Communication Studies
Update on Unit Response to External Reviewers' Report & Action Plan
Programs Being Reviewed: Graduate Program
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Approved by Dean: Brenda O'Neill, Dean of Faculty of Public Affairs, 2 November 2022

Note: This document is made available for public posting on the Vice- Provost's website.

*** Denotes items that SQAPC would like the unit to pay particular attention to based on their past review of the original action item.

External Reviewer Recommendations	Unit Response Please categorize as: 1- Agreed to unconditionally 2- Agreed to if resources permit 3- Not agreed to (provide rationale) Please assign a category for each of the recommendations, which aligns with the categories above.	Original Action Item	Owner	Timeline	Progress Update	Will the action described require calendar changes? (Y or N)
1. That administrative support staff be expanded in the program including, at the very least, a full-time Graduate Administrator whose work responsibilities are exclusive to the graduate program.	Category: 2- We strongly agree, and this is our most pressing concern. The COMS program requires a fully dedicated graduate program administrator if it is to remain competitive in the	A formal request will be prepared with the annual 2019-20 budget submission	Unit to prepare a budget submission Funding decision to be made by the University, upon	mid-2019	Budget requests for additional staffing have been made by the program in each year since tabling of the CPR report. These requests have not been approved by the university. The unit will continue to request the resources we require to ensure a full-	N

	aggressively growing field of communication and media studies, particularly in the Ontario market, and to maintain the spirit of inventiveness found in our recruiting, pilot projects, new initiatives, workshops and plans for new graduate programming. Our ability to pursue summer programming, expand international partnerships, and pursue new initiatives in experiential learning and/or professionally-oriented graduate programming will be constrained without addressing administrative capacity.		recommendation of the Dean of FPA		time dedicated staff person for the graduate program.	
2. That the unit's commitment to diversity in hiring be continued.	Category: 1- This has been a priority of the unit over the past decade and the program has made positive strides to address a gender imbalance that existed at the time of the previous OCGS review (we now have equal numbers of	None	Unit	Continuing	The unit has made progress toward enhancing diversity in every hire since the completion of the program review, adding 2 racialized faculty members and two racialized staff members. The unit has prioritized its next faculty position to be in communication and disability studies. Budget requests for a new hire in this	N

	male and female faculty members). We intend to maintain this commitment and foresee no obstacles in this regard. Specifically, our hope is to increase the diversity of our faculty through current recruitment efforts (we are hiring two Instructor rank candidates in 2018-19) and recruitment efforts in the future (we anticipate having an additional tenure track assistant professor rank position to fill as of 1 July 2020).				area have been submitted three times since the program review. Most recently, the submission received approval in principle from ODFPA but was not funded by the university.	
3. That IT Staffing in the unit be considered for expansion.	Category: 2 - While a dedicated IT person would be of value in the unit, it is a much more pressing priority to secure a fulltime dedicated administrator for our graduate programs as outlined in our self study and recommended by the reviewers. The unit does require dedicated IT support generally, but that relates more directly	None at this time	Unit	Continuing	Due to the pandemic, the IT needs of the unit have not been prioritized. However, as we enter a new period in which our curricular offerings will need to be more flexible and accommodating of different learning needs, it's expected that IT demands on the program will increase. The unit's ability to respond to these demands will be determined largely by the availability of dedicated IT support. We will continue to advocate for IT resources as our needs come into clearer view in the coming years.	N

	to our undergraduate program, which has more technology-driven curricular needs.					
4. That trends in library database and trends in digital culture be examined in consultation with relevant faculty to generate future strategies to maximize library resources and their contribution to digital media research.	Category: 1 - We have not developed a graduate program strategy for maximizing library resources for digital media research. While the library is a crucial resource, and while its recent changes have been keenly observed by many, our faculty rely on its resources for numerous research purposes (beyond those of digital media), and many scholars/students pursuing digital research have developed individual strategies, relationships and networks with library staff to support their work. Still, we intend to discuss whether and how to accommodate the library's resources and strategic directions with respect to our program in	Formalize terms of reference for unit library rep to ensure consultation with Library and Graduate Committee to develop a program strategy for digital media research	Unit	To begin 2019-20	Due to pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and sabbaticals involving faculty members with relevant expertise, no significant progress has been made on this recommendation to date. It will be added to the program's planning cycle for 2023-24.	N

