

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON  
QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Cyclical Review of the undergraduate and graduate programs in Film Studies  
Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report**

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's undergraduate and graduate programs in Film Studies are provided pursuant to articles 4.2.5.b-4.2.6.a-b of the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and article 7.2.23 of Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The undergraduate and graduate programs in Film Studies (MA in Film Studies; MA in Film Studies with specialization in African Studies; MA in Film Studies with specialization in Digital Humanities; Honours BA in Film Studies; General BA in Film Studies) reside in Carleton University's School for Studies in Art and Culture, an academic unit administered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

The external reviewers' report, submitted to the School for Studies in Art and Culture on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, offered a positive assessment of the programs. The reviewers report that they 'found the programs at Carleton in a good state of health, with a highly collegial faculty who are active in their research and professional engagements . . . As a group, they have produced a substantial number of publications (books, book chapters, and journal articles), been frequent conference presenters, and regularly host conferences and colloquia.' The reviewers added that, 'as uniformly reported by the students we met, [the faculty] are dedicated and passionate teachers who inspire both their undergraduate and graduate students.' The reviewers remarked 'on the enviable breadth of world cinema expertise the currently faculty hold—African, East and South Asian, European and North American,' as well as on the practica available to undergraduate students: 'The undergraduate students praised the practica that they had been able to secure, such as volunteering as an assistant at a film festival . . . the program is to be congratulated for having this ongoing option for students.'

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 Film Studies faculty, the Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in a response to the report of the external reviewers that was submitted to CUCQA on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

An Action Plan detailing how, when and by whom the recommendations will be implemented was received and approved by CUCQA on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Introduction

The undergraduate and graduate programs in Film Studies (MA in Film Studies; MA in Film Studies with specialization in African Studies; MA in Film Studies with specialization in Digital Humanities; Honours BA in Film Studies; General BA in Film Studies) reside in Carleton University's School for Studies in Art and Culture, an academic unit administered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

The site visit, which took place on January 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, was conducted by Dr. Philippa Gates, from Wilfrid Laurier University, and Dr. Brian McIlroy, from the University of British Columbia. The site visit involved formal meetings with the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic), the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, and the Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture. The review committee also met with faculty members, contract instructors, staff, BA and MA students.

The external reviewers' report, submitted on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, offered a positive assessment of the program.

This Final Assessment Report provides a summary of:

- Strengths of the programs
- Challenges faced by the programs
- Opportunities for program improvement and enhancement
- The Outcome of the Review
- The Action Plan

This report draws on eight documents:

- The Self-study developed by members of the Film Studies programs (please see Carleton's IQAP 7.2.1-7.2.3) (Appendix A)
- The Report of the External Review Committee (IQAP 7.2.9.16) (Appendix B).
- Communication from CUCQA regarding the outcome of the external review (IQAP 7.2.9.18) (Appendix C)
- The response from the Film Studies faculty, Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture, and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs to the Report of the External Review Committee (IQAP 7.2.9.19) (Appendix D).
- The internal discussant's recommendation report (IQAP 7.2.11) (Appendix E).
- The communication from CUCQA regarding the outcome of the review (IQAP 7.2.15) (Appendix F).
- The programs' Action Plan (IQAP 7.2.16) (Appendix G)
- The acceptance by CUCQA of the Action Plan (Appendix H)

Appendix I contains brief biographies of the members of the External Review Committee.

This Final Assessment Report contains the Action Plan (Appendix G) agreed to by the Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs regarding the implementation of recommendations for program enhancement to have been advanced as a consequence of the cyclical program review process.

The Action Plan provides an account of who is responsible for implementing the agreed upon recommendations, as well as of the timelines for implementation and reporting.

### **Strengths of the programs**

#### *General*

The external reviewers' report states that 'Carleton University's Film Studies Program is one of good quality. Its nearly forty-year history has allowed for growth and a generally well-thought through complexity of course offerings for students.' The report concludes that, 'overall, we found the program at Carleton in a good state of health.'

#### *Faculty*

The report notes that the Film Studies programs are delivered by 'a highly collegial faculty who are active in their research and professional engagements.' The report continues: 'as a group, they have produced a substantial number of publications (books, book chapters, and journal articles), been frequent conference presenters, and regularly hosts conferences and colloquia.' The report in addition concludes that the faculty 'are dedicated and passionate teachers who inspire both their undergraduate and graduate students.'

#### *Students*

The external reviewers observed that 'In our meeting with undergraduate students, it was clear that they were, on the whole, extremely satisfied with the teaching quality and course offerings.' The report continues: 'The undergraduate students praised the practica that they had been able to secure, such as volunteering as an assistant at a film festival . . . the program is to be congratulated for having this ongoing option for students.' The undergraduate students were also 'very excited about the addition of "film practice" courses.'

#### *Curriculum*

The report observes that the undergraduate program regularly offers 'around 30 (0.5 credit) undergraduate courses a year, covering traditional core courses in film history and theory with a broad range of topics courses including a significant focus on national and global cinemas.' The external reviewers felt compelled to remark 'on the enviable breadth of world cinema expertise the current faculty hold—African, East and South Asian, European and North American.'

