

Final Assessment Report for the 2023-2024 Cyclical Review of the Human Rights Programs

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier’s Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the programs in Human Rights offered in the Faculty of Liberal Arts at the Brantford campus, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the units’ response, and the decanal response. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

The last cyclical program review for the undergraduate programs in Human Rights (program name recently changed from Human Rights and Human Diversity), took place as part of the 2016-2017 review cycle.

The Human Rights Self-Study was authored by Andrew Robinson as Program Coordinator and by Stacey Wilson-Forsberg, who became Program Coordinator while the Self-Study was in the process of being finalized. The Self-Study also notes the contributions of program faculty, who participated in meetings about the Self-Study and reviewed a draft of the document and the work of administrative staff in contributing to the document and review process. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the program also submitted a copy of faculty curricula

vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, and the Dean of Liberal Arts prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on September 28, 2023, and an in-person site visit took place on the Brantford campus November 30 – December 1, 2023.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Josephine McMurray** from the Business Technology Management program at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Awalou Oudraogo** from the Department of Equity Studies at York University, and **Dr. Kristi Kenyon** from the Human Rights Program at the University of Manitoba. During the external review, the committee met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Trish McLaren, Associate Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Janny Leung, Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Dr. Stacey Wilson-Forsberg, Program Coordinator
- Full-time Human Rights Faculty
- Human Rights undergraduate students
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Head of Collections and Acquisitions, and Ms. Irene Tencinger, Liaison Librarian
- Ms. Jennifer Beam, Program Assistant
- Ms. Lisa Jarvis, Associate Director, Community and Workplace Partnerships and Ms. Sara Darling, Community Service Coordinator
- Ms. Phyllis Power, Manager, Global Engagement Programming
- Ms. Sally Heath, Manager: Academic Program Development and Review

The review committee submitted their completed report on January 10, 2024. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HRHD program assessment involved several integrated and interrelated stages that, building on the tradition of open dialogue and collegial decision-making, we included a thorough examination of university documents, and meetings with all stakeholders. These activities were conducted in an environment of open discussion and inquiry, and included on-site visits and discussions with key individuals, as well as a working dinner with full-time faculty members.

Our meetings addressed the following salient themes regarding the scope and optics of curricular planning: i) the preparation of students, ii) the nature of the discipline, iii) the character of the program, iv) the external

environment and conditions which influence teaching and learning and to which it is expected to be responsive, v) a review the objectives of the programs to provide guidance in determining the structure and content of programs, vi) the overall planning strategy and direction, vii) an identification of generic and program specific problems, the implications for both enrolment management and working environment of these problems, and to suggest solutions; solutions will be both those necessitating internal changes as well as those required of the central administration, viii) further curricular initiatives, and ix) inter- and intra-departmental collaboration.

The great benefit of HRHD is that it integrates a thematic or issue-based dimension into the curriculum. The program follows various interdisciplinary linkages.

The assumption on which our Report rests is that the curriculum is a collective enterprise. A well-designed curriculum not only fosters unity among faculty through intellectually grounded collegial relationships, but also guides students through sequentially organized and intellectually enriching learning paths. Our Report provides an analysis of the concerns and issues we gathered from discussions and documents. It concludes with a set of specific, actionable, and general suggestions.

The proposed program's name change from, Human Rights and Human Diversity, to Human Rights serves well to incorporate a human rights curriculum opened to local and global recognition of relations. This certainly adds to the identity and the strength of the program and provides coherence to the array of courses.

Overall, the HRHD program performs very well despite resource constraints and should be encouraged to continue its innovative trajectory with some fine-tuning for continual improvements. These improvements should be gradual and evolutionary. To reiterate, the program is in excellent shape although it would benefit from additional faculty appointments. Both faculty and students stand to gain from this stimulating environment. As a whole, the program and its scholars are doing an excellent job.