	graduate committee this year.					
5. That the unit examine the need for a TA Mentor to assist graduate student teachers/teaching assistants in the program.	Category: 2 - The unit will apply to participate in the TA Mentor Program for 2019-2020 and subsequent years.	An application will be submitted to EDC in Winter 2019 for a TA Mentor for 2019-20	Unit (graduate supervisor)	Winter 2019 for 2019-20 academic year	The unit has benefitted from the regular use of a TA mentor with support from ODFPA.	N
6. That future graduate seminars in Communication and Media Studies continue to be held in Richcraft Hall, in the renovated space of what is currently the Survey Research Center.	Category: 1 - We agree and the current renovations in Richcraft Hall 4308 will provide a newer, more comfortable setting for graduate seminars and other core program needs.	Classes will be scheduled at the time the 2019-20 timetable is set	Unit	Winter 2019 for 2019-20 academic year	Due to the pandemic, graduate seminars were conducted online during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years. However, all graduate seminars except one (to be delivered on line) in 2022-23 will be held in RH 4308.	N
7. That the unit engage in continuing conversations about the viability of summer program offerings.	Category: 2 - The unit has initiated conversations with FPA about expanding current summer offerings in the graduate program as part of a broader discussion around increasing graduate enrolments. A commitment from the University to fully staffing the graduate administrator position would allow the program	As a pilot, we have scheduled two graduate seminars for Spring 2019 to test student demand; however, a commitment to pursuing this more fully will require additional resources.	Unit	Spring 2019	There remains no evidence of demand from graduate students to justify the delivery of summer courses or other programming. However, graduate students do benefit substantially from participation in faculty-led research, attendance at conferences, symposia and summer schools hosted at other universities. All these initiatives are encouraged and supported by the unit and often held during the summer months.	N

	to pursue such an initiative more seriously.					
8. That the graduate program supervisor clarify the status of the foreign language competency expectations for particular cohorts.	Category: 1 - The foreign language requirement no longer exists; this will be clarified for relevant students directly via email communication from the graduate administrator in Sept 2018.	The foreign language requirement no longer exists. Students will be notified individually that this requirement has been eliminated from the program.	Unit	Immediate	All PhD students are aware of the change to the foreign language competency requirement. This is no longer a concern.	N
9. That program administration continue to work to clarify expectations concerning the second comprehensive exam.	Category: 1 - The second comp has always been a difficult exam, in part due to the transition from directed course work to independent scholarship that it requires. Consistent with other humanities and social sciences programs, and particularly other doctoral programs in communication, we permit significant autonomy for student committees to develop the thematic contents of the exam. It is worth noting that the scope and	The program has already developed a brief summary document and the Graduate Supervisor has begun meeting with second year PhD students as a cohort to clarify expectations about the second comprehensive examination.	Unit	Immediate	The objectives, format and timeline for completing the second comprehensive examination is clearly communicated to students (as well as faculty) and no longer appears to be a source of confusion.	N

	procedures of the second comp have been in the Graduate Handbook for many years. The unit will develop a one-page description of the comp, its learning outcomes, its usual procedures, and a recommended timeline to completion. The program is exploring the feasibility of convening a 'second comp' workshop with second year PhD students to discuss the comp's goals, learning outcomes, and past student experiences with the exam.					
10. That program administration continue to work to clarify the expectations of the initial faculty mentor.	Category: 3 - The expectations of the faculty mentor are communicated to participating faculty members and new students each year in August during the orientation session and via email. However, we will send occasional reminders throughout the year to ensure more consistent	No new action	Unit	Continuing	These expectations are clearly communicated and understood by both faculty mentors and graduate students.	N

	communication of these expectations.					
11. That graduate students be given additional opportunity for feedback in the annual revision of the Graduate Handbook and that the Handbook be placed in a particularly prominent location on the program's Graduate website.	Category: 1 - We feel the opportunities for revision are ample and sufficient, and that transmission of the handbook via email be retained. However, we will also post a copy of the Handbook to our website as a reference guide for graduate students.	Handbook to be posted to program website.	Unit	Continuing	The Graduate Handbook is prominently displayed under a "resources" tab on the website. The Communication Graduate Caucus President and Vice-President receives a copy of the handbook every summer before it is finalized for review and revision, as needed.	N
12. That the University, the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and the unit work to develop strategies for providing predictable funding at adequate levels for PhD students entering the latter stages of their degree programs.	Category: 2 - Funding for PhD students is clearly articulated with their offer of admission; unlike many universities, Carleton's communication is very	We have initiated discussions with FGPA on this subject and will continue to pursue possible strategies that we hope may result in improved	FGPA and FPA, with support from Unit	Continuing	The program continues to advocate for stronger financial packages that support PhD students in the later stage of their degree program. Core funding of PhD students is outside the control of the unit.	N

