

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON
QUALITY ASSURANCE
Cyclical Review of the undergraduate programs
in Communication and Media Studies
Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report**

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's undergraduate programs in Communication and Media Studies are provided pursuant to the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The undergraduate programs in Communication and Media Studies reside in the School of Journalism and Communication, a unit administered by the Faculty of Public Affairs.

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorized by Carleton University's Senate Quality Assurance and Planning Committee (SQAPC) as being of good quality. (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.13).

The External Reviewers' report offered a very positive assessment of the programs. Within the context of this positive assessment, the report nonetheless made a number of recommendations for the continuing enhancement of the programs. These recommendations were productively addressed by the Director of the School of Journalism and Communication and the Dean of the Faculty of Public Affairs in responses to the External Reviewers' report and Implementation Plan that was submitted to SQAPC on August 26, 2021.

Communication and Media Studies
Unit Response to External Reviewers' Report & Implementation Plan
Programs Being Reviewed: Undergraduate Programs

Note: This document is forwarded to Senate, the Quality Council and posted on the Vice- Provost's external website.

Introduction & General Comments

Please include any general comments regarding the External Reviewers' Report.

The Communication and Media Studies (COMS) program is pleased with the observations of the external assessors and the conclusions in their report about the Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies (B.CoMS) degree. The report notes that the COMS program enjoys an excellent reputation, evidenced by a progressive and comprehensive B.CoMS curriculum, prominent and award-winning faculty and staff, a record of strong recruitment and retention, significant contributions to FPA and pan-university initiatives, and collegial governance. However, it also raises some concerns that could undermine the program's strengths and its ability to continue supporting important academic initiatives across campus. Most significantly, it identifies problems with current levels of professional staffing to support student advising and concerns about a higher faculty workload relative to the norm in FPA and at Carleton. The report calls for the University to pay attention to both issues, recommendations with which the program fully agrees. The COMS program is committed to working collaboratively with the University and the Office of the Dean, FPA, to develop a strategy that will address these vulnerabilities. The report also identifies other areas of priority and opportunity, including initiatives relating to curricular development and governance, which the program will address over the next two years. Finally, although not recommended by the reviewers, the program is undertaking an assessment of learning objectives and a review of the current B.CoMS curriculum to identify outdated courses for removal and new courses that can be added to the program that reflect both developments in the field and the expertise of recently hired faculty members.

For each recommendation one of the following responses must be selected:

Agreed to unconditionally: used when the unit agrees to and is able to take action on the recommendation without further consultation with any other parties internal or external to the unit.

Agreed to if additional resources permit: used when the unit agrees with the recommendation, however action can only be taken if additional resources are made available. Units must describe the resources needed to implement the recommendation and provide an explanation demonstrating how they plan to obtain those resources. In these cases, discussions with the Deans will normally be required and therefore identified as an action item.

Agreed to in principle: used when the unit agrees with the recommendation, however action is dependent on something other than resources.

Units must describe these dependencies and determine what actions, if any, will be taken.

Not agreed to: used when the unit does not agree with the recommendation and therefore will not be taking further action. A rationale must be provided to indicate why the unit does not agree (no action should be associated with this response).

Calendar Changes

If any of the action items you intend to implement will result in calendar changes, please describe what those changes will be. To submit a formal calendar change, please do so using the Courseleaf system.

UNIT RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Programs Being Reviewed: Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies

Prepared by (name/position/unit): Josh Greenberg, Program Head, Communication and Media Studies

