

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
UNIVERSITY PROGRAM REVIEW (UPR)
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND FILM
UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS
April 2024

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Department of Communication, Media, and Film's Programs

In accordance with the University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external review and the internal responses of the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Communication, Media, and Film.

In addition to identifying the strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, the report prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation and sets out a plan (including the agent(s) responsible for addressing the recommendations and deadline dates) for follow-through. Timelines for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations are built into the process, with areas reporting mid-cycle on their progress to the Senate Program Development Committee, or earlier where there are significant concerns requiring urgent follow-up.

The Department of Communication, Media, and Film (CMF) 2022-2023 Self-Study (covering the preceding eight years), submitted to the Office of Quality Assurance on April 15, 2023, included: 1) a summary recommendations and actions from the last review; 2) descriptions and analyses of the programs, their learning outcomes, curriculum structure, and student experience; 3) information on enrolments as well as financial, physical, and human resources; and 4) the program data including the standard data package provided by the Office of Quality Assurance. Included in the appendices to the Self-Study were faculty member CVs, the Leddy Library report, course descriptions and syllabi, curriculum maps, Film Code of Conduct, the Department's renewal, tenure, and promotion criteria, and student satisfaction survey data.

The Department of Communication, Media, and Film programs were reviewed by Susan Lord (Department of Film and Media, Queen's University), Natalie Coulter (Department of Communication and Media Studies, York University), and Karen Robson (Odette School of Business, University of Windsor). In addition to assessing the Self-Study, the Review Team conducted a two-day site visit on November 2-3, 2023 which included meeting with faculty (including cross-appointed faculty, as well as faculty in the School of Creative Arts to discuss the shared BFA in Film Production), technical and administrative staff, students, the Head of the Department of Communication, Media, and Film, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the Associate Vice-President Academic.

In their report (January 22, 2024), the Review Team confirmed that undergraduate and graduate programs meet the IQAP evaluation criteria and are consistent with the University of Windsor's mission statement. Admissions requirements, program requirements, and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate, and aligned with degree-level expectations, and the reviewers commended the Department on the constant renewal and innovation evident in curriculum, policy, and practice. Assessment methods were also noted as being appropriate, effective, and in alignment with the learning outcomes. The programs are delivered by dedicated faculty, passionate about their teaching and the programs generally, and committed to educating undergraduate and graduate students and providing an exceptional and supportive student experience. The Review Team also noted that students believe the programs to be of great quality and relevance, and praised the faculty for being very approachable and highly supportive.

While the reviewers agreed that the learning outcomes align with the structure and requirements of the undergraduate and graduate programs, they encouraged greater articulation of community-based/experiential learning and commitments to EDII in the learning outcomes, present within specific courses and across the curricula. The Review Team also encouraged adding media options for assignments beyond film making, developing

professional content creation for podcasts, social media (TikTok, Instagram), micro-media, *etc.*, noting that this is part of both professional and public-facing knowledge production, community-based engagement, and cross-generational and cross-sector communication. Assessments that mirror industry work (proposals, pitches, strategy documents, case studies) should also be considered, outside of internships or practica, to more fully align theory and practice.

The reviewers acknowledged the strength of the BFA in Film Production, though they noted that the joint administration of the program between CMF and the School of Creative Arts (SOCA) was not sustainable in that it could lead to administrative dysfunction and was a drain on resources. While the relationship between the two areas was described as vibrant, supporting students' creative and critical practice, the reviewers suggested that the key to sustaining the relationship is to eliminate some complexity by moving film production to SOCA and focusing film studies in CMF. With regard to the graduate program, which the reviewers also acknowledged as strong, there was concern that the faculty complement limits the number of course offerings and graduate student enrolment in light of the supervision required for the major paper requirement, and creates challenges in adapting to new directions in the field. The reviewers noted that this, as well as the lack of opportunity for experiential or work-based learning in the graduate program, could be addressed by introducing a course-based option to the graduate program.

The Head of the Department of Communication, Media, and Film and Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences submitted their responses to the External Reviewers' Report (January 26, 2024 and February 25, 2024, respectively), addressing the recