

Dance, Undergraduate (BA and BFA) and Graduate Programs (MA, PHD, MFA)

School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design

Cyclical Program Review

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Final

Reported to Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: June 6, 2016

Program Description

The Department of Dance has been in existence since 1970. At the undergraduate level the Bachelor of Fine Arts is the nucleus of the Department. The program is distinctive for its holistic approach, educating intelligent, flexible bodies in integration with dynamic, adaptable minds, with the belief that dance is both an art form and an academic discipline. In 2003 a BA in Dance was established, with an emphasis on theoretical studies and world dance forms, and in 2001 a 90-credit degree was introduced.

Founded in 1976, York University’s MA in Dance was the first research-based graduate program in dance in the world and to date the largest of its kind in Canada. The Master of Fine Arts in Dance offers candidates the opportunity to conduct research in contemporary choreography and dance dramaturgy within diverse contexts for theatrical dance. The MFA program enables students to develop and refine skill in aspects of contemporary choreographic process, from conceptualization through final production and documentation of theatrical choreography. The PhD program allows students to pursue the tracks of “History and Heritage Studies” and “Ethnography and Cultural Research,” two fields that define dance studies at the moment, preparing graduates for careers in academia and the cultural sector.

Program	Accepts 2013	Enrolment FTES 2013	Degrees Awarded 2013
Dance (BA/BFA)	63	244	Hons – 57; 90 credit – 2; Certificates 3
Dance (MA/MFA)	10	12	15
Dance Studies (PhD)	5	12	3

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

Ann Kipling-Brown, Professor Emerita, PhD, University of Regina, Saskatchewan
 Juliana Saxton, Professor Emerita, Department of Theatre, University of Victoria, British Columbia
 Professor Steve Bailey, Department of Humanities, York University, Toronto, Ontario

Site Visit: September 23 and 24, 2015

During the site visit, the reviewers met with Acting Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Fahim Quadir, Chair of Dance Department Susan Kash, Dean of the School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design Shawn Brixey, Graduate Program Directors Patrick Alcedo & William Mackwood and Librarians Kathy Elder & Catherine Davidson. In addition, interviews were held with full- and part-time faculty members, musicians, administrative staff, and students from the Dance Student Association and Graduate Dance Student Association. The reviewers toured the dance studios, meeting rooms and theatres and attended a dress rehearsal “I AM”, MacLean Studio (solo projects by MFA 2nd year students).



Outcome: The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Dean's Implementation Plan, established in consultation with the program, outlined a comprehensive plan for program enhancements. Progress on the recommendations will be included in the Follow-up Report due December 2017. The next cyclical program review will begin in the fall of 2021.

Strengths:

- Many graduates have been involved in, developed and managed significant programs, companies, organizations and teaching positions locally, nationally and internationally.
- Faculty members have impressive research agendas and have received extensive funding both externally from major funding bodies as well as grants from internal university sources.
- The physical space in terms of studios, theatres and classrooms and conditioning rooms as well as facilities to record sound and video are impressive and provide an excellent resource for the study of dance.
- University Libraries provide excellent support for the undergraduate and graduate programs in dance
- Program Level Outcomes have been established for each program and course level objectives have been established.

Opportunities for Enhancement:

- Enhanced information through the program website or other social media outlets would be beneficial for potential and current students, parents and community members alike.
- The undergraduate curriculum should be reviewed in light of student needs, including those who wish to pursue a Bachelor of Education, blended or online learning options and multiple entry points to the degrees.
- Outreach to students across campus to create visibility for the program and opportunities for collaborative projects with students from other disciplines should be explored.
- Collaborative opportunities with digital and technological tools should be explored.
- Careful consideration should be given to the advantages and disadvantages of shortening the master's level program (MA).
- Clear plans for renewal of the full-time faculty complement need to be established to support students at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Implementation Plan

The Review Report provided some excellent suggestions for the program that have been taken up in the implementation plan; however, because the Report also departed significantly from the evaluation criteria, the programs were asked to consult with the Dean on an implementation plan rather than submit a separate response to the review report.

The Plan addresses the need for the programs to continue evolving their identity and well-established reputation through curriculum renewal and increased clarity about its strengths.

In particular, the undergraduate programs must address the interdisciplinary interests of contemporary dance students within a framework that continues to provide core performance training. Enhanced web activity and marketing are planned and new partnerships sought to strengthen enrolments in the dance education stream. Ongoing curriculum renewal will include review of degree expectations with view to allowing more opportunities for UG dance students to pursue special interests and the Faculty and Dean will create more opportunities for students to come together across Departments for creative exploration. In addition, the Department and Dean's Office will collaborate to ensure there are performance opportunities and out-reach community experiences for students especially at the first and second year level.

A more streamlined MA and PhD, to be developed by the Department members with leadership from the Chair and the Graduate Program Directors, will also allow the currently suspended MFA to be reinstated on a more stable footing. The Department and Dean's Office will review innovative MA program models that do not require an MRP or thesis, further supporting sustainable enrolments. This will include the establishment of a 1 year MA and implement 4+1 model to help address graduate enrolment fluctuations, expected for Spring 2018.

The Department and Dean will develop a staffing model that makes effective use of Full-time, sessional and Teaching Assistants' expertise to be implemented in the Fall of 2016 and, for MFA students, Fall of 2017. At least one new faculty position is a priority for the Faculty.

Alice J. Pitt
Vice-Provost Academic
York University