

# CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

## Cyclical Review of the Bachelor of Journalism Program

### Executive Summary

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's Bachelor of Journalism (BJ) program is provided pursuant to articles 4.2.5-4.2.6 of the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and articles 5.1.9.23-24 and 5.1.9.26-27 of Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

Carleton University's Bachelor of Journalism program is administered by the University's School of Journalism and Communication, an academic unit in the Faculty of Public Affairs (FPA).

The program was categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **good quality with report**.

The program was judged to be of good quality. However, a number of concerns were identified. These concerns were:

1. The appropriateness of the curriculum for the profession and the discipline of journalism studies at this place and time given the integrated digital medial landscape.
2. That some of the learning outcomes are not currently being achieved, particularly in the area of multimedia and digital journalism.
3. An historic admissions practice that yields twice the number of students in first year who can be admitted to second year.
4. Lack of appropriate technical support.
5. Challenges faced by faculty with respect to staying abreast of developments in the professional field of journalism and in having their professional contributions better recognised by the University.

Responding to these concerns has provided opportunities for program enhancement. CUCQA feels the School of Journalism and Communication has taken advantage of these opportunities in a satisfactory manner through initiatives identified in its response to the report of the Review Committee and the Action Plan that details the implementation of these and other initiatives.

The Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Senate of Carleton have approved this Final Assessment Report and Executive Summary and the Action Plan it contains.

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY**  
**School of Journalism and Communication**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 12, 2013

**TO:** John Shepherd  
Chair  
Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance

**FROM:** Christopher Waddell  
Director  
School of Journalism and Communication

**CC:** Andre Plourde  
Dean  
Faculty of Public Affairs

**Re:** **Action plan in response to Outcome of the cyclical review of the Bachelor of Journalism program**

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This note outlines the School of Journalism's action plan in response to the CUCQA October memo which included a series of requests and notes that two follow-up reports will be filed with CUCQA by June 30, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

It is easiest to address the issues raised in the October 17 memo one by one, indicating the action taken or to be taken and expected time of completion for each.

**Report for June 30, 2014**

**The addition of technical support to enhance the classroom experience.**

With significant financial support from the Dean's office, the School used some of its own funds to staff the television facilities in the summer of 2013 to upgrade software, solve problems discovered during the year, clean up servers from the academic year, prepare for the fall term and make the television studio rentable by outside organizations. Had we not done that, the facility would have sat closed and empty all summer and we would have been unprepared for the fall term. Our sole television technician (compared to five IMS staff dedicated to Journalism when our television facilities were in the Southam Building) is an employee of Instructional Media Services seconded to Journalism from September to the end of April.

In addition to that sole person, in September the School hired using its own budget a second technician to work part-time for some days of the week providing additional technical support to television (as well as assisting our one IT person who reports to the Dean's office). This second technician combines that work with a part-time function overseeing equipment distribution in television.

These steps are all stop gap measures until the technical support issue can be addressed more substantively in the School's 2014-15 budget.

The School's budget submission for the coming year will include two requests that are essential to provide sufficient technical support for both the undergraduate and graduate courses taught in the School. Both groups of students spend considerable time in television and in multimedia journalism courses that require ongoing technical support.

The budget submission will propose that the School's television technician (seconded from IMS) be transferred to the School's books as a full-time member of the School staff, working all year long not just during the academic year. A second person would be hired on a full-time basis and would split his or her time between additional support for the television facilities and providing more general IT support for courses in the program and for faculty members.

While providing essential IT support to current undergraduate and graduate courses, this second person can also play a role in a proposed new Bachelor of Civic Media program now under discussion within the School (see below). Technical support for skills training and teaching in online activities, social media etc. would be needed for this new degree program but in many ways it is an outgrowth of what is currently taught within Journalism, mainly in support of their teaching-related activities.

The Dean of Public Affairs has signaled his support for this proposed restructuring and increase in technical support. He has indicated, however, that there are not the necessary unallocated base funds in the Faculty's current budgetary allocation to make this much needed investment in technical support.

Finally the School has started to generate revenue from renting its television facilities to external production houses at times when the studio and related equipment are not in use for teaching. We expect this to be a growing source of revenue in coming years that can contribute to the cost of additional technical support for the facility.

### **Plans to respond to the concern over the admission process for the BJ program in the light of the condition for students to enter second year.**

The School is in the early states of developing a proposal for a new degree - a Bachelor of Civic Media - to be delivered jointly by Journalism and Communication faculty within the School. The School's management committee enthusiastically supports such a new degree. A faculty committee will complete a study by the end of 2013 that will make a preliminary assessment of the fea-

sibility of such a degree, how it would operate and what additional teaching, infrastructure and technical resources such a degree would require.

