

Martin Luther University College 2018 Implementation Report

Submitted By: Rev. Dr. Mark W. Harris, Principal-Dean

Date: May 25, 2018

Recommendation: To proceed with anticipated curriculum changes (Reviewer's Recommendation #1).	
Responsibility: Principal-Dean; Management Team	Implementation Date: September 2014
<p>Additional Notes: 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>	
Recommendation completed (2015).	

Recommendation: 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).	
Responsibility: Faculty Council	Implementation Date: June 2014
<p>Additional Notes: 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>	
Recommendation completed (2015).	

Recommendation: 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).	
Responsibility: The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	Implementation Date: April 2015
<p>Additional Notes: The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee in consultation with the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Department will consider appropriate evaluation tools for this course.</p>	
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).	
Responsibility: Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	Implementation Date: Commencing September 2014
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).	
Responsibility: Director of Leadership and Ministry; Director of the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy Program	Implementation Date: August 2014
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).	
Responsibility: Comprehensive Evaluation Committee	Implementation Date: April 2015
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.

2016-2017 Actions

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.

Completed In Progress Other

2018 Unit Comments: In reviewing the history of responses to this recommendation, it appears that we have deviated from the original intent of this recommendation, which is understandable given the number of leadership transitions at both the seminary and FGPS in the subsequent years. The original recommendation was 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."

Toward this end, the meetings of the various program committees (BA program, MDiv/MA (Public Faith) program, and MA/PhD (Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy) program, now minute their department meetings. The Comprehensive Evaluation Committee undertakes periodic, evaluative reviews of each of the programs and issues reports to the Seminary Senate for consideration. Minutes are prepared and filed for all meetings of the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee and Senate. In addition, all evaluative tools and program reports are stored in the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee file for future reference.

2018 Decanal Comments: It is instructive to follow this discussion back through the annual reports and to the original recommendations.

One aspect of the recommendation was to formalize evaluation and assessment to preserve institutional memory and improve decision-making. FGPS notes that the recommendation went further in asking for "Clear documentation of the assessment processes and the content of the assessment..."

The 2013-14 unit response refers to the role of the Comprehensive Evaluation Committee to ensure that decisions (1) are consistent with the unit's mission; (2) are evidence-based; and (3) respect the academic freedom of faculty. In 2017, WLS (now Martin Luther University College) noted that they had invested significant effort in establishing clear, formal and ongoing evaluative processes for courses and programs as part of the ATS process. The completed report was to be shared with FGPS. As Dean of FGPS, I have not seen this report. That may simply be an oversight because I am new to Laurier. FGPS is very interested in seeing and discussing this report. As noted last year, FGPS looks forward to seeing the outcome of the ATS process, and would be happy to assist in any proactive changes that might arise from it.

2018 PRS Comments: The committee believes that further discussion on this recommendation should be between the Principal-Dean and the Dean of FGPS. No further reporting is required.

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 30th. 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
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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.

2016-2017 Actions

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.

Completed In Progress Other

2018 Unit Comments: As was the case with Recommendation # 6, it appears that successive responses to the recommendation, provided by a variety of individuals, has diverged from the original intent of this recommendation. The original recommendation was that WLS "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'."

In the years since this cyclical review, a number of steps have been undertaken in response to this recommendation. Faculty teaching loads have been reduced to provide more time for research; the Research Office has met with faculty to assist in developing strategies to increase the number of applications for SSHRC or partnership grants; an increased number of grant applications have been submitted; and faculty consult with the Research Office, on an ongoing basis, to explore grant opportunities. Seminary students have participated in the "Three Minute Thesis" competition for the last three years;

"Poster Days" at the conclusion of the MA research course have provided the opportunity for students to showcase their research; and all thesis defenses are open for public participation. In addition to the above, one of our faculty has received a Wabash Grant, for the coming academic year, specifically to explore the indigenization of the theological curriculums. At the same time, it must be noted that the theological disciplines represented at the seminary have far fewer opportunities for the kind of funding that are categorized as "traditionally measured outputs" than many other disciplines at the university.

2018 Decanal Comments: FGPS acknowledges that metrics of academic outputs vary among disciplines. Opportunities for access to funding for research and scholarship differ widely among departments and faculties. Even so, it is important to develop and monitor metrics of quality including scholarly output.

The 2017 response refers to a position paper that was going to be shared with the Office of Research Services and FGPS. As with the report mentioned above, I have not seen this position paper but I am very interested in continuing this discussion.

If we can't measure academic productivity in a discipline, how do we know if we have achieved excellence? I strongly encourage the program to provide concrete recommendations for metrics that capture excellence in scholarship, teaching, and mentoring. Without an agreed-upon set of measures, it is difficult for someone outside of the discipline to evaluate success. Lack of a shared vision for assessment increases the chance that more general metrics may be used, to the detriment of the program.

2018 PRS Comments: As with the previous recommendation, in their discussions the committee did not believe that continued reporting through this mechanism was beneficial. No further reporting is required.

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.

Recommendation completed (2017).

Recommendation: 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).	
Responsibility: Principal-Dean	Implementation Date: December 2014
Additional Notes: The Principal-Dean will organize a session with staff from the Laurier Office of Research to explore possible approaches.	
No further reporting required (2017).	

PRS Comments: The committee acknowledges that Martin Luther University College has demonstrated collegiality and diligence in completing four of these Implementation Reports since its last cyclical review in 2013-2014. There are two recommendations from that review that have not yet been fully implemented, but with the unit's next cyclical review approaching in 2020-2021, the committee did not perceive there to be benefit in asking for additional reports. Since comments from the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies suggest that these final two recommendations are still valued, it is recommended that the Principal-Dean meet with the Dean of FGPS to discuss how they might be achieved, or processes put in place to achieve them, in advance of the unit's next cyclical review.

Subsequent Report Required? Yes No