We recommend that all efforts be made to safeguard the core identity of the program, particularly its focus on an interdisciplinary approach to human rights. Problems may emerge not with the principles of inter- or multi-disciplinarity itself but with its practical implementation. We hope that all courses will clarify the principles and applications of interdisciplinarity. We agree that the course offerings are pedagogically sound and are impressed by the department's and the program's proactive consultation and utilization of community resources.

A critical goal of this assessment is to ensure the program adheres to Laurier's progressive and central values. The program must feel empowered to do its work and pursue innovative approaches. Overcoming administrative challenges is crucial for any department. This high-quality innovative program is poised to achieve increased student enrolment. and increased levels of research activities. Recruitment of faculty will be key herein.

The program is well positioned to reach out to and include students, partners in enterprises and agencies, and communities, fostering solidarities and legitimacy both within the local university context and beyond. However, the success of the recommendations below hinges on an environment which privileges a collective, action-oriented approach to the process of improving the program. This involves mobilizing resources for collective participation, shaped by the mission statement, effective leadership, and channels of communication or networks of cooperative relationships. Strong leadership is essential and must draw on a dynamic vision that includes diverse partnerships and the concomitant focus on sustaining continuous learning and teaching. The fundamental issue is trust, which emerges from both consultation and collaboration. A visionary program

cultivates an authentic spirit of community in a manner that is conducive to the continuous improvement of all interested parties. This vision recognizes the significance of community involvement, professional integrity, critical inquiry, a commitment to change, and public accountability and responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 15 recommendations to improve the quality of the Human Rights programs. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and a response by the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The recommendations were grouped into themes by the program in their Unit Response and presented in this order below.

Theme I: Human Rights Program's Mission and Objectives

Recommendation #1: We recommend a faculty retreat to collectively clarify the identity and aim of the program, review and update program objectives and program-level learning outcomes with respect to inclusiveness, theoretical and interdisciplinary rigour, and decolonization.

Program Response: The Human Rights PCC met in-person on Friday March 22 2pm-5pm to discuss the external reviewers' report and recommendations and to begin, what will be a long discussion around our program's mission, values, and objectives. While several meetings will be planned over the next year to move this discussion forward, faculty agreed that we need to do a better job communicating the objectives of our program, and especially what we do at the classroom level *versus* the wording of brief academic calendar descriptions. The Human Rights PCC agreed to update curriculum and related calendar descriptions, however we remained adamant that we must continue to maintain the Human Rights program's unique identity and not cross onto the terrain of other Brantford-based programs such as Law and Society, Social Justice, and Criminology. The academic calendar describes the Human Rights program as follows:

“Laurier Brantford's Human Rights and Human Diversity single and combined honours program, examine the key forces that will shape students' futures as individuals, workers and Canadians.” [This needs to be deleted from the calendar since we no longer refer to the campus as Laurier Brantford and we are now the “Human Rights” program].

“The program is designed to provide an understanding of the origins and the laws and institutions designed to protect human rights as well as the processes diversifying cultures and the policies that have been put in place to manage and accommodate this diversity.”

A new mission statement could look like this if we have permission to use some of the wording provided by the external reviewers:

“The Human Rights program is designed to provide an understanding of the laws and institutions designed to protect human rights. Through a single or combined honours, students are guided in the understanding of human rights principles and their application to governmental and non-governmental practices, and everyday social interactions, as well as consideration of the limitations of international law and the applications of justice in all its forms.”

Decanal Response: I am glad to hear that the PCC had the opportunity to meet and collectively deliberate on the program's identity and aim. I am supportive of the new mission statement the program came up with.

Recommendation #2: There is an urgent need for concerted attention with respect to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) including the following specific actions: i) development of a robust EDI statement, plan and measurement strategies that will enable swift progress towards meeting targets.

Program Response: We are working on an EDI statement along the lines of the paragraph below. However, we would need to see a sample of how to measure and evaluate EDI outcomes to be able to consider this recommendation. Has the university developed a rubric for measuring EDI outcomes? There is no question that our self-report was weak in this area. However, it is challenging to speak on behalf of the entire program when half of the PCC rejects anything they deem as "Woke" and any language around social justice, oppression, critical race theory, and decolonization. Furthermore, 15 CTFs teach most of the Human Rights classes. Only 4 of the CTFs are women, and all but one CTF are white. The program coordinator will have a close look at all course syllabi in spring and fall 2024 to keep better track of EDI considerations in course content. This notwithstanding, EDI principles are at the core of much of our teaching. Through our international courses and past internships in Mexico and Ghana, and the selection of instructional materials for our courses, we work with undergraduate students to critique their deeply held assumptions about themselves and others by positioning themselves as witnesses (as opposed to spectators) to all forms of injustice and to carefully reflect on the ethics of spending time with, observing, and telling the stories of vulnerable people in the Global South. Dr. Ame brings a West African perspective to the classroom with his reliance on textbooks, articles, and documentaries. Dr. Robinson uses many case studies from the Global South in HR100 and 200, and Dr. Wilson-Forsberg brings an anti-oppression framework to all of her teaching. All three professors conduct research in Africa, and with the African diaspora in Canada and all three professors have won Teaching Excellence Awards in Internationalization.

Decanal Response: I appreciate the challenges in EDI planning, as we try to balance between respecting different viewpoints in an open academic environment and advancing equity for deserving groups. There is no doubt that our teachers in the program can be more diverse both in terms of race and gender, but opportunities to hire new members can only be created if there is strong growth in enrolment. The university does have a strategic plan in EDI which can provide general guidance/directions, and programs are encouraged to work with the AVP EDI and AVP Indigenous Initiatives offices.

Recommendation #8: The program has a clear and urgent need for a larger full-time faculty component, and one that reflects the diversity of the student body. We recommend the hiring of a targeted hire for a full-time female faculty member.

Recommendation #9: Based on the program goals and current academic trends, we recommend that the new hire's expertise focus on gender, sexuality, and poverty, racial capitalism and global justice research that grounds experiences of Indigenous peoples and social precarity.

Program Response: The Human Rights PCC fully agrees with this recommendation and would further argue that a targeted hire would solve many of the challenges listed in the external reviewers' report. In our recent unsuccessful Canada Research Chair submission, we reiterated that our program would greatly benefit from the

addition of a full-time female faculty colleague to fill the gap in women's rights, a key area of human rights left by the retirement of Dr. Catherine Stewart in 2020. This is vital for four reasons.

First, having a full-time faculty member committed to teaching some combination of the following courses would emphasize the importance of these topics to our students: HR232 Women, Rights, and Equality; HR319 Children/Youth and Disabilities: Inclusion and Human Rights; HR320 Children's Rights; HR365 Immigrant and Ethno-Racial Youth; HR375 Sexual Minorities and Human Rights; a possible Indigenous Rights course.

Second, it is anticipated that the recruitment of a full-time female faculty member, being associated with these topics, would help share the responsibility of mentoring our overwhelmingly female student body. This is a responsibility that falls disproportionately on the program's lone female full-time member at present.

Third, it is entirely possible that when prospective students are offered admission to the Human Rights program, they look closely at course offerings and the faculty contingent in the undergraduate academic calendar and web site. A human rights program containing four men and one woman, is bad optics. It also would not take current students long to realize that of the 15 CTFs teaching the vast majority of courses in human rights, only four are women.

Fourth, with an international human rights law focus around women/gender, the targeted faculty hire would be well positioned to contribute to the process of developing a new Laurier Law School on the Brantford campus and at the university-wide level, she will fill a research void left by the retirement of Professor Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann who held the Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in International Human Rights.

Decanal Response: I agree that hiring a new full-time female faculty member in HRHD will be highly desirable, but the only realistic possible pathway for that to happen in the current fiscal environment is if we are successful in a CRC bid. I encourage the program to resubmit their application at the next opportunity.

