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Cinema and Media Arts, BA, BFA, MA, MFA, PhD
School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design (AMPD)

Cyclical Program Review – 2008 to 2015

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan Executive Summary

Reported to Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: December 4, 2017

Program Description

The BFA in Film Production at York University has the distinction of being the first university-based film school in Canada. The undergraduate program in production came into being in 1969 first as a BA, and then in 1971, it became a BFA (Specialized Honours) in Production with the creation of a separate BA in Film Studies, now called Cinema and Media Studies. In 2009, Canada's first program in Screenwriting was created and offered as a BFA (Specialized Honours).

Within York University's MFA Film, there are two degree programs: Screenwriting and Production. Both were established in 1978, and both are recognized internationally as two of the most innovative and dynamic MFA Film degrees in Canada, offering a challenging blend of theory and practice taught by working filmmakers and screenwriters. Both feature a five term, two-year course of study that blend coursework, workshops and field placements, which culminate in a thesis film or screenplay, accompanied by a support paper.

In January 1999, the joint degree program MFA (Film)/MBA (Arts & Media Administration) was introduced. It allows students to earn both degrees after an intensive three-year course of study. Graduates of this highly challenging program pursue careers that jointly utilize advanced creative and business skills, and are uniquely positioned for rewarding jobs in the film, television and new media industries.

There are two core graduate degree programs (MA and PhD) in Cinema and Media Studies at York University. The Masters in Film, established in 1978 was the first graduate program in Canada. The PhD was established in 2008 and was the first stand-alone doctoral program in cinema and media studies in English Canada. The MA is currently a five term, two year course of study comprising of coursework which culminates in a Major Research Paper. The PhD offers a specialization in three fields: 1. Cinema and Cultural Theory; 2. National and Transnational Cinemas; and 3. Cinema and Technologies of the Image.



	Registration (new intake) 2015	Enrolment FTES 2015	Degrees Awarded 2015
Undergraduate BA/BFA	190	521	77 Hons; 19 90-credit; 2 minor
MA/MFA	114	158	96
PhD	31	114	12
Graduate Diploma	n/a	n/a	20

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Marielle Nitoslawska, Professor of Film Production, Concordia University
 Jerry White, Canada Research Chair in European Studies, Dalhousie University
 David Skinner, Chair, Department of Communications, York University

Documentation Provided to the External Reviewers

Prior to the site visit, the external reviewers are provided with the following:

- Dean's /Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Department/Program Omnibus Statement (where applicable)
- Program Self-Study Brief, which includes program structure, curriculum and learning outcomes, program reflection, enrolment and retention data, resources, student input and quality enhancement opportunities
- Faculty CVs
- University, Faculty and Program planning documents

Site Visit: October 6 and 7, 2016

The Review team met with the following individuals: Barbara Crow, Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Sean Brixey (Dean, School of Arts, Media, Design and Performance), Ali Kazimi (Chair, Cinema and Media Studies), Adam Taves, Acting Associate University Librarian, Kathryn Elder (Head, Sound and Image Media Library), Howard Wiseman (Screenwriting area head), Laurence Green (acting Film Production area head), John Greyson (MFA program director), Sharon Hayashi (MA and PhD program director), Larry Gilmore (manager, Studio Operations), Kenneth Rogers (Associate Dean Research, AMPD). They also met with groups of undergraduate students in production, screenwriting, and Film Studies; graduate students in production, screenwriting, and Film Studies; faculty members in production, screenwriting, and Film Studies; and administrative and technical staff.

The reviewers also toured facilities, including, production facilities at main campus, including equipment depot and storage, editing facilities, studios, etc.; off-campus production facilities (“Cine-Space” on Kipling avenue); and the graduate student lounge and library.

In addition, they attended a York-sponsored screening of online work at a downtown Toronto venue.

Outcome:

The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Decanal Plan addressed the review recommendations. The Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance requested that curriculum mapping for all of the programs be submitted to the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic by November 30, 2018. Progress on items in the Dean’s plan will be included in the Follow-up Report due June 2019. The next CPR will begin in the Fall of 2023.

Strengths:

The Reviewers made particular note of the library resource available to students, faculty and staff. “The Sound and Image Library holds one of the most outstanding collections of world cinema found in any Canadian university, and some of the films the library holds (mainly by Canadian experimental filmmakers) are very difficult to find elsewhere. The overall library situation is exemplary.

The strength of the faculty complement is impressive. The Reviewer Report stated, “Production faculty represent an impressive cross-section of varied cinematic practices, and collectively offer the breadth and diversity that has had, and continues to have, a direct impact on the diversity of the curriculum in the core undergraduate courses and in the unique profile of the MFA.” They also noted, “Cinema and Media Studies faculty represents a very wide range of specialization and the ability to deliver a diverse curriculum taught by bona fide experts in specific areas is certainly present.”

