

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW (PPR)

Bachelor of Fine Arts In Image Arts: Film Studies The Creative School

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate Image Arts: Film Studies. This report identifies the strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvements and enhancements, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

This report also includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy, or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations, who will be responsible for leading those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations

SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF Image Arts: Film Studies

Degree: Film Studies (BFA)

The School of Image Arts offers full-time, four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees in its two undergraduate programs, Film Studies and Photography Studies (name changed to Photography Media Arts as of Fall 2023). Students in either program may elect the Integrated Digital Option during their third and fourth years. This option provides a hybrid curriculum with greater emphasis on emerging digital media.

The internationally renowned Image Arts: Film Studies program creates graduates who master the art of the moving image. Students discover the best way of telling their story and engaging an audience through cinematic techniques and skills.

They learn by doing and gain hands-on experience in all aspects of film production, from cinematography and sound design to filming with digital and analog technologies.

Located in the heart of Toronto, the epicentre of filmmaking in Canada, students are taught and mentored by filmmakers and film scholars with lots of experience working in the industry and teaching high-level academic courses. They forge lasting collaborations with their peers by creating a body of fiction and non-fiction short films.

Date of last PPR: 2012

Accreditation info: N/A

This document comprises the The Creative School (TCS) Dean's response to the Peer Review Team (PRT) Report and the School's response, in accordance with the directions of the 2020 Periodic Program Review (PPR) Manual and with Section 8.2 of Senate Policy 126, Periodic Program Review of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs. The site visit by the external PRT for the Periodic Program Review was carried out between March 13 and 14, 2023. The Film Studies program submitted a list of potential Peer Review Team (PRT) candidates to the Office of the Dean who then selected

Marc Furstenau, Professor, Film Studies, Carleton University

Jean-Claude Bustros, Associate Professor, Cinema, Concordia University

The PRT report considers the Film Studies program to be of high quality. The program's location in the heart of downtown Toronto, industry-standard facilities, and broad curriculum were noted to be strengths. Specifically, it lauds the program's dual focus on technical training in the art of filmmaking and critical film theory. However, the reviewers believe that there is room for the program to better integrate these two aspects of their curriculum. Additionally, the wide-ranging nature of the curriculum could be further streamlined to remove redundancies in course offerings. The Reviewers felt confident in the program's plan to address these challenges.

The PRT Report offered the following seven critical recommendations, and the School has responded thoughtfully to each to generate their Implementation Plan. The Dean's Office is in full support of the School's responses to the PRT recommendations.

The program submitted its response to the PRT report to the Dean of the Creative School to which the Dean responded on July 18, 2023.

The Academic Standards Committee completed its assessment of the Image Arts - Film Studies on Jan 18, 2024. The Committee indicated that a thorough, analytical and self-critical program review was conducted. The program provided a detailed plan for future growth and support for development.

The Academic Standards Committee recommends that the program continue, as well as provide a one-year follow-up report, as follows:

1. The mandated One-Year Follow-up Report be submitted by June 30, 2025 to include:
 - a. An update on all curricular changes as indicated in the Implementation Plan
 - b. A plan outlining how the program will comply with Faculty level changes to curriculum and planning
 - c. A description of the measures and steps the school has taken to engage with EDI throughout its curriculum and program activities

Presented to Senate for Approval: **March 5, 2024**

Start date of next Periodic Program Review: **2026-27**

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE PROGRAM'S AND DEAN'S RESPONSES

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The program should continue with the process of curriculum review that is underway, with the explicit goal of streamlining the passage through the production courses and of more explicitly integrating the history and theory courses with production courses.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation that further curricular review is needed. We have been undergoing a review for the past 3 years which has yielded many substantive proposals which align with many of the recommendations of the PPR external review. In the case of production courses, changes have been proposed to address redundancies between the second and third year of the program, creating a new hands-on studio course in directing and editing for drama. We also agree with the concept of integrating history and theory with production courses. We are therefore proposing the streamlining of the film theory course sequence together with a new course in film aesthetics which explicitly links theoretical concepts to the creation of moving images.

DEAN'S RESPONSE:

The Dean's office supports these directions. The Creative School is currently examining curriculum, infrastructure, and budgets holistically through a 360 Review of all programs within the faculty. Several initiatives have surfaced and are under discussion with proposed developments expected in the next academic year. The possible implementation of university-wide availability of courses from the School of Image Arts is timely. This, combined with an examination of core and elective courses within Image Arts and other programs within The Creative School will stimulate synergies and enhance the School of Image Arts as a leading educational program in the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The program should establish clearer and more explicit channels of communication between faculty and: 1) the technical staff; 2) current students.

1. Communication with technical staff should be improved so that, for example, there is not an "expectation gap," as some described it, whereby students are given tasks by faculty requiring equipment and resources that technical staff cannot provide.
2. Communication with students should be improved so that, for example, they clearly understand the steps they will be taking to complete the program and the relation between each step and between the production courses and the critical courses. There should also be more formal representation of student interests in school and program governance, i.e., student representatives who can attend meetings, etc.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

1. We agree that meeting course pedagogical ambitions with technical resources is a challenge. We recognize that better communication between faculty and staff can help to alleviate some of this tension. One method is to create a shared calendar of production course resource needs shared among all film faculty and staff and adjusted in order to avoid potential resource conflicts.

Another way to address this is better communication with new part-time faculty who may not be completely aware of the broader context of the overall resource demands. We have implemented a shared Google calendar sheet to help coordinate resource needs more efficiently over the course of each semester.

In terms of student communication, we plan a series of start of semester orientation sessions to address this shortcoming.

2. We wholeheartedly agree with this recommendation. In addressing it we already started with a “town hall” style meeting among current students, faculty and staff in order to hear student perspective as a followup to conversations with the PPR external reviewers. This meeting was followed up with an extensive survey to get student feedback on the program moving forward.

Moving forward we will initiate a series of orientation sessions at the start of each academic year, with a specific orientation session for each year of the program. We have done this historically only for incoming students however we recognize that a similar session would be extremely helpful for all levels of the undergraduate program. These sessions will clearly outline core course expectations, schedules, equipment access as well as address issues such as safe on-set work practices, collaboration and diversity awareness.

Finally, we also agree with the recommendation on student representatives in meetings, especially concerning course content and curriculum. The current structure of student representation at our School Council meetings is good, however we now recognize it is too limited to allow for meaningful feedback.

DEAN’S RESPONSE: *The Dean acknowledges this recommendation. No direct response provided.*

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The application process could be revised slightly, to allow for prospective students to demonstrate their individuality more effectively, and to allow the program to put together a more diverse cohort each Year.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

We agree in principle with this recommendation. However we also stand by our current requirement that applicants create original work based on a specific theme that changes from year to year. This ensures that 1: portfolio material is more likely to be original (as the theme changes each round) and 2: it creates a clearer comparator as assessors can see how each applicant approaches the same requirement. However we will also consider adding an additional “open” component to the portfolio submission.

DEAN’S RESPONSE:

The Dean’s office is committed to working with the School to support initiatives that improve student experience.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The program should continue developing and building on the success of the Integrated Digital option.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

We heartily agree with this recommendation. The content of the ID program is cutting edge and will define the future of film making in many areas. However, structurally the ID option has proved to be problematic as it forces students to shift out of the core film program in year three (3). As a result, we are now looking to make the ID program content available to all students in the film program by converting it to open electives. Thus all students will be able to delve into new technologies such as CG, VR, AR, animation, virtual production and game design. We also are in the process of bolstering this content by better coordinating with other programs in The Creative School currently offering similar content. This will reduce redundancies while also encouraging greater interaction and collaboration between film students and students in Photo, Media Production, New Media, and Creative Industries.

DEAN'S RESPONSE:

See response to recommendation one.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The program should establish more formal relations with graduates/alumni, who could participate in program events, meet with current students, and provide important opportunities for networking. The alumni we met with said that they and others would be keen to do so.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

This is an excellent suggestion and one that we have been working on in recent years. We already have end of year career day, our student-run film festival and other events to create outreach. However we also recognize that much more needs to be done. One way is to create a system of alumni "mentors" willing to return to the program to meet with current students for one-on-one career advice. Another is a much more robust apprenticeship program. We recently met with representatives of the Director's Guild of Canada (DGC) in order to streamline the process of student entry into various fields in the film industry. We will also continue to bolster our relationship with professional organizations such as the Canadian Society of Cinematographers (CSC), Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and the Canadian Cinema Editors (CCE).