Theme II: Curriculum

Recommendation #4: As part of the faculty retreat recommended earlier, conduct a detailed curriculum review with particular attention to core courses. Specifically, we recommend the addition of core courses in Indigenous Rights and related to Gender/Sexuality, either taught as HRHD courses or offered by other departments. In a human rights program in Canada, it is imperative and fundamental to the program's legitimacy and currency to include this content in core courses.

Program Response: The Human Rights PCC spent our March 22 faculty retreat time discussing core courses. We agree with this recommendation. Human Rights already offers or shares three courses focused on gender (HR232 Women's Rights and Equality, HR370 Gender, Sexuality, and Social Justice, and HR375 Sexual Minorities and Human Rights). On March 22 we agreed as a PCC to make **HR232 Women's Rights and Equality a core course** in the Human Rights program. We are also committed to developing HR232 as an online course to be included in a Human Rights minor. The inclusion of Indigenous Rights as a core course is important. However, any course on Indigenous Rights would be cross listed with Indigenous Studies, and likely owned by Indigenous Studies. So far, we have been unable to agree on sharing such a course, but we will ensure that the discussions will continue.

Decanal Response: I am supportive of making HR232 a core course, though the program may wish to remove another course from the core so that the total number of credits required to complete the major does not increase. I encourage further discussions with Indigenous Studies.

Recommendation #5: Currently the core courses are heavily structural (focusing on human rights laws and mechanisms) and draw primarily on theoretical approaches originating from the Global North and West. There is a need for an early, contextually, and culturally rich introduction to human rights that draws upon diverse cultural, faith and legal traditions, particularly non-western.

Program Response: This observation is correct, to a certain extent, and certainly the academic calendar descriptions give this appearance. However, the purpose of the human rights program is and will continue to be “to provide an understanding of the laws and institutions designed to protect human rights.” This legal/policy focus is what differentiates the Human Rights program from Law and Society, and Social Justice Community Engagement. In this respect the program is closer in content to political science than it is sociology. Some of our courses focus on human rights laws and institutions because they are designed to provide the foundation of human rights to students. The courses are:

HR100 (renamed Fundamentals of Human Rights)

The new public policy combination of courses: PO263 Politics and Government in Canada and HR327 - Understanding Public Policy for Issue Advocacy

HR323 Rights in Canada: Rights, freedoms, and the Charter

HR328 the United Nations in the International Community

The remainder of the Human Rights courses are topic specific beginning with a survey of human rights topics in HR/SOJE 260 renamed to Key Issues in Human Rights. HR/SOJE260 (OC) is a popular course with multiple sections. Approx 400 students enrolled in three sections in F, W and one in Spring. We see this OC course as a “hook”. Many Waterloo students take the course, like it, then complete a human rights minor. It is also a mandatory course in the online policing BA. We are now revamping the course in line with the new 4th edition of the textbook *Human Rights: Theory and Practice* by Michael Goodhart and published by Oxford University Press. Some of the new chapters (bolded below) reflect recommendations made by the external reviewers to adopt perspectives from the Global South, decolonialize, and focus on the rights of women and Indigenous peoples. The topic outline will be as follows:

Introduction

Part I: Foundational Knowledge

2 Basic Human Rights Vocabulary

3 Philosophical Foundations

4 Historical Development of HR

5 International Institutions

6 HR in International Law

7 Civil Society & NGOs

8 UN HR Treaty System

9 **Feminist Approaches to HR**

10 **Imperialism and HR**

Part II: HR Issues

11 Genocide

12 Torture

13 Political Democracy and State Repression

14 What Makes Gross Human Rights Violators?

15 Humanitarian Intervention

16 HR in Armed Conflict (incl. brief discussion of Gaza)

17 Forced Migration and Refugees

18 **Women & HR**

19 **Children & HR**

20 **Disabilities & HR**

21 **LGBTQ+ & HR**

22 **Race & HR**

22 **Indigenous Rights**

23 **The Right to Development**

24 **Environmental Rights** (we are also redeveloping HR231 Human Rights and the Environment as an online course to add to the Human Rights Online Minor).