External Reviewer Recommendation & Categorization	Unit Response: 1- Agreed to unconditionally 2- Agreed to if additional resources permit (describe resources) 3- Agreed to in principle 4- Not agreed to Rationales are required for categories 2, 3 & 4	Action Item	Owner	Timeline	Will the action described require calendar changes? (Y or N)
<p>1. That the program hire one full-time staff member. (Weakness) This is the only recommendation we identify as a weakness in the program. And it is based in a need that was continually made clear throughout our visit. The existing staffing complement is less than the normal amount of other, comparable units in the Faculty. We commend the existing staff for handling the significant workload associated with the program and their clear dedication to helping students; however, it is also quite apparent that the current workload of staff is unsustainable. A dedicated, full-time staff position is essential.</p>	<p>2 – Base funding for new staff positions will be required</p>	<p>The program head made a formal request to the Dean of FPA in March 2021 for an increase in staffing resources to support student advising and program administration needs. The Dean acknowledges the staffing challenges in the program and has agreed to work with the program head to explore financially-viable solutions to address the staffing concerns.</p>	<p>Dean FPA</p>	<p>Winter 2021 and ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>2. That the program receive increased TA support. (Concern) We heard and noted concerns about both the workload of existing TAs and the lack of sufficient number of TAs to meet program learning outcomes. Given the size of the program and its 1000-level undergraduate classes, it is imperative that B.CoMS receive more TA support.</p>	<p>2 – Base funding for more TA resources than are currently assigned to the program will be required.</p>	<p>The program head submitted a formal request and proposal to the Dean FPA during the 2021 annual budget negotiations to make adjustments to the TA numbers allocated by the Faculty to Communication and Media Studies. This request was not accepted as it would have required making an exception to the TA allocation formula that is currently applied to comparable units in the Faculty. The program head will continue to push for this change moving forward.</p>	<p>Dean FPA</p>	<p>Winter 2022</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>3. That the program investigate standardizing class sizes. (Concern) It is expected that class sizes vary across 1000 through 4000 level courses; however, there are uncommon levels of variation within individual years. This is most pronounced at the 3000-level where class size can reach 150. 4000-level ‘caps’ seem overly flexible, ranging from 10-40, within and between academic terms. Standardizing class sizes could help build stability into the program, mitigate disparities in workload and improve planning.</p>	<p>2 – Base funding for more permanent, continuing faculty positions and contract instructors to ensure availability of more courses.</p>	<p>The program head and Dean FPA agree on the need for better standardization of class sizes across all levels of the program. A budget request was submitted and approved by the Dean FPA to achieve incremental progress on this recommendation for the 2021-22 academic year. Both the program head and Dean will continue to work together to ensure even greater levels of consistency in future planning cycles.</p>	<p>COMS & Dean FPA</p>	<p>Winter 2022</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>4. That the program’s load measure be reduced. (Concern) The load measure in Communication and Media Studies is significantly higher than what is considered normal in the Faculty. This has clear, negative impacts on the effective administration of the program as well as the quality of teaching and learning. We recommend that the program and Dean work to establish a more realistic and equitable load measure with the goal of meeting this target by the next cyclical review.</p>	<p>2 – Base funding for new permanent, continuing faculty positions is required to address this concern or a strategy that would better align the size of the program with the current faculty complement.</p>	<p>The program head will request that the Dean advocate for additional faculty teaching positions for COMS in her annual budget request to the University while also advocating to ensure that positions lost through retirements and/or pre-tenure resignations are returned to the program. The program head also intends to actively seek more faculty positions through the Faculty’s competitive position allocation process, as positions become available.</p>	<p>COMS and Dean FPA</p>	<p>Summer 2021 and ongoing</p>	<p>N</p>

<p>5. That the program re-examine its 1000- level courses. (Opportunity) While we didn't hear specific complaints about the 1000-level courses from students or faculty, there could be benefit in reexamining the courses to better reflect the program's goals at the introductory level. There is a clear desire to enhance writing instruction at the 1000-level, though this is contingent on better TA support as in Recommendation #2.</p>	3	<p>The program feels that the current 1000-level courses are fulfilling stated DLEs and learning outcomes. However, we are open to re-examining our first-year courses to identify ways in which we might place greater emphasis on teaching interculturally aware and equity-minded fundamental writing instruction specific to Communication and Media Studies and of developing additional courses and/or modules to be delivered throughout all years of the program. This would require a new hire in the broad area of composition studies.</p>	COMS	2021-22	Y
<p>6. That the program consider creating a set of governing principles. (Opportunity) The program has steadily grown in size since the last cyclical review. For purposes of continuity, clarity and equity, we wondered if the program should consider creating a set of guiding principles. We stress that this is not something the program should be made to do, nor that it need be a long list of rigid policies; instead, we ask that they take up the issue for consideration.</p>	3	<p>There are no problems currently with the program's organizational culture to suggest this as a necessary step. However, we recognize the benefits of establishing a written set of governing principles or at the very least a program mission statement that would serve as a guiding framework for organization decision-making at the program and committee levels. Given the large numbers of faculty members who will be on sabbatical in 2021-22, the program will commit to initiating a discussion about this opportunity in the 2022-23 academic year.</p>	COMS	2022-23	N