

## Waterloo Lutheran Seminary 2017 Implementation Report

**Submitted By:** Mark Harris, Principal-Dean, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

**Date:** May 23, 2017

<b>Recommendation:</b> To proceed with anticipated curriculum changes (Reviewer's Recommendation #1).	
<b>Responsibility:</b> Principal-Dean; Management Team	<b>Implementation Date:</b> September 2014
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b> The Management Team comprised of the Principal-Dean and Academic Program Directors will continue to make changes to the curriculum in line with the changes coming with the College of Registered Psychotherapists and changes by the Association of Theological Schools to the Master of Divinity programs. Further changes will be forthcoming in the negotiations with Laurier concerning the Operating Agreement and the Provincial SMA process.</p> <p>From the FGPS Dean: The Seminary is encouraged to move forward with the proposed diploma, and to discuss with the FGPS dean plans for new graduate programs which fit within the university's academic plan and Strategic Mandate Agreement.</p>	
<b>Recommendation completed (2015).</b>	

<b>Recommendation:</b> Because of the distance that some students live away from WLS, it may be useful to develop some protocol about how students can qualify to be virtually connected occasionally to a face to face class through a variety of digital means so it meets real needs (icy roads) and avoids easy excuses (not bothering to come in) (Reviewer's Recommendation #2).	
<b>Responsibility:</b> Faculty Council	<b>Implementation Date:</b> June 2014
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b> The WLS Faculty Council has discussed the range of circumstances and adopted a policy and protocol for students wanting to connect to class through digital means.</p>	
<b>Recommendation completed (2015).</b>	

<b>Recommendation:</b> The pilot online class should be seriously monitored and evaluated to see its potential strengths and weaknesses, assessing what can and cannot be delivered in the purely online format, rather than jumping on some online bandwagon as "the solution" to demographic and pedagogic problems (Reviewer's Recommendation #3).	
<b>Responsibility:</b> The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	<b>Implementation Date:</b> April 2015

**Additional Notes:** The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee in consultation with the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Department will consider appropriate evaluation tools for this course.

**Recommendation completed (2016).**

**Recommendation:** To develop a comprehensive assessment plan that has clear indicators for each of the learning outcomes in the various programs in a way that transcends success in individual courses (Reviewer's Recommendation #4).

<b>Responsibility:</b> Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	<b>Implementation Date:</b> Commencing September 2014
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**Additional Notes:** This item will be referred to the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee. Additional Faculty to be appointed to work with this Committee.

**Recommendation completed (2016).**

**Recommendation:** Work with Laurier and their Director of Teaching Support Services [now CTIE] to be a pioneer in the new module for assessment that has been created and is being funded by Laurier, since this promises to give important evaluative data from the course to program to degree levels (Reviewer's Recommendation #5).

<b>Responsibility:</b> Director of Leadership and Ministry; Director of the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Program	<b>Implementation Date:</b> August 2014
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**Additional Notes:** The Directors of the M.Div. and M.A. Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy programs have begun a pilot project to implement models for assessment.

**No further reporting required (2016).**

**Recommendation:** We would further recommend that the many informal forms of evaluating courses, programs, and degrees that occur in such a collegial and well-connected faculty be made more formal so it both gives a trace of the history of decisions and can guide future decisions, e.g., terminating or initiating programs. Clear documentation of the assessment processes and the content of the assessment seem to be a real need (Reviewer's Recommendation #6).

<b>Responsibility:</b> Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	<b>Implementation Date:</b> April 2015
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**Additional Notes:** The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee will discuss and consult about possible modalities for adopting a system of evaluation in the light of the new Laurier Course Evaluation process.

From the FGPS dean: The Seminary is encouraged to include the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies in early discussions of program changes, including terminating and initiating programs.

**2014-2015 Actions**

Unit Response: The Seminary is continuing to re-engineer its academic programs. The Doctoral programs are in the middle of a renaming process. The focus of the M.A. in Christian Studies is the next program to be reconsidered. Initial conversations are underway in the Department. Once some preliminary ideas are identified, a conversation will be initiated with the FGPS Dean.

FGPS Decanal Response: Senate approved the change in name of the DMin to a PhD in Human Relationships.