With respect to those courses that focus more heavily on processes and institutions, we emphasize that we take a clear-eyed analytical approach to those processes and institutions with an emphasis on identifying practical policy fixes and responses. In most classes, a convention or treaty is presented in class and instructors work with the students to dissect the wording and understand where that convention or treaty works as it should and,

when it doesn't, why it doesn't. Perhaps the word "critically reflect" needs to be woven through the calendar descriptions to clarify this approach to the content? For example, Article 14 of the UDHR grants the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution, but in reality (as discussed in great detail in HR336) allowing people to cross a border to seek asylum is left to the discretion of each individual nation state, which does not bode well for asylum seekers. And while an International Convention on the Rights of Refugees is important, the 1951 definition of "refugee" has not kept pace with the changing nature of conflict and violence in the world.

As for non-Western/Northern traditions, these are very much a part of the human rights curriculum, though there is always room for improvement. For example, HR326 Transitional Justice is divided into three sections: retributive, restorative, and reparative justice. In retributive justice, we discuss the role of the ICC, international criminal tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, hybrid courts (East Timor, Lebanon, and Cambodia), and traditional justice (Rwanda and Uganda). In restorative justice, we focus on Chile and South Africa. Finally, for reparative justice, we discuss the role of apologies, compensation, and memorialization in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Armenia. During our recent faculty retreat we discussed adding the call by Caribbean countries for reparations for slavery in recognition of how slavery, colonialism and racism intersect and impact the lives of Black people around the world. HR100 includes material that introduces students to critiques of international human rights as being Eurocentric in origin. In particular, it introduces students to the concepts of cultural relativism and cultural imperialism. Students are also offered a wide range of essay topics, including several that create space to encounter non-Western critiques of standard international human rights positions on controversial issues. HR200 /101 introduces students to the perspectives of actors in the Global South who are being accused of human rights violations and encourages them to reflect upon what may be involved for efforts to advance international human rights in foreign countries to show adequate sensitivity and respect for local contexts and values. HR320 Children Rights, for its part uses two textbooks, one uses a Western perspective and the other a West African perspective. Other course materials such as journal articles and videos (documentaries) are selected to reflect the two perspectives. In addition, HR402: Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Human Rights focuses on understanding the definition of human rights and its practice in different parts of the world with the Global South featuring heavily mainly due to a lot of negative traditional practices out there.

Decanal Response: I wish to thank the program for this very thoughtful response to the reviewer's recommendation. I'm pleased to read about the non-western perspectives that are already embedded in our curriculum.

Recommendation #6: We recommend reviewing and revising elective courses to focus on those that align most clearly with human rights and the HRHD program's objectives, with particular attention to courses that form part of the Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations and the International Development Option. There are a number of skills-based courses related to the Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations program that do not appear to contain human rights content. There is also an opportunity to revise courses in the International Development Option - an option that is currently experiencing a decline in student interest. There are courses that are not currently framed in human rights terms but could be revised to augment the program's content in areas such as perspectives on human rights in the Global South, and the right to development.

Program Response: The international development option will be redeveloped including the revamping of HR/OL 301 Development Theories and Approaches as the “Right to Development” to be guided by a textbook or journals from the Global South. The Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations, for its part, is an option for human rights students who would like to work in the NGO sector. In the NGO sector, skills like grant writing, project management, and fundraising are critical. The certificate was designed without human rights specific content to attract students from other programs since the student body is too small to keep the option going on their own.

Decanal Response: I agree with the program that the International Development Option should be redeveloped, and the Non-Profit Certificate should serve the needs of students from different programs.