## *Learning Outcomes*

The external reviewers were impressed by the quality and appropriateness of the programs' learning outcomes as well as by the considerable thought that had gone into their development: 'Much work has clearly been done to establish learning outcomes for the undergraduate program as a whole . . . the learning outcomes are appropriate, ranging from discipline-specific goals (e.g., "critically assess and reflectively apply different theoretical, philosophical and historiographic methodologies") to more general key and transferable skills (e.g., "construct cogent academic arguments in writing and orally"). In the self-study it is apparent that the learning outcomes have been considered in terms of broader degree-level expectations (i.e., what students will learn by the time they have completed the program), as well as course-level expectations and in relation to specific modes of assessment (i.e., what students will learn by the end of a specific course and by the end of a specific year in the program).' The reviewers also noted a clear articulation of 'the different level of expectations for students in the general, honours, and master's programs.' They conclude: 'It seems to us that these outcomes are realistic and achievable and speak to the value of a general humanities education with a focus on critical thinking, research and essay-writing skills.'

## **Challenges faced by the programs**

The external reviewers noted that the biggest challenge facing the undergraduate program is 'the decline of first and second year enrolment by up to 50% over the last five or six years.' This decline is mirrored in the take-up of the practicum option, a phenomenon also apparent at the graduate level.

The external reviewers also noted that challenges existed with mentoring graduate students and with the effectiveness of communications with them. A significant issue for graduate students 'was a lack of coherence with the core two-term FILM 5000: Directions in Film Theory and Film History course.'

A significant imbalance in graduate supervisions on the part of faculty was also noted.

## **Opportunities for program improvement and enhancement**

The External Reviewers' Report made 18 recommendations for program improvement. The reviewers noted that 'these recommendations are not required but offered as possibilities for program improvement and expansion.'

### *Undergraduate Program*

1. Assessment of Learning Outcomes: we recommend that this assessment be carried out every two or three years rather than annually and be conducted on two core courses at the second- and fourth-year levels rather than four courses.
2. First-Year Courses: we recommend dividing the first-year introductory course into two 0.5 credits courses rather than 1.0 credit and, relatedly, reducing the first-year requirement for the general and/or combined honours to 0.5 first-year film credits.
3. Second-Year Courses: we recommend removing pre-requisites from second-year courses (but retaining them for third- and fourth-year courses).

4. Renaming/Renumbering Courses: We recommend giving separate titles and/or course numbers to all the different versions of each course taught by full-time faculty members.
5. Practicum: we recommend to review the actual experiences the students have with the practicum.
6. Production Courses: we recommend that the faculty consider the addition of a few production courses—for example, on screenwriting, digital editing, and production—since there is a great deal of student interest and would require few additional resources.

#### *Graduate Program*

7. Faculty Grants/RAs: We would encourage the faculty to apply for internal and external grants with a view to supporting professional training for graduate students.
8. Internships: we recommend reviewing the internship option to make it more attractive or available to students.
9. Graduate Handbook: we recommend providing students with a graduate handbook (perhaps online) with clear information about deadlines, contacts, and expectations.
10. Divide FILM 5000: we recommend dividing the course into two separate 0.5 courses—the first, to focus on research methods and, the second, to focus on thesis preparation.
11. Supervision Equity: we encourage the unit to seek a more equitable way to even out the supervisory load.
12. International Students: we recommend discussing with the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs how better to support and assist international students.

#### *Governance*

13. Curriculum Submission: we would recommend that all curriculum submissions be sent directly to the SSAC's curriculum committee rather than be pre-vetted by the Director of the SSAC.

#### *Facilities*

14. Designated Classrooms: we recommend that it would improve morale if the university could designate specific rooms for film studies courses.
15. Improved Facilities: we recommend that if renovation monies become available, the university should at the very least select one film studies classroom for (a) sound-proofing and (b) installation of raked seating.

#### *Other Suggestions/Issues*

16. Faculty Mentoring: we encourage the senior professors to think about a mentoring or coaching process for their colleagues on the subject of grants.

17. Future Hirings: if monies for one or two more faculty positions do become available, and the world cinema emphasis remains, we would recommend hiring a specialist in Central and South American Cinema and, if the faculty decide to move forward with production courses, we would recommend hiring a lecturer (teaching stream) in film production.

#### *Supplementary Questions*

18. BGINs Involvement: since some faculty members expressed a strong desire to be involved with, and develop specific courses for, the BGINs program, we recommend that the program consider a formal relationship with the new program.

#### **The Outcome of the Review**

As a consequence of the review, the Film Studies programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

#### **The Action Plan.**

The recommendations that were put forward as a result of the review process were productively addressed by the Film Studies faculty, the Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture, and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in a response to the report of the external review that was considered by CUCQA on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The Film Studies faculty and the Director of the School were generally pleased with the report of the external reviewers and agreed to respond positively to all recommendations except recommendation 13. CUCQA was satisfied with the reasons given in the response for not acting on this recommendation.

An Action Plan detailing how, when and by whom the recommendations will be implemented was received and approved by CUCQA on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

It is to be noted that Carleton's IQAP (7.7.1) provides for the monitoring of action plans: 'A report will be filed with the Office of the Vice-Provost by the Faculty Dean(s) and academic unit(s) when the timeline is reached for the implementation of each element of the Action Plan. This report will be forwarded to CUCQA for its review.'

In the case of the Film Studies' programs, the majority of monitoring will be achieved by means of an update on the Action Plan to be submitted by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

#### **The Next Cyclical Review**

The next cyclical review of the Film Studies programs will be conducted during the 2021-22 academic year.