PRS Comments: The committee felt that the spirit of this recommendation; that is, a more formal documentation record of assessment work being undertaken within the Seminary's programs, has been lost in the comments provided. In next year's report, please address the recommendation more directly.

### **2015-2016 Actions**

Unit Response: Amidst the change in leadership and other programmatic demands of this last year, the seminary has made little progress in terms of developing clear documentation of assessment processes. Toward this end, particularly with an ATS assessment visit being scheduled for 2018, the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee has been instructed to make the compilation of such documentation a priority in the coming year.

FGPS Decanal Response: The most urgent matter is to address the issues raised by the Quality Council regarding the change to a PhD. The acting dean will be involved in these discussions.

Acting Dean FGPS: Much progress has been made in responding to the Quality Council requests for additional information. WLS has been diligent in compiling further information and presenting a more compelling case for the renaming. I would urge them to continue keeping track of quality indicators around publications (student and faculty), types of dissertation (title, content, methodologies) projects, and changes in the field that could lead to future enhancements of the program. It will be very important to retain emphasis on the research emphasis of the program.

PRS Comments: In next year's report, the committee would appreciate hearing an update on any progress that has been made in developing clearer documentation of assessment processes. In addition to the upcoming accreditation visit, this will be helpful for WLS' next cyclical review.

Completed    In Progress    Other

2017 Unit Comments: For the past academic year, WLS has been undergoing a self-study in preparation for an accreditation visit with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) that will take place in March 2018. A significant portion of this effort has been toward establishing clear, formal, and ongoing evaluative processes for courses and programs.

The intent is that these processes, established for the ATS process, will be continued so as to put us in a good position for the next periodic review, as well as our own, ongoing evaluative processes.

This report, which will be completed by the end of 2017, will be shared with FGPS.

In addition, over the past year the Seminary's Comprehensive Evaluation Committee has undertaken an evaluation of the BA program. Once that report is completed, they are scheduled to undertake a full program review of the MDiv program.

2017 FGPS Acting Decanal Comments: I'm pleased with the hard-fought approval won from the Quality Council on the PhD in Human Relationships program. I would encourage the seminary to continue to work toward making this program as research-intensive as possible, stressing the highest standards in student work, external examiners, and grant applications and publications/presentations on the part of students and faculty. FGPS looks forward to seeing the outcome of the ATS process, and would be happy to assist in whatever way possible with the review of the MDiv, and any proactive changes that might arise from it.

2017 PRS Comments: While the committee recognizes that the WLS has provided several updates on this recommendation, in following the comments it was still not clear if or how the original intent of the recommendation – a system of documenting decision-making as it pertains to curriculum changes and assessment – had been implemented. The committee would appreciate an update next year indicating how those implicit processes within the WLS have been formalized. The report referenced may also assist the committee in evaluating the successful completion of this recommendation.

**Recommendation:** Consideration should be given for providing standard internet access in all teaching rooms and data projection (Reviewer's Recommendation #7).

**Responsibility:** Principal-Dean

**Implementation Date:** June 2014

**Additional Notes:** All classrooms have access to internet and media technology. WLS has secured some additional equipment to support instruction and promote communication. The Principal-Dean will monitor the functioning of information and digital technologies to insure they are working effectively.

**No further reporting required (2016).**

**Recommendation:** The workload is very heavy and thus it is a challenge to balance teaching, supervision and research. It appears to be a good idea to have a person (maybe the assistant dean) assigned to have annual reviews of the overall workloads of each of the core faculty members. At that time, it would be helpful to have the faculty members articulate their research plans for the coming year and express what support they would need for that (Reviewer's Recommendation #8).

**Responsibility:** Principal-Dean

**Implementation Date:** September 2014

**Additional Notes:** WLS will begin phasing in reduced teaching loads Regular faculty will move from six to five courses for the academic year May 1 to April 30<sup>th</sup>. The Principal-Dean will review faculty workloads at time of performance reviews.

**Recommendation completed (2015).**

**Recommendation:** At the same time, it is important for WLS to articulate to the university that the nature of their teaching, supervision, and community-engagement, will from time to time reduce not their capacity of research and critical reflection on their field nor their teaching, but the traditionally measured "outputs"(Reviewer's Recommendation #9).

