



REPORT: BACHELOR OF JOURNALISM CYCLICAL REVIEW

DATE: June 28, 2016

TO: John Shepherd
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

FROM: Susan Harada
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CC: André Plourde
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RE: Response to the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA)

As requested by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance, the Journalism program is submitting a report with respect to issues raised in connection with the 2013 cyclical review of the Bachelor of Journalism degree.

In a note dated March 11, 2016, CUCQA called for further details on two items that were still in progress: the requested reduction in the number of students admitted into the first year of the BJ; and, the development of a new and complementary program “to compensate for reduced enrolments in first-year journalism.”

BJ Admissions

The program’s progress report of July 17, 2015, provided background information about the BJ admissions process. To summarize, the longtime practice of the School of Journalism and Communication has been to admit more students into the first year than can be accommodated in the upper years, a practice that CUCQA, in its January 9, 2014 memo, observed to be “of an ethically dubious character, and one which undermines the creation and maintenance of a healthy environment for first-year students.”

Given the resource-intensive nature of this professional program, increasing upper year numbers to match first-year intake has never been regarded as a feasible solution. It has long been recognized that the top quality Journalism programs, both domestic and international, are anchored in pedagogical imperatives dictating the necessity of manageable student-instructor ratios, especially as students move into hands-on writing and reporting seminars, workshops and production labs. Therefore, the Journalism program’s response to CUCQA’s request will be to reduce first-year intake, removing the

“gate” that allowed the program to control the flow into second year and beyond¹; all students who join the program in first year will do so knowing they will be welcome to stay for the full four years.

In making this change to its admissions practice, the Journalism program will adopt the same academic standard as programs such as the Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management (BPAPM). The BPAPM stipulates that students will be in Good Standing after first year if they have a Major CGPA of at least B- and an overall CGPA of at least B-.² Another significant change will drop the current Journalism requirement that the overall first-year CGPA be calculated on 5.0 full credits; the program will instead adopt the norm, which is a 4.0 full credit requirement.

As of Fall 2017, the Journalism program plans to admit 130 students into first year, with BPAPM academic standards. According to data obtained from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP), it is possible that the 130-strong first-year cohort would translate into approximately 105 students in second year. If that is indeed the result, the second-year number would allow the Journalism program to continue to accommodate high-achieving transfer students, up to the program’s total manageable number (based on available resources and space) of approximately 110 students.

It should be noted that with the data came the warning from OIRP researchers that projections are based on the past and cannot be used to accurately read the future. It is clear that the program dynamic and student experience will shift once the gate is removed; there is no reliable way to predict the impact the different atmosphere will have on admissions, enrolments, performance in first-year Journalism courses and retention. As a result, there is no reliable way to predict whether we will end up with more students that we are currently adequately resourced for in the upper years.

To the extent that second-year enrolments (and enrolments in third and fourth years) markedly exceed the 110 expected under the proposed new arrangements, it will be crucial for the program to have the support of the university with respect to resources, in order to accommodate all of Carleton’s Journalism students while continuing to provide the kind of quality professional instruction upon which its reputation rests. We would

¹ Until 2015-2016, students who earned a B+ or better in their 1.0-credit first-year Journalism course and a B average or better over their 5.0 first-year credits were guaranteed a spot in second year; a certain number of students whose grades did not quite reach that criteria were also offered spots. The change to two 0.5-credit first-year Journalism courses for 2016-2017 will see a concurrent change in the minimum required for a guaranteed spot. The minimum will be a B+ or better in at least one of the first-year Journalism courses and a B or better in the other, along with an overall average of B over the 5.0 first-year credits.

² As noted in the 2016-2017 calendar: “A student who is not in Good Standing but has a Major CGPA of at least 6.0 and an Overall CGPA of at least 6.0 is on Academic Warning. Students with a Major CGPA of less than 6.0 or an Overall CGPA of less than 6.0 are required to leave the program with the status of Continue in Alternate (CA) or the status Dismissed from Program (DP). Students are in Good Standing at any subsequent APE and at graduation if they have a Major CGPA of at least 6.5 and an Overall CGPA of at least 6.5. Students who do not receive Good Standing at any subsequent Academic Performance Evaluation will be required to withdraw from the program with the status Continue in Alternate (CA) or the status Dismissed from Program (DP).”

also hope that the proposed new academic standard described above would result in higher retention of Journalism students, thus partly compensating for the reduced first-year cohort, especially in light of the higher Journalism tuition rates after first year.

With the change to BJ admissions will come a necessary adjustment to intake for the BJ-Humanities degree. Again, the Journalism program has been grateful for its collaboration with Humanities; however, our future structure makes it necessary to return to our original agreement of a maximum of 10 BJ-Humanities students each year as of Fall 2017. Some of our anticipated curricular changes, for example, including the presentation of more options for Journalism students in the upper years, will depend on ensuring they can take advantage of a range of Special Topics courses. It is also beneficial for our students to have the flexibility to develop their knowledge and expertise in areas beyond Journalism and the Humanities, hence the program requirement that 4.0 credits be taken in a field other than Journalism.

Program Renewal - curriculum

As noted in the Journalism program's July 2015 progress report, work has been underway on the development of a renewed BJ curriculum. Changes affecting the first and second years will be introduced in Fall 2016, and include the creation of two clearly defined 0.5-credit introductory Journalism courses in first year and a new 0.5-credit "Digital Journalism Toolkit" course in second year to run alongside the existing 1.0-credit Fundamentals of Journalism course. The Fundamentals course will broaden from its primarily print-based focus to include new and various ways of researching, reporting and writing for 21st century audiences.

It is anticipated that third-year changes will be in place for Fall 2017; these changes will expand the current six-week sections on Journalism ethics to a new full-term course: Information Media Ethics in a Digital World will have a blended format and will eventually be open to students from other disciplines. Fourth-year changes will follow in Fall 2018, and will entail significant structural curricular realignment. Faculty will be called on to develop a slate of new courses; change will therefore depend on the program maintaining a steady state with respect to the number of faculty members. The driving philosophy of the planned upper year changes is one of opening up even more options for Journalism students, equipping them to follow new avenues in order to practice journalism in its constantly evolving forms, some of which we have yet to imagine. As such, production courses will revolve around a planned Digital Hub.

At the same time, students will be presented with a slate of thoughtful courses that dig deeply into journalism past, present and future, placing their professional courses into greater context and helping them operate in a world that values enterprise, analysis and storytelling beyond the borders of legacy media. Some of those courses, such as "Great Stories: Journalism in Words, Sounds and Images" and "Strategies of Storytelling", will be open to the wider Carleton community – students who have an interest in understanding journalism's shifting forms and functions.. As noted in the July 2015 progress report:

“Mirroring 21st century global information practices, it is the intention of the Journalism program to develop a specific menu of Journalism courses that could draw in students from other disciplines. This is not intended to be a minor; it would open up a selection of lecture-based courses to non-journalism majors. They are the readers/viewers/listeners/ collaborators in this evolving journalistic enterprise, and such courses would help them gain an appreciation of why journalism matters in our society.”

The first step in this shift will be taken in Fall 2016, with the program’s new offering for non-Journalism majors – JOUR 1003 Discovering Journalism.

Program Renewal – new offering

The Journalism program, in concert with the School of Information Technology, has developed a proposal for a new program – the Bachelor of Media Production and Design (BMPD). This program will complement the existing Journalism program; as noted in the BMPD proposal:

A new space is being forged where media, information, public engagement and design intersect. This proposed new honours degree program will provide academic and professional training to young people who wish to work creatively within that space. A combination of intensive hands-on workshops and lecture courses will give students a strong foundation in data, research, writing, and narrative abilities across media formats (text, photography, audio, video, graphics). At the same time it will foster fundamental design skills and design thinking in the development and application of narratives, with the understanding that design influences information pathways, making “story” and “design” inseparable. It will prepare students to innovate and operate across all facets of narrative that engage, inform, entertain and ultimately contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of how we connect with each other in the 21st century to build stronger societies.

The Bachelor of Media and Production Design will be a 20-credit four-year program with an optional one-year co-op placement between third and fourth years (Year 3 winter term/Year 4 fall term). It will be rooted in the Journalism program of the School of Journalism and Communication. Courses such as the capstone will be taught jointly by BMPD faculty and faculty from the Carleton School of Information Technology (CSIT). Some BMPD credits will be cross-listed courses offered by Journalism. ITEC (Information Technology) credits will be provided by CSIT.

The goal with respect to the BMPD is for a Fall 2018 launch, pending the necessary approvals.

Next steps

The program's BJ admissions policy will be submitted in time for Senate approval for the 2017-2018 calendar.

The BJ program modifications will begin in Fall 2016, with additional upper year program changes phased in for Fall 2017 and Fall 2018.

The new program proposal for the Bachelor of Media Production and Design will be on a track that will allow it to commence in Fall 2018.