

New Media Periodic Program Review
June 2023
1 Year Follow-up Report

The following report outlines progress made on the 10 recommendations that arose from a combination of the programs' self-study report as well as the external peer review team's report.

Priority Recommendation #1: *Expand curriculum to include Gaming and Interaction Design*

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

The new media technologies that were once niche and experimental now permeate many aspects of culture and society. The expanded field of new media includes areas of specialisation such as interactive design and gaming that are interwoven with the core practices that have evolved from within fine art. Our current students are the first generation to have grown up in this iteration of interactive new media spaces. As a result, they understand society from within these mediated spaces and live within the overlapping art, design, and gaming spaces.

Implementation Actions:

- Develop a proposal for an expanded New Media curriculum that allows students to focus on interactive design and gaming while building on the existing New Media Fine Art curriculum.
- Request a new hire to support the expansion into Gaming

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

2021-22 academic year with submission of proposal to VPA by end of Spring 2022, and a planned start with the Fall 2023 cohort.

Responsibility for

a) leading initiative: *Program Director*

b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: *Curriculum Committee, School Council, Faculty Dean, UPO, VPA*

Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)

This recommendation is completed. We submitted a proposal in Spring 2022 to add Core Required group options in the 3rd year of the program. The proposal was approved and is now being implemented starting in the 2023/24 calendar year. These options provide pathways for students to develop depth in the areas of Interaction Design or Video Games, while maintaining the existing curriculum for students who choose to continue to focus on New Media Art. All pathways build on our existing foundations in year 1 and 2, and lead to a common Thesis course where art, interaction design and gaming can blend together in interesting ways.

A new hire was requested and approved to help support the development of the Video Games pathway in particular. The hiring process began in Winter 2023 and is underway.

Priority Recommendation #2 : *Better balance between introductory and advanced courses.*

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

This is tied to Recommendation #1. Currently, students primarily develop depth in the area of New Media Fine Art. The proposed curricular expansion will address the need for more advanced courses by providing alternative pathways in the 3rd year of the program.

<p>Implementation Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a proposal for an expanded New Media curriculum that allows students to focus on interactive design and gaming while building on the existing New Media Fine Art curriculum required and elective courses.
<p>Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?) e.g. 2021-22 academic year with submission of proposal to VPA by end of Spring 2022, and a planned start with the Fall 2023 cohort.</p>
<p>Responsibility for a) leading initiative: <i>Program Director</i> b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: <i>Curriculum Committee, School Council, Faculty Dean, VPA</i></p>
<p>Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)</p> <p>This recommendation is also completed. The proposal outlined in Recommendation #1 has allowed us to develop curriculum in the Required Group options that will cater to our students diverse interests. We have already begun this work to establishing the new Gaming and Interaction Design curriculum, and will be updating the New Media Art courses this year ahead of Fall 2024 where the Required Group options will first take effect. We have also updated our shared core required curriculum with the addition of RTA 111 (Intro to New Media) which provides students with a broad-based perspective on the field and includes discussions of how art, interaction design and videogames intersect, as well as RTA 867 - Game Engines, which acknowledges the need for New Media graduates to become proficient with those tools, regardless of their application area (art, design or games).</p>

<p>Priority Recommendation #3 : <i>Increase emphasis in the curriculum on Indigenous knowledge and learning.</i></p>
<p>Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation) To align with the values of this University wide initiative by embedding Indigenous knowledge and learning into its curriculum.</p>
<p>Implementation Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Review course outlines to identify areas for integrating content highlighting contributions by Indigenous artists and supporting the development of Indigenous knowledge creation</i> • <i>Offer additional courses that focus on Indigenous creators and knowledge.</i>
<p>Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?) Begin curriculum review in Fall 2022 by examining current offerings, with an eye towards developing future offerings.</p>
<p>Responsibility for a) leading initiative: <i>Program Faculty</i> b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: <i>Curriculum Committee, School Council</i></p>
<p>Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)</p>

We have postponed implementation our Indigenous faculty member was on sabbatical in 2022/23. The program faculty deemed it important that our colleague be available to participate in these discussions. We did begin to map out a strategy for future hire priorities that will ensure continuity of representation of Indigenous perspectives within our curriculum, once current faculty members retire.