**Responsibility:** Principal-Dean and WLS Team for the Seminary/Laurier negotiations

**Implementation Date:** October 2014

**Additional Notes:** WLS will begin a conversation with Laurier on the future direction of the Seminary with a possible name change to become a small University within Laurier. As such it will be a professional and teaching focused school. This will be the WLS contribution to Laurier that will help in the provincial process for differentiation among Ontario Universities.

**2014-2015 Actions**

Unit Response: This process is underway with Laurier. We have begun a negotiations process concerning our Operating Agreement. It is anticipated that the name change will proceed over the summer and a plan will be undertaken over the next year to implement the new business plan and transition to the new name.

FGPS Decanal Response: the dean looks forward to the outcome of these negotiations to clarify the roles of WLS and FGPS in the admission and progress of students in the Seminary's graduate programs.

PRS Comments: The committee felt that the comments provided did not directly address the spirit of this recommendation; that is, the way in which the Seminary communicates to the university community its commitment to teaching, supervision, and community engagement. Please provide an update in next year's report, addressing the recommendation more directly.

**2015-2016 Actions**

Unit Response: The seminary places a very high priority on teaching, research, and community engagement, all of which are understood as different but interrelated facets of our institutional priority on integrated learning, among both students and faculty. One of the implications of this is that the seminary faculty do not necessarily meet the university's traditionally measured outputs for research and publication. A reduction in faculty course loads has been, in part, an effort to free up time for more traditional research. At the same time, faculty has begun to develop a position paper to clearly articulate, to the university, both the range of approaches that are embodied within our faculty and the variety of outputs, some of which fall within the range of "traditionally

measured outputs" and some which do not, yet which are appropriate to the nature of our field.

FGPS Decanal Response: FGPS looks forward to this position paper, especially with regard to questions about changing the DMin nomenclature to PhD.

Acting Dean FGPS: Such a position paper would also be useful in clarifying graduate faculty status for WLS faculty.

PRS Comments: The committee would like an update on this recommendation in next year's report, and recommends a conversation between the WLS and the VP: Research about how to better communicate the research output of WLS faculty to the university community.

Completed    In Progress    Other

2017 Unit Comments: The Seminary is just completing a position paper that will be shared with FGPS and the Office of Research Services, summarizing the breadth of research methodologies that are employed at the seminary through our teaching, supervision, and community engagement. It is our hope that this document will serve as a basis for further discussion and confirm that while the seminary may not be seen as performing at the desired levels according to the traditionally measured benchmarks for establishing research output, that our commitment to ongoing research activities are both concrete and significant.

2017 FGPS Acting Decanal Comments: We would welcome this document not only in terms of establishing research benchmarks to help with determining Graduate Faculty Status, but also appropriate external examiners. However, it should be noted that where external examiners for graduate programs are concerned, particularly the PhD in Human Relationships, research must accord with Quality Council expectations around research productivity, including both appropriate grant funding and publications/presentations. It is imperative that these programs live up to the standards common to all graduate research programs in Ontario, with discipline-specific research cultures taken into some consideration.

2017 PRS Comments: In next year's report, the committee would appreciate confirmation that the position paper referenced above had been completed and shared with the FGPS and the Office of Research Services.

**Recommendation:** Consideration for faculty to apply for SSHRC funding with faculty from across the university may provide a way to access these research funds (Reviewer's Recommendation #10).

**Responsibility:** Principal-Dean

**Implementation Date:** December 2014

**Additional Notes:** The Principal-Dean has discussed this issue with the Laurier VP-Research. WLS Faculty feel it remains difficult to access funding through these granting

Councils and Foundations. WLS also gained access to a searchable data base for Foundation funding.

**2014-2015 Actions**

Unit Response: Plans had to be postponed for a workshop on research funding. This was aimed at helping faculty apply for research funds. This initiative will be rescheduled once a new VP-Research is appointed.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.

**2015-2016 Actions**

Unit Response: The seminary has scheduled a workshop, with staff from the Laurier Office of Research, to explore funding sources and approaches.

FGPS Decanal Response: Some discussion of the outcome would be helpful. Were there more applications for research funding? The expectation of the Quality Council that faculty members actively engage in research to support the PhD program will continue to be an issue.

