertaking ongoing five-year plans (see self-study, section 3.2, p. 15). The challenges are as follows:

Since the conclusion of Laura Parisi's term as Chair in 2020, the Department has had four different Chairs/Acting Chairs (Thea Cacchioni, Chair, 2021; Laura Parisi, Acting Chair, January to June 2022; Sikata Banerjee, Acting Chair, 2022-23; Gillian Calder [Law], Acting Chair, 2023-24). Even on its own, such quick turnover in leadership is bound to be an obstacle to planning and stability, regardless of how dedicated each person is to the role. It also meant less continuity in the mentoring of new junior faculty and lost momentum in the process of rebuilding trust and community that was begun in October 2021 at a meeting themed, "Creating a Culture of Care, Accountability and Reciprocal Safety as a Way of Overcoming Disconnection and Advancing Decolonization."

The pandemic itself, during which lockdowns normalized working from home, was a challenge for us all. For this small Department, the pandemic and the lack of stable leadership combined



Faculty and Department for the hiring]

4. Develop a process for maintaining data on graduates and keeping in touch with alumni in order to support outreach and recruitment efforts through data-driven information about career paths, alumni profiles on the website, and alumni as ambassadors. [Accountability: Department]
5. Increase enrollment caps in some of the well-subscribed classes in order to meet the threshold for TA support and also to make the best of the new enrollment-based funding model. [Accountability: Department]
6. Devote adequate resources to mentorship. [Accountability: University, Faculty, Department]
7. Develop a social media strategy for recruitment and outreach. [Accountability: Department]
8. Provide more University-wide support for faculty research projects and programs. [Accountability: University]