Priority Recommendation #4 : Implement a strong EDI targeted approach for new hires actively recruit candidates from equity-deserving groups.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

In alignment with the current values and initiatives of the School, the New Media program continues to work on improving representation from equity-deserving groups within the Faculty.

Implementation Actions:

- Request a replacement hire to provide continuity when current Indigenous faculty retires

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

New hires to support Indigenous curriculum and the program's expansion into gaming will be requested for the 2022/23 hiring cycle.

Responsibility for

a) leading initiative: Program Director, DHC

b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: *Department Chair, Faculty Dean*

Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)

While we did not get an Indigenous New Media hire approved this year (this will likely hinge on a current faculty member's retirement), we did place a strong emphasis on EDI in our current strategic hire for Video Game Design & Development, which in turn informed our job posting and recruitment process. The DHC for this hire is still under way and is currently considering two candidates, both of which have EDI as a fundamental element of their research and community engagement within the video game space. We strongly believe that diverse & critical perspectives in this area is critical as our program develops.

Priority Recommendation #5 : Increase in staff support for facilities and activities.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

New skillsets are required to support the new curricular initiatives in gaming and interaction design. At least one of the tech staff job descriptions will need to be developed to ensure adequate support from the program's new areas of expertise.

Implementation Actions:

- Work with departmental staff to review tech staff positions and future needs

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

Begin technical needs review starting Fall 2022, with the goal of having additional support in place by Fall 2023.

Responsibility for**a) leading initiative:** Program Director, Operations Manager**b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** Department Chair, Faculty Dean**Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)**

We have begun the work of identifying technical needs for new courses coming online, particularly in the area of Video Game Design and Development. These needs will begin to emerge in a more specific way as the related courses begin to launch (starting with RTA 867 Game Engines) in Fall 2023.

Unfortunately, the current budgetary climate means that new staff positions have been off the table. We have had to adapt our current strategy and shift our focus towards providing opportunities for existing staff to build on their existing skillset and acquire training in new areas. This is an ongoing process in collaboration with our Operations Manager. We are also collaborating with the Red Bull Gaming hub and leveraging their expertise when possible.

Priority Recommendation #6 : Increased student advising**Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)**

Students have identified confusion regarding course selection and frustration over the frequency of some course offerings. Students need help understanding how to use their electives to create a personalized educational pathway and consider prerequisites and other constraints such as alternate year elective offerings. This support becomes even more critical with the implementation of the new Open Elective Policy.

Implementation Actions:

- Support academic advisors by providing updated information and instruction on how to guide students through the new curriculum.
- Revise and redesign the information offered online.
- Launch a Winter orientation focused on curriculum

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

2022/2023 academic year

Responsibility for**a) leading initiative:** Program Director, department staff**b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Department Chair***Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)**

We have done significant work on our communications and student-facing advising processes.

We have worked with our academic advisors to ensure that they are up-to-date after our recent curricular changes. We have also implemented a 1st year Winter orientation with a specific focus on curriculum planning. We strategically scheduled this orientation right before Course Intentions to help new students navigate this process. The orientation took place on Zoom for accessibility reasons. We presented to students an overview of our curriculum design philosophy as well as discussed the various pathways,

thematic offerings and elective choices in plain, clear language with concrete examples of what each course aims to achieve. The session was recorded and shared with students in upper years as well.

The Fall orientation used to touch on these in a much more superficial way, as we also have a lot of other practical information to share with We found that students were more receptive to this type of material in the Winter term, having had a semester to adapt to University life. We found that deferring the discussion of curriculum planning to the Winter. We plan to continue running this orientation, and eventually make the content available on a more permanent basis on our program website. In addition to curriculum advising, we have developed our [Makerspace Code of Conduct](#) which reflects our community values.

Priority Recommendation #7 : Strengthen engagement with the Library and the Zone Learning network.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

Implementation Actions:

- Review curriculum to ensure these important university resources are referenced and utilized.
- Encourage faculty to utilize their support and resources.

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
2022/2023 Academic year

Responsibility for

a) leading initiative: Program Director, Program Faculty

b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair

Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)

Unfortunately, we have not been able to focus resources towards on implementing this recommendation in the 2022/23 academic year. Building stronger engagement with the Library and the Zones is still an important area of growth for the program. Now that we have been able to make significant process on higher priority recommendations such as curriculum overhaul, communications, marketing and new hires, this item will be top of mind for the upcoming academic year.

