

CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Cyclical Review of the BA in Communication Studies

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary of the cyclical review of Carleton's BA in Communication Studies are 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)

The BA in Communication Studies is administered by the School of Journalism and Communication, an academic unit of the Faculty of Public Affairs.

As a consequence of the review, the program was categorised as being of **good quality with national presence** (Carleton's IQAP 5.1.9.12). The Committee is not requesting a report beyond standard updates on the implementation of the School's Action Plan.

The Review Committee recognized that this is a strong program providing an excellent student experience. In the opinion of the Committee, the program's curriculum is superb, and maintains a refreshing interdisciplinary orientation towards the broader communication intellectual landscape. In addition, the program's faculty have impressive interdisciplinary profiles, both internal and external to communication studies. There is no doubt that the School's profile, objectives and learning outcomes are aligned with the university's Strategic Integrated Plan. Furthermore, the School has been an excellent institutional citizen in meeting the strategic needs of the University and the Province.

However, the Review Committee noted that the School's impressive success in attracting undergraduate students poses challenges regarding resources, especially faculty resources. Not only will the School need to replace likely retirements; a net increase in tenure-track faculty is in addition desirable. The Review Committee also offered a number of recommendations that would be useful in managing the growth in students. There are five general recommendations:

1. Take steps to augment the academic staff in the program;
2. Revise and further develop the program's curriculum, in particular:
 - a. eliminate the program's three concentrations;
 - b. create more flexible program requirements;
 - c. enhance the use of digital tools;
3. Integrate the undergraduate student association as a site of experiential learning;
4. Better coordinate the use of laboratory space;
5. Accelerate the creation of a new Civic Media joint program with Journalism.



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Date: February 23, 2015

To: Dr. John Shepherd, Vice-Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Chair, Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance

Cc: Dr. André Plourde, Dean, Faculty of Public Affairs

From: Dr. Josh Greenberg, Director, School of Journalism and Communication

Re: **Action Plan – Cyclical Program Review of the BA in Communication Studies**

The School of Journalism and Communication is pleased that the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) has judged the BA Communication Studies program to be of **good quality with national presence**. We thank the Chair and other members of the Committee for their time and effort in reviewing all documents and supporting materials.

The CUCQA memorandum dated November 18, 2014 identified five issues requiring clarification and statements of next steps. The Action Plan detailed below addresses these issues. It has been prepared in consultation with Dr. André Plourde, Dean of the Faculty of Public Affairs.

1. Academic Staffing

The University's investments in the Communication Studies program in recent years have been welcomed. Its commitment to funding replacement and net new positions has allowed us to hire new faculty who are emerging as leaders in the field, and who bring fresh ideas and perspectives at a time when the media landscape and the field itself are undergoing rapid change. Moreover, it has helped strengthen our overall research profile and the quality of the graduate and postdoctoral students we are able to attract to Carleton. Importantly, it has also helped chip away at a very high faculty load measure, which created significant workload problems that were documented in the self-study and external assessors' report. Specifically, these investments have led directly to a reduction in the faculty load measure from its highest ever value of 57 in 2010-11 to 53 in 2014-15. Yet, even with this decline Communication Studies continues to have the highest load measure in the Faculty of Public Affairs and amongst the highest in all of Carleton University.

Analysis of OIRP data suggests this situation is not likely to change, even with recent appointments set to come on stream in July 2015. We hope the University will continue investing in new positions for the program, not just to bring our workload in line with other units in FPA and across campus, but to support the program as we introduce a suite of curricular innovations that are intended to attract new students to Carleton and improve the experiences of those already here. In the short term, it will be very important to receive a replacement position for the vacancy created by the retirement of Eileen Saunders in 2014.

2. Revising Curriculum

We are completing a review of the undergraduate curriculum and will be implementing and recommending several changes before the end of the Winter 2015 term that respond directly to issues raised during the cyclical program review: the elimination of concentrations, introduction of new courses, hybrid/online options, a more flexible degree structure, greater emphasis on applied communication and media production skills, and a proposed new name for the program. Once it is in place, the revised program will better reflect where the field of communication and media studies is heading, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve and in a position of strong competitiveness with other programs. We expect the revised program will become even more attractive to students already at Carleton, as well as new domestic and international applicants.

The memorandum asked for clarification about two additional curricular issues:

- (a) In response to the request for clarification about the 2000-level theory and methods courses, both were previously required 1.0 credit courses that are now each split into two separate and required 0.5 credits (i.e., COMM 2001 [1.0] has been replaced by COMM 2000 [0.5] and 2002 [0.5]; and COMM 2101 [1.0] has been replaced by COMM 2100 [0.5] and 2102 [0.5]).
- (b) In response to the request for clarification about the HRE, the issue of flexibility was made with respect to scheduling challenges in our 4000-level courses. Many of our students manage multiple commitments and are often submitting override requests for courses primarily because of scheduling conflicts and dilemmas. The HRE was introduced only *in part* as a way of increasing flexibility for students from a scheduling perspective. However, the main reason for introducing the HRE was to increase the quality of the 4th year experience for high achieving students. This was a FPA priority, and Communication Studies was an outlier within the Faculty in not providing an HRE opportunity for its students.

3. Integration of undergraduate association as a site of experiential learning

There seems to have been some miscommunication on this point. The Program does not intend to develop any formal strategies for integrating the Communication Undergraduate Student Society (CUSS) as a site of experiential learning, largely for the reasons noted in the CUCQA memorandum (i.e., fluid and changing membership). However, we will continue to work very closely with CUSS to support initiatives that promote greater student professionalization, such as facilitating and helping to host events with program alum and employers in the media and communication industries.

4. Coordination of laboratory space in the River Building

Beginning in 2015-16, the Survey Centre located on the 4th floor of the River Building will be used as a classroom space for a new 4000-level “Professional Research in Communication” course, in which students will work on faculty research projects under the guidance and supervision of a course director. In 2015-16 this will appear as a “special topic” course; our intention is to feature it as a regular course in a proposed new curriculum going forward. The introduction of a small number of new media production courses may require use of teaching studios and labs currently used only in the journalism program and located on the 1st and 4th floors of the River Building. Use and access to these facilities will need to be considered in consultation with the journalism program.

5. Possibility of a new Civic Media Program

The School’s Director and Associate Director visited civic media programs at MIT and Emerson College in Boston in October 2014, and struck a joint committee to develop a proposal after they returned. That committee tabled an internal document in January 2015, which outlines a number of different options for building capacity in the area of civic media, including a joint degree. Discussions are now active in both the communication studies and journalism sub-units, and these options are being considered in relation to wider strategic goals and objectives for both programs. We will make a clear recommendation on the feasibility of a new civic media program before the end of the Winter 2015 term.

I trust that this document responds to the questions raised in your November 2014 memorandum. Please be in touch if I can elaborate on any issues or points of concern.

Recommendation	Action to be taken	Responsibility	Timeline
Taking steps to augment the academic staff	Will submit request to dean for new faculty position(s)	Director	May/June 2015
Revising and further developing undergrad curriculum	Committee to develop suite of new course proposals and modifications to degree structure	Director, UG Supervisor, Faculty Committee	August 2015
Better coordination of laboratory facilities	Specific laboratory needs to be determined following conclusion of curricular planning cycle	Director in consultation with Assoc. Dir. (head of Journalism program)	Before end 2015-16
Explore possibility of civic media program	Joint committee and sub- unit review processes already underway (ongoing)	Director and Assoc. Director	May 2015