Opportunities for Enhancement:

The Review Report provided a fulsome and robust discussion of the materials included in the self-study, the Dean’s agenda of concerns, and the challenges and issues that were raised during the site visit.

The Review Report was detailed in its evaluation of the curriculum, the student outcomes, the faculty and staff complement and the resources challenges. The report included 10 detailed recommendations, the first five related to the curriculum and the other six related to the administration and resources required to support the program. The report’s summary of recommendations is appended and abbreviated below.

The recommendations regarding the curriculum are focused on the following:

1. York should consider eliminating the BFA in Screenwriting as a free-standing Program stream. There is clearly some excellent teaching going on there but there are long-term problems of faculty complement, low enrolments and disconnect from production that we think can be well-addressed by students who want to be screenwriters being encouraged to pursue a more general degree in production, one that would still allow them to avail of the *clearly very high-quality teaching* in screenwriting that York offers.
2. The undergraduate Production program should consider innovative curriculum solutions to improve the transition between the first two and the last two years of the program.
3. More effort should be made to integrate theory and practice within the undergraduate BFA; this effort should be paralleled by an initiative to bring some studies courses into meaningful interaction with the production realm.
4. The role of professional internships in the curricula of the Department should be reconsidered, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.
5. The BFA course numbers & titles should be reviewed where needed. The BFA requirements do not provide a clear overview of the program, as they should.

With regards to administration and resources, there were six recommendations. The first of these recommendations was related to the volume of requests for student and faculty assistance. The second was related to the extensive service component assumed by faculty in the production program. The reviewers felt that both of these required immediate investigation.

Two additional recommendations focused on the requirement for policies to a) ensure adequate upgrading of digital technologies, and b) a sustainable equipment access policy to restore acceptable working conditions for the technical support staff of the depot area. Both are essential to maintaining the reputation, credibility and competitive advantage of the graduate and undergraduate programs.

Dean's Implementation Plan

In her Implementation Plan, the Interim Dean of AMPD notes the following: "Like many disciplines, Film has experienced radical shifts related to the rapid introduction of new technologies. Film production remains a vibrant field and I am pleased to report that the current chair and I have had positive conversations related to potential curricular trajectories in the years ahead.

The Interim Dean has provided details about the proposed follow-up for recommendations made by the external reviewers. They are incorporated into the chart below.

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	First Responsibility for Follow-up	Final Responsibility for Follow-up	Timeline
Consider eliminating the BFA in Screenwriting	Discussion of a common first year curriculum Examination and re-assessment of the upper level Screenwriting	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department NOTE: In the MFA, Production and	Dean's Office and possibly AAPPC; Faculty Council	Fall 2017
Curricular solutions to improve student transition from years 1&2 to years 3&4	Curriculum and student selection process for upper year courses to be examined and re-assessed	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department; Production Curriculum Committee	Associate Dean Academic, AMPD	FW 2017/18
Better integration of theory and practice at the undergraduate level	Honours BFA stream in Media Arts	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department	AMPD AAPPC; Faculty Council; Senate	Completed in 2016/17; launching in September
Reconsideration of the role of professional internships at the undergraduate and graduate levels	Better use of support offered by the AMPD EE Administrator Develop a process for submission and approval of EE proposals Increase the use of opportunities available at CineSpace	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department	EE Administrator and Associate Dean Academic Dean's Office	Fall 2017

Review of BFA course titles and numbers	All course titles and numbers to be reviewed for clarity of sequence	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department	AAPPC and Governance Officer	FW 2017/18
Address the heavy workload experienced by staff	Potential instances of staff being asked to perform duties beyond their job description to be identified and corrected CineSieve to be staffed by a part-time summer student Cases of faculty/staff negative interactions to be addressed Explore possibility of increased banding for some positions and hiring additional personnel in Equipment Room.	CMA Studio Manager Department Chair Faculty Relations; HR; Dean Department Chair; HR	EO Dean's Office EO and Dean's Office	FW 2017/18 SU2017 SU FA 2017 FW2017
Address the heavy workload experienced by production area faculty	Current curriculum and number of student projects and screenings to be examined and re-assessed	CMA Executive Committee; CMA Department	Dean's Office Associate	Fall 2017
Ensure ongoing commitment to equipment upgrades	Explore sponsorship opportunities for new equipment	AMPD Sr Development Officer; CMA Executive	Dean; Sr Development Officer	FW 2017/18

Implement a sustainable equipment access process	Develop guidelines for student use of equipment Explore hiring additional personnel in Equipment Room.	CMA Studio Manager; CMA Executive Committee; Production Curriculum Committee	EO; Dean's Office	Fall 2017
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Curriculum mapping for all degree programs will be submitted to the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic by November 30, 2018. A report on the progress of the other initiatives will be provided in the Follow-up Report, due in June 2019.

Alice J. Pitt
Vice-Provost Academic
York University