Priority Recommendation #8 : Creation of a dedicated public presentation space.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

Public presentation is an essential part of the lifecycle of a creative project. It allows a creative project to find its audience and provides the creator with valuable feedback from that audience. Such encounters are also essential for the mobilisation of innovation.

Many students in New Media have the opportunity to exhibit their work only in their final year, which limits their creative development. An exhibition space would allow students and faculty to share their work publicly and connect the New Media program community with those of the surrounding sector.

Implementation Actions:

- *Prepare a study of needs and potential collaborations with programs such as Interior Design and Fashion to identify opportunities within Creative School facilities.*

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

Begin development of study starting Fall 2022. Follow up on study in 23/24 academic year.

Responsibility for

a) leading initiative: Program Director

b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair, Faculty Dean

Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)

Much as with Recommendation #5, the tight budgetary climate has made the creation of a dedicated exhibition space impossible. Instead, we have focused our efforts in this area on a strategy that will allow for New Media interventions & public exhibition across a variety existing spaces on campus. In particular, our faculty members have been working on a higher degree of coordination between the different exhibition spaces on campus, with a special focus on the Assembly Gallery in the IMA building, which has already housed a New Media student exhibition. We have done work in collaboration with the management of the RCC to revitalize underused teaching spaces such as RCC-187 so that they could be used as practice exhibition spaces for students. We have also showcased our student's Thesis work on campus by leveraging the Catalyst as a presentation space. Finally, we are spending time in Summer 2023 towards building mobile exhibition structures. The resources, such as movable walls with embedded displays and specialized plinths will allow us to temporarily deploy "pop-up" exhibitions in a variety of areas across campus that are not typically conceived of as gallery spaces.

Priority Recommendation #9 : Strengthened program narrative to better communicate professional opportunities.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

Defining New Media can be a challenge given it is a relatively new discipline in part tied to rapidly changing technologies. However, finding more opportunities for communicating and reinforcing a program narrative, one that is cumulative (years 1 - 4) and that embraces the curricular paths through the program would help to address what some students described as ambiguity in program identity. Moreover, the program acknowledges as a strength the "diversity of student interests" and the ways in which they apply their critical, technical and creative skills through employment in a number of fields. Finding ways to highlight a range of program outcomes could contribute to strengthening program identity, recruitment, and post-graduation pathways for students.

Implementation Actions:

- *Work in collaboration with marketing team of Dean's office to create targeted communications for recruitment.*

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

Being a review of New Media's marketing strategy starting Spring 2022

Responsibility for**a) leading initiative:** Program Director**b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** Department Chair**Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)**

We have done a significant amount of work this year in collaboration with our Dean's office marketing team as well as the University's central marketing and recruitment to refine the message and presentation of the New Media program. This involved several presentations to stakeholders across the University as well as the development of a new recruitment slide deck and associated language. We have also been updating various University websites to reflect these new developments. This is an ongoing project.

Priority Recommendation #10 : Increase connections to industry (co-ops, field placement, internships) and the larger Toronto community.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

In alignment with the University's "Community and Urban Partnerships" priority, the program must continue to strengthen its relationships within the sector, particularly at a local level.

Implementation Actions:

- Re-establish connections with local partners such as artist-run centers and cultural organizations
- Establish a program-specific PAC that creates valuable conversations amongst our professional partners.

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)

We will examine the implementation of a program-specific PAC starting Fall 2022, with the goal of having it in place by the end of the 2022/23 academic year.

Responsibility for**a) leading initiative:** Program Director**b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** Department Chair**Status for 1-year Follow-up Report: (To be added as an update 1 year following Senate approval of PPR)**

Post covid, we have begun re-building relationships with our Industry partners (such as the Science Centre) and organizations in the New Media art community (InterAccess Media Arts Centre). In particular, the New Media program is now officially participating in InterAccess's Media Arts Prize which recognizes the work of Thesis students along with other programs in the GTA. We have also begun developing relationships with organizations in the area of Video Games, specifically the Level Up Showcase and the XP Games Summit.

Regarding our PAC, we have not yet established a New Media specific PAC but have identified which member of RTA's School-wide PAC would be most appropriate to contribute to an advisory board for New Media. The next step in this process will be to navigate the creation of a dedicated PAC on an administrative level. We expect to seek advice & make process on this last point in this upcoming academic year.