Theme III: Recruitment

Recommendation #12: We recommend more effective communication and recruitment strategies for prospective students centered around the Human Rights program and considering the needs of different target populations. Approaches for local high school students might include: outreach to local schools, hiring current students to do recruitment outreach, offering dual enrolment courses on campus to give students a ‘taste’ of the program, and offering summer or holiday short courses aimed at recruiting majors. For mature and transfer students, direct engagement with, and presentations at Conestoga College may be productive alongside alternative modes of instructional delivery (e.g. summer, evening and weekend courses). For international students, there is a strong opportunity to develop a stronger relationship with Laurier’s new international bridging program and to offer human rights courses through this program.

Program Response: Our recent Open House in March 2024 was quite successful in terms of the number of prospective students who came to our FLA desk to ask specifically about Human Rights. Dr. Robinson talked to about 5 students and Dr. Prani about the same number. Our student volunteers talked to several other students. 5 prospective students and 5 parents came to Dr. Ame’s teaching demonstration. The spontaneous applause at the end of Dr. Ame’s lecture said it all. We will continue doing what we have been doing. Furthermore, we are piloting the Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations in two high schools with NGO specialization skills majors in Hamilton-Wentworth in April and will pursue the certificate at Brantford Collegiate Institute (BCI), which is apparently starting a similar SSM.

Decanal Response: In addition to the initiatives the program is taking, the Faculty is also in conversation with local school boards to explore dual credit opportunities.

Theme IV: Skills, Experiential Learning and Career Pathways

Recommendation #3: We recommend sustained and continued efforts to further promote community college pathways and other alternative entry routes to the HRHD program. This could provide more accessible educational opportunities for a broader range of students, including local students who may need additional skill development.

Program Response: The Human Rights program has a 2+2 pathway articulation with Conestoga College. Also our Mohawk College 2+2 pathway recently received Senate approval and we are now working on the articulation agreement.

Decanal Response: HRHD probably has more college pathways than any other program in FLA. I encourage the program to do what it can to continue to promote these innovative educational pathways.

Recommendation #7: The self-study raised questions about the program's Professionalization Seminar. We recommend that the HRDH program draw on its strengths in student and alumni consultation to survey current and former students about the concrete skills they most need to enter the human rights workplace (or to further their professional or graduate studies) and use the resulting information to inform a review of the Professionalization Seminar.

Program Response: The Human Rights PCC decided to cancel the HR300 Professionalization seminar due to a lot of repetition in content that is now being delivered at the university and Faculty levels (for example, the new U UU400 Internship Course and the UU 499 Research Course). We have directed academic advising to inform students that it is no longer required to graduate, and we will replace the core course with HR232 Women's Rights and Equality moving forward.

Decanal Response: I'm glad to read that HR300 will be replaced by HR232 and I am supportive of this decision.

Recommendation #11: We recommend exploring more options to engage undergraduate students in faculty research through Research Assistantships and related opportunities.

Program Response: We hire high performing undergraduate students when the funding is there. We support the establishment of UU499 and will be happy to hire/supervise students when the opportunity arises.

Decanal Response: There is also a research apprenticeship program available that the Human Rights program could leverage to address this recommendation.

Recommendation #14: Encourage more research and community engagement activities among both faculty and students. This could involve collaborative projects with community organizations, research initiatives that address local and global Human Rights issues, and workshops or seminars that involve external experts. Given the strong emphasis on experiential education (EE), there's room to expand these opportunities. This could include more community-based and organization-based experiential learning, particularly focusing on social justice, equity, and Indigenous issues.

Program Response: The Human Rights program is actively involved with community organizations in Brantford, the Waterloo Region, and more recently, the GTA through community service learning, student internships, and

through assistance with grant writing as a component of the not-for-profit certificate. On the research front, Dr. Wilson-Forsberg's research program is deeply community engaged through several SSHRC-funded projects. The research is often presented in class and often involves paid undergraduate research assistants. For example, one of our Human Rights graduates Neala Heyratiyan, who is now at McGill Law School, worked very closely with Drs. Wilson-Forsberg and Masakure on their various community engaged projects for two years.