Among the elements under consideration for inclusion in such a program of study are how digital media are changing social interactions, politics, communications and communities and how such media are used to engage local, national and international communities on a wide range of issues and causes. The program might also include innovations in communications, new technologies and new uses for existing technologies. It could also offer a professional skills component and workshops designed to test social media and communications theories in journalism as well as in communication and public relations, as well as more traditional academic study. Components of the degree might also involve participation from or courses offered by other units within the Faculty of Public Affairs.

Although it is too early to know the committee's recommendations, the concept is predicated on the ability of students to transfer into the program after taking the one first-year journalism course (JOUR1000) or from the first year Communication Studies course (COMM1101). We believe this will be an attractive alternative for those who don't continue in Journalism beyond first year. We also see it as a potential stream of additional students for the School, independent of those admitted to either Journalism or Communication Studies.

The report with its recommendations will be taken to a School faculty meeting in early January for a decision on next steps.

**Plans based on the Journalism's tenure and promotion criteria to support professional faculty members in career development in a research institution. It is expected that research be conducted to identify how other journalism schools understand the contribution of distinguished, standard setting practitioners and how appropriate career development can contribute effectively to continuous curriculum development in journalism programs.**

The School's tenure and promotion criteria written in the spring of 2013 and approved by the Provost in July 2013 detail for the first time a journalism-specific set of requirements for a Journalism faculty member to be promoted to Full Professor. With these guidelines in place, the Director will meet in the winter term 2014 with individual journalism faculty members at the Associate Professor level to encourage them to pursue activities that would qualify them for promotion to Full Professor under the guidelines. At the same time during the winter term 2014 a committee of faculty members will conduct a survey of other journalism schools in Canada and the United States to determine the number of full professors they may have and how they achieved that to provide additional input into discussions about career development the Director will have with faculty members.

**Report for June 15, 2015**

**The completion of a strategic plan for the BJ program that encompasses a review of the program's curriculum in the light of the external reviewers' observation that there is a need for the BJ program 'to articulate Carleton's contribution to journalism education in the twenty-first century with degree level expectations that are consistent with emergent professional expectations.' It is the view of the Committee that an important first step in this process will be the BJ program's participation in the pilot project on learning outcomes assessment and the basis this provides for curriculum mapping and annual curriculum review.**

It is expected that a new strategic plan for the journalism program will be completed in the 2014-15 academic year under the leadership of the program's new Director or Associate Director. The current Director's term ends on June 30, 2014.

In preparation for that a committee composed of three faculty members and two undergraduate students has begun work as part of the pilot project on learning outcomes and assessment supported by Carleton's Office of Quality Assurance. The group has met twice and is drafting new learning outcomes that will then lead to curriculum mapping as preparation for curriculum reviews. The outcomes and mapping exercises should be completed in the first half of the winter 2014 term.

#### **Response to recommendations from the review committee**

**We recommend the classroom experience would be enhanced with additional technical support.**

As noted above, the School intends to request an additional full-time technical support person in its 2014-15 budget submission to our Dean in January, as well as requesting the current television technician academic-year secondment be transferred to the School from IMS as a full-time employee.

**We recommend that the School of Journalism would benefit from developing a strategic plan that clearly articulates Carleton's contribution to journalism education in the twenty-first century and that degree level expectations are consistent with emergent professional expectations.**

As noted above, preparations that will help lead to the development of a strategic plan are now under way but much of the work will be done in the 2014-15 academic year with a proposed completion date of June 2015. A learning outcomes committee is at work on learning outcomes in preparation for curriculum mapping in the winter 2014 term.

**At a minimum, we recommend the School of Journalism engage an external consultant to support the faculty to systematically review and renew its curriculum.**

The School believes that its participation in Carleton's learning outcomes pilot project will give it a good base from which to review its curriculum systematically. As that process proceeds, engaging an external consultant remains a possibility should it be determined that it would assist in reviewing the curriculum and in developing a curriculum review process.

**We strongly urge Carleton to change its undergraduate admission system.**

While there are no plans to change the undergraduate admission system for the Bachelor of Journalism degree, the Schools recognizes the benefits to be gained from providing a journalism-related option for those who do not have the grades required to continue in Journalism beyond first year. (Most now continue at Carleton in a BA program.) For that reason a joint Journalism and Communication faculty committee is currently exploring the idea of a Bachelor of Civic Media degree. We believe it would be attractive to those who can not continue in Journalism as well as appealing to some students now in Communication Studies. The program could also attract a third group of students from outside those in either program to increase our overall School enrolment.

**We strongly recommend that the School engage in some comparative research with other journalism schools in North American in order to identify how other schools understand the contribution of distinguished, standard-setting practitioners and support professional faculty members in their career development in a research institution.**

A committee of School faculty will conduct this research in the winter term 2014 with the results compared to the School's new tenure and promotion standards for Full Professor. The results of this comparison will be incorporated in career discussions held by the Director with faculty members during the winter 2014 term.