	clear in detailing how scholarships and TA contracts are paid each semester. In addition, a fifth year of TA eligibility has been offered for many years, although this is not written into the initial contract with students. In our view, the question of funding in the latter stages of PhD degrees is entangled with the question of extensions, as many students find work to support their degree completion, at the cost of extending the time necessary for completion of their program.	financial packages for students.			
13. That the unit work with the University and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs to develop strategies for providing additional conference travel funding for PhD students.	Category: 2 - Many conferences in our field offer funding to graduate students, including the Canadian Communication Association, and we regularly encourage our students to be proactive in seeking out these opportunities. The unit has also prioritized an internal research travel	The unit will pursue additional opportunities for conference travel funding in consultation with FPA and FGPA.	FGPA and FPA, in consultation with Unit	Continuing	Due to the pandemic, students have not been traveling to attend conferences. However, the unit continues to advocate for more support of graduate students for conference travel and continues to provide additional financial supports beyond the Graduate Student Travel Bursary that is funded by FGPA and administered with support of the unit.	N

	fund for MA and PhD students as an additional support to the current conference travel fund, and some funding is also available through FPA.					
14. That the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and the University make strenuous efforts to improve funding arrangements for international graduate students, such that their recruitment becomes feasible.	Category: 2 - The unit is encouraged by the recent agreement to reduce international PhD fees to domestic levels for 5 years for some international students. The unit has applied for the Trillium in the past (once successfully), and generally been supported in recruiting one international Ph.D. student per year. We are also receptive to exchange programs, international collaborations, and other mechanisms for bringing international students into our program. We would welcome the ability to grow the international dimension of our program but require consistent and multi-year funding to	The unit will continue to pursue opportunities to offer attractive funding packages to qualified international graduate students	FGPA, with support from the Unit	Continuing	FGPA now provides international students with domestic tuition fees for a period of five years of full time study. The unit continues to advocate strongly for better and more funding packages in support of international students.	N

	attract the best students available.					
15. That the graduate program supervisor explores additional ways to clarify, effectively communicate, and consistently apply unit norms concerning late-stage registration status and program extensions.	Category: 3 - The process in place currently is working despite past difficulties with respect to specific extensions in previous years.	While there is no need for "new action", the unit will continue to make new and current students aware of the time-to-completion goals, and to ensure that requests for program extensions are appropriate in relation to student research projects.	FGPA and Unit	Continuing	The Graduate Supervisor and Graduate Administrator continue to work closely with students to ensure they remain aware of their program requirements and monitor student "time-to-completion" standards. Extension requests used to be determined by FGPA but have been downloaded to the program level since the time of the previous program review.	N
16. That the unit be encouraged to consolidate its strengths and to develop and pursue collegially generated priorities that build upon the solid foundation that has been established in its graduate programs.	Category: 1 - We are very happy to receive such encouragement and would note that we feel well supported in this respect from FPA, with respect to our recent hiring and course development, and from FGPA, with respect to reasonable domestic targets for recruitment and new program opportunities.	No new action	Unit	Continuing	No new action has been taken	N
17. That the unit be encouraged to continue its deliberate, intentional approach to collegial development of assessment metrics and practices	Category: 1 - We are very happy to receive such encouragement and pleased that the	No new action	Unit	Continuing	The program's graduate committee regularly assesses course offerings and other degree elements to ensure the programs (both MA and PhD) are	N

consistent with its mission and appropriate to its specific program content, objectives and priorities.	reviewers recognize the validity and reliability of our process for developing learning outcomes, conducting learning assessment, and innovating with the pedagogical delivery of an outward facing, interdisciplinary graduate curricula of public importance.				current and reflective of new developments in the field.	
18. That the unit be supported in applying collegially established definitions and criteria that are reflective of local practice in meeting university-wide requirements to provide "experiential learning" credits or similar initiatives. It is further recommended that any initiative to develop additional experiential learning programming be deferred until adequate support staff resources are in place.	Category: 2 - We are very happy that the reviewers are excited by the experiential learning initiatives we are developing as both formal and informal components of our graduate curricula. We also agree with the reviewers that our ability to expand on our experiential learning initiatives – at both the undergraduate and graduate levels – would be greatly enhanced with additional administrative support.	We have an open file on experiential learning in the graduate committee and are discussing ways to integrate it into our program for 2019-2020. We will investigate the possibility of requesting new fiscal and base funding to aid our efforts from the Office of the Provost and FPA through special and annual budget submission processes.	Unit	Continuing	Due to lack of staff support, no new action has been taken. However, experiential learning opportunities for students continues to be explored and developed through non-curricular initiatives, such as professional development workshops, research assistantships and inclusion in community-based scholarship. Much of this activity was on hold due to the pandemic but is expected to restart in 2022-23.	N