Decanal Response: Indeed, the program is heavily involved with the community and there are various collaborative projects that are ongoing. I would trust the program's judgment about where there is (or is not) available capacity within the program to extend these initiatives or initiate new ones.

Recommendation #15: Integrate more skills-based learning into the curriculum, focusing on practical skills that students need in the field of Human Rights and Human Diversity, such negotiation, advocacy, critical thinking, and analysis.

Program Response: These skills are taught in the Not-for-Profit Certificate courses, HR100, HR 200, and HR328.

Decanal Response: I agree that the program is already embedding practical skills into the Human Rights program curriculum. I trust the program to determine if there are further ways that the skills identified by the review committee could be integrated into HR courses.

Theme V: Enhancing Student Experience

Recommendation #10: Explore ways to use existing resources to foster a sense of community among students - including alternative uses of available space, social events and programs and activities that bring faculty and students together in person.

Recommendation # 13: Our meeting with the students confirmed our perception that HRHD needs a plan to enhance the first-year student experience and connection to the program by supporting peer networks through more timely and program-centered orientation for students' academic success. This is necessary since there is a dichotomy in the student body between those who are very engaged and take full advantage of the opportunities provided by HRHD in courses and outside the classrooms and those student participants who had never contacted HRHD program for advising purposes.

Program Response: The program takes and has taken very deliberate measures to foster a sense of community amongst its majors. These include:

- hosting a meet and greet early in the Fall semester each year;
- restricting HR200 (now 101) to HR majors with the intention that this will provide a setting in which they can identify and get to know their colleagues and then, within the course, having students work in

small groups with their colleagues and rearranging these groups several times during the semester to make sure they meet as many other HR majors as possible;

- actively supporting the program's students' association;
- nominating and supporting students' involvement in ACERS;

The program recognizes that these efforts are challenged by the facts that the Brantford campus is largely a commuter campus and that it has become more so since the return from Covid. It also believes that many organic student community, groups, and traditions were wiped out during the Covid period and will take time to redevelop.

Decanal Response: The issue that the reviewers pointed out is campus wide, though I agree that more opportunities for faculty and students to get together will be desirable. I encourage the program to continue to look for ways to foster community amongst its students, with a particular focus on the experience of first year students.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: As the reviewers have pointed out, Human Rights is a strong program that aligns well with the University's mission. It offers excellent experiential learning opportunities and practical skills that prepare students well for a professional career, especially if they plan to work in the non-profit sector. The faculty members are dedicated and conduct policy-relevant and community-engaged research.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts: I agree with the reviewers that the program can be strengthened in the areas of indigeneity, sustainability, and inclusive community.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Heidi Northwood

July 29, 2024



APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: September 19, 2024

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee: January 9, 2025

Submitted to Senate (for information): March 4, 2025

Implementation Report Due Date: March 4, 2027

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The following Implementation Plan was created by the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts as part of the Decanal Response.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date
<p>Recommendation #1: We recommend a faculty retreat to collectively clarify the identity and aim of the program, review and update program objectives and program-level learning outcomes with respect to inclusiveness, theoretical and interdisciplinary rigour, and decolonization.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>Dec 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #2: There is an urgent need for concerted attention with respect to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) including the following specific actions: i) development of a robust EDI statement, plan and measurement strategies that will enable swift progress towards meeting targets.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>Dec 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #3: We recommend sustained and continued efforts to further promote community college pathways and other alternative entry routes to the HRHD program. This could provide more accessible educational opportunities for a broader range of students, including local students who may need additional skill development.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>