PRS Comments: As with the previous recommendation, the committee would like an update on the outcome of the workshop with the ORS and on any initiatives that have taken place in the past year to further encourage WLS faculty to apply for SHRRC or other related external funding opportunities.

Completed  In Progress  Other

2017 Unit Comments: As a result of our workshop with the Office of Research Services last year, several faculty have attempted, without success, to secure internal research grants in the past year.

The Seminary has also been a co-signatory in two SHRC Connection Grants; the "Uprooted Conference", exploring refugee resettlement, and the "International Community Music Conference." We will also be submitting a SSHRC grant application for a proposed "Shi'a – Protestant Dialogue", taking place in partnership with Conrad Grebel, in October of this year.

2017 FGPS Acting Decanal Comments: We would continue to encourage the Seminary to stress research productivity via grants to all faculty, and for the seminary as a whole to continue to engage in all manner of grant-eligible research and dissemination activity (such as the aforementioned conferences and public presentations/dialogues, which are commendable). These are key to a healthy research culture, and very helpful in recruiting the best students to WLS' graduate programs.

2017 PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be completed and there is no need to report on it further.

<b>Recommendation:</b> It may be useful to find someone at Laurier, contract someone, or appoint someone internally at WLS who can help faculty members identify potential external funding sources for their research projects, if they need it for the nature of their work (Reviewers' Recommendation #11).	
<b>Responsibility:</b> Principal-Dean	<b>Implementation Date:</b> December 2014
<b>Additional Notes:</b> The Principal-Dean will organize a session with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to explore possible approaches.	
<b>2014-2015 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Response: Some cross disciplinary partnerships are being initiated (e.g. Psychology, Political Science etc.) As these develop they may enable further initiatives in research funding.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: Now that the DMin has become a PhD, research expertise on the part of faculty members is even more important. The dean encourages WLS to explore sources of research funding that will also benefit doctoral students who currently are not covered by the university's minimum guarantee of funding. Acting Dean FGPS: A big part of all graduate programs in Ontario is the training of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP), which are greatly facilitated through research grants, and I encourage WLS to keep this at the forefront of faculty engagement with WLS graduate programs.</p> <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.</p>	
<b>2015-2016 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Response: As noted in recommendation #10, we are holding a workshop with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to discuss possible research funding sources for faculty. In addition, Dr. Olena Darewych has been appointed to serve as a resource to the WLS faculty, to assist in identifying external sources for research funding.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: As above.</p> <p>PRS Comments: Please provide an update in next year's report on the outcome of conversations that have taken place in the past year between the WLS and the Office of Research Services. With the PhD program now approved, it will be increasingly important to demonstrate the research activity of the WLS faculty to both internal and external communities.</p>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<p>2017 Unit Comments: In both fields of the seminary's doctoral program, it is exceptionally challenging to find significant funding resources for research grants. Consequently, when internal or external grant funding is used as a major benchmark of research activities, the</p>	



seminary appears to be underperforming. However, it needs to be noted that the lack of external or internal research funding does not reflect a lack of research activity among our faculty or graduate students. In this past year, we have been successful in identifying several sources which have funds available for research: The Canadian Association for Spiritual Care and The Society for Pastoral Counselling Research, both of whom welcome research grant applications for students enrolled in the spiritual care stream.

2017 FGPS Acting Decanal Comments: I would urge the seminary to continue to make all eligible funding opportunities visible to faculty and graduate students. I would also request that they consider making such applications, on the part of graduate students, mandatory, as they are in other graduate programs at the doctoral level (if the seminary has not done so already). I would also suggest, however, that grant funding not be seen as the only measure of research productivity, but that graduate students also be encouraged to professionalize via peer-reviewed publications, national and international conference presentations, public lectures, policy papers, professional publications, etc.

2017 PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be an ongoing one, but does not require further updates on it. In their conversation about this recommendation, the committee discussed the value of building internal expertise and capacity to help mentor faculty in identifying research funding opportunities.

PRS Comments: The committee appreciates the Seminary's ongoing commitment to the implementation of those recommendations that came out of the 2013-2014 cyclical review, and requests that one more implementation report be submitted in 2018 to provide an update on the two remaining recommendations.

Subsequent Report Required?      Yes       No