DEAN'S RESPONSE:

See response to recommendation three.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The institution should work more directly with the program to ensure that the technical infrastructure—the facilities and equipment—is kept up to date, so that students are working with an appropriate range of tools to prepare them for jobs in the industry. To ensure the quality of such a practical program, there should be a commensurate increase in the number of technical staff, to properly support students.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

We agree with the above recommendation, however we are also met with the challenge of doing so within very tight budget constraints. However, we recently hired a new service technician in our TRC (technology resource center) and are also exploring ways to reach out to industry to upgrade current facilities through donation and/ or naming rights to key spaces in the building such as the sound stage and our principal screening room. We have also earmarked funds to improve the projection quality and acoustics of the screening room to bring it closer to industry standards.

Due to the high cost of industry standard film equipment, we need to make those purchase decisions carefully. However with careful coordination with other programs (such as RTA Media) that cost can be shared as was done with our high end Arri cinema cameras.

DEAN’S RESPONSE:

The Dean’s office will work with the School and Human Resources to regularly review the School’s staffing needs as the program evolves. Several factors are currently in play that influence next steps regarding staffing, including curricular renewal, and initiatives from the 360 Review.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The institution should consider more permanent “Teaching Stream” positions so that the program is less dependent on transient sessional instructors. More permanent teaching faculty could be more integrated into the program, thus avoiding redundancies, repetitions, and so on, that are often the result of the difficulties of effectively communicating with sessional faculty.

PROGRAM RESPONSE:

We wholeheartedly agree with this proposal. However, implementing it has significant budget implications and also entails discussions with both the RTA and CUPE union representatives as such a position does not currently exist within the collective agreements.

DEAN’S RESPONSE:

See response to recommendation seven.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: Film Studies:

<p>Priority Recommendation #1 Curriculum: Have faculty meet to map film course content in all four years to identify learning outcomes, skills, artists, assignments, professor experiences, etc.</p>
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PRT recommended that we continue curriculum review to streamline the passage through the production courses and, more explicitly, integrate history and theory courses with production courses based on student and faculty feedback. ● PRT recommended that we continue developing and building on the success of the Integrated Digital option, which brings value but is not well integrated into core film courses.
<p>Implementation Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess redundancies (reduce the number of core courses), ● Include industry-level professional development and better position theory and practice with reference to production courses. ● Reevaluate how analogue film is taught and integrate advanced technological content. ● Better integrate new technologies formerly taught in the Integrated Digital option into core technology courses as they inform evolving industry practices. ● Create a new course in film aesthetics.

Timeline:

January - April 2024

Responsibility for

- Program Director, as well as program curriculum committee, with recommendations from the faculty

Priority Recommendation #2

Curriculum: Revisit core and elective courses based on discussions re: Priority #1 as well as changes coming about in the Creative School based on the 360 Revisioning Mandate.

Rationale:

As indicated in the PRT and program response, actions outlined in Priority #1 will be carried out and will lead to changes in the course names and possibly the course sequence, as well as the creation of new courses. This will impact the course calendar, which will need to be modified accordingly.

Implementation Actions:

- Applying minor and major modifications based on revised curriculum necessitating changes in the course calendar based on discussions of Recommendation 1, including revising course titles and/or descriptions and, if needed, repositioning course delivery in the program.
- Reach out to the education developers in CELT for assistance in integrating change and transitioning to the new curriculum.
- Addressing a communication plan on how to inform faculty and students of changes in the curriculum

Timeline:

February - May 31

- Prepare documents for major modifications for the May 31st deadline

Responsibility for

- Chair, PD, program curriculum committee, working with school manager, academic advisor, associate dean

Priority Recommendation #3

Curriculum: Meet with RTA Media Production to discuss synergies in electives pertaining to technological areas, including CG, VFX, animation, virtual production, and game design.

Rationale:

Find synergies with RTA Media Production (and possibly other) programs in the Creative School and share resources and elective courses in order to enhance offerings for film program students. Benefit students by collaborating with other programs as a means to address gaps in faculty and resources while finding efficiencies. Evidence in our PPR indicates that students want these skills; evidence from employers that they want students to have a broad range of

skills.

Implementation Actions:

- Meet with faculty in RTA Media Production to look at core and elective courses that are similar; see if they can be combined, and consider alternative delivery models
- Determine courses that can be cross-listed
- Look at developing courses together

Timeline:

Before 2024/25 loading

Work has begun based on a meeting between faculty members, chairs, associate dean and curriculum specialist in mid-October 2023, with more meetings planned.

Responsibility for

- PD, chair, program curriculum committee (in collaboration with Curriculum specialist and Associate Dean)

Priority Recommendation #4

Curriculum: Discuss the implementation of 360 Mandate, including CSE courses and other mode of delivery recommendations.

Rationale:

The Creative School is undergoing a major restructuring, and all programs are asked to reduce one core course per year in order to make room for the “Creative School Experience” courses that will serve to integrate students from all programs. The goal of these courses, running from first to fourth year, is to expose Creative School students to all areas of discipline in the faculty and to develop course competencies in social justice and decolonization, entrepreneurship and Leadership, story and content creation, understanding audiences, creative technologies and sustainable design.

Implementation Actions:

- Undertake a curricular audit and work toward identifying courses that can be modified or eliminated to make room for CSE course
- Consider core competencies and identify shared areas of interdisciplinary collaboration
- Join in discussions based on newly identified Creative School “Clusters”
- Contribute to discussions that will be taking place starting in January 2024 regarding the curriculum for the Creative School Experience

Timeline:

- Dec 2023 - April 2024

Responsibility for

- Chair, Program PDs, Curriculum committee members working with Program Manager

Priority Recommendation #5

Program Identity, Culture and EDI: Program Name Change - from Film Studies Program to

“Cinema” or simply “Film” - to be determined / Schedule training for faculty in EDI

Rationale:

- As suggested by the PRT Communication should be enhanced. Faculty believe that Film Studies is more about theory than production, which is the core of the program. PRT suggests:
- Establish clearer and more explicit channels of communication between faculty, the technical staff and current students.
 - Communication with technical staff to improve “expectation gaps,” whereby students are given tasks by faculty requiring equipment and resources that technical staff cannot provide.

Implementation Actions:

- Consult with Faculty and students, including surveys and meeting with representatives. Consult industry
- Establish new advisory council

Timeline:

January - April 2024

Responsibility for

- Program PD, Curriculum committee members working with Chair, Program Faculty and School Manager

Priority Recommendation #6:

Establish a process map to recruit student representation in school and program governance.

Rationale:

PRT recommends that the program create a communication plan to improve student’s understanding of the steps required to complete the program and choose their courses.

Implementation Actions:

- A. Communicate with students to improve understanding of the steps required to complete the program. LINK production courses and critical courses.
- B. Include formal representation of student interests in school and program governance, i.e., student representatives who can attend meetings, etc.

Timeline:

Sept 2024- Dec 2024

Responsibility for

- Film PD, Film Curriculum committee with faculty consultation.

Priority Recommendation #7:

Map student assignment due dates per semester to evaluate student workload, equipment availability and access to technical staff.

Rationale:

PRT recommended more focus on communication with students and improving student experience.

Implementation Actions:

The program director and professors responsible for overseeing courses meet to look at the intersection of assignments and determine if it is possible to spread deadlines.

Timeline:

Feb - May 2024

Responsibility for

- Program Director and TFA faculty

Priority Recommendation #8:

Expand opportunities to further Alumni relations

Rationale:

Alumni can provide networking and entry points into industry experience

Implementation Actions:

- Update alumni lists through LinkedIn.
- List events and project critiques to invite alumni participation.
- Look at the calendar for the year and identify/schedule networking events for students
- Create a plan for encouraging alumni to volunteer to “mentor” recent graduating students to help transition into their careers

Timeline:

Fall 2024

Responsibility for

- Program Director, TFA Faculty, Academic coordinator, Dean’s office

Priority Recommendation 9:

Recommend hiring goals based on retirements and the needs of the school.

Rationale:

A TFA faculty member specializing in documentary production resigned last year, and another film scholar is now Associate Dean and is teaching very little in the school. Beyond those immediate hires, retirements are expected in the next few years.

Implementation Actions:

- Determine priority needs.
- See if there is any possibility of cross-listed faculty with Media Production if positions are not readily available.

Timeline:

Nov 2023 - Jan 2024

Responsibility for

- Chair, Program Director in discussion with program faculty, curriculum committee, DHC, and possible collaboration with Media Production

Priority Recommendation #10: Establish industry outreach and internship goals and responsibilities.

Rationale:

Faculty and students agree that we need to strengthen student/industry engagement through internship opportunities. Students want more opportunities to get professional experience.

Implementation Actions:

Improve and strengthen alumni Relations by establishing more formal relations with graduates/alumni, who could participate in program events, meet with current students, and provide important opportunities for networking.

Timeline:

January 2024 - October 2024

Responsibility for

- PD with Curriculum committee, events manager, school manager, and chair