<p>Recommendation #4: As part of the faculty retreat recommended earlier, conduct a detailed curriculum review with particular attention to core courses. Specifically, we recommend the addition of core courses in Indigenous Rights and related to Gender/Sexuality, either taught as HRHD courses or offered by other departments. In a human rights program in Canada, it is imperative and fundamental to the program’s legitimacy and currency to include this content in core courses.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>Dec 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #5: Currently the core courses are heavily structural (focusing on human rights laws and mechanisms) and draw primarily on theoretical approaches originating from the Global North and West. There is a need for an early, contextually, and culturally rich introduction to human rights that draws upon diverse cultural, faith and legal traditions, particularly non-western.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>Dec 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation #6: We recommend reviewing and revising elective courses to focus on those that align most clearly with human rights and the HRHD program’s objectives, with particular attention to courses that form part of the Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations and the International Development Option. There are a number of skills-based courses related to the Certificate in Non-Profit Career Foundations program that do not appear to contain human rights content. There is also an opportunity to revise courses in the International Development Option - an option that is currently</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>

<p>experiencing a decline in student interest. There are courses that are not currently framed in human rights terms but could be revised to augment the program's content in areas such as perspectives on human rights in the Global South, and the right to development.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #7: The self-study raised questions about the program's Professionalization Seminar. We recommend that the HRDH program draw on its strengths in student and alumni consultation to survey current and former students about the concrete skills they most need to enter the human rights workplace (or to further their professional or graduate studies) and use the resulting information to inform a review of the Professionalization Seminar.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #8: The program has a clear and urgent need for a larger full-time faculty component, and one that reflects the diversity of the student body. We recommend the hiring of a targeted hire for a full-time female faculty member.</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>CRC bid when next opportunity comes up; no institutional guarantee possible</p>
<p>Recommendation #9: Based on the program goals and current academic trends, we recommend that the new hire's expertise focus on gender, sexuality, and poverty, racial capitalism and global justice research that grounds experiences of Indigenous peoples and social precarity.</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>See above</p>

<p>Recommendation #10: Explore ways to use existing resources to foster a sense of community among students - including alternative uses of available space, social events and programs and activities that bring faculty and students together in person.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #11: We recommend exploring more options to engage undergraduate students in faculty research through Research Assistantships and related opportunities.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #12: We recommend more effective communication and recruitment strategies for prospective students centered around the Human Rights program and considering the needs of different target populations. Approaches for local high school students might include: outreach to local schools, hiring current students to do recruitment outreach, offering dual enrolment courses on campus to give students a ‘taste’ of the program, and offering summer or holiday short courses aimed at recruiting majors. For mature and transfer students, direct engagement with, and presentations at Conestoga College may be productive alongside alternative modes of instructional delivery (e.g. summer, evening and weekend courses). For international students, there is a strong opportunity to develop a stronger relationship with Laurier’s new international bridging program and to offer human rights courses through this program.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee in collaboration with Recruitment & Admissions</p>		<p>June 2025</p>

<p>Recommendation # 13: Our meeting with the students confirmed our perception that HRHD needs a plan to enhance the first-year student experience and connection to the program by supporting peer networks through more timely and program-centered orientation for students' academic success. This is necessary since there is a dichotomy in the student body between those who are very engaged and take full advantage of the opportunities provided by HRHD in courses and outside the classrooms and those student participants who had never contacted HRHD program for advising purposes.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #14: Encourage more research and community engagement activities among both faculty and students. This could involve collaborative projects with community organizations, research initiatives that address local and global Human Rights issues, and workshops or seminars that involve external experts. Given the strong emphasis on experiential education (EE), there's room to expand these opportunities. This could include more community-based and organization-based experiential learning, particularly focusing on social justice, equity, and Indigenous issues.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>
<p>Recommendation #15: Integrate more skills-based learning into the curriculum, focusing on practical skills that students need in the field of Human Rights and Human Diversity, such negotiation, advocacy, critical thinking, and analysis.</p>	<p>Program Coordinating Committee</p>		<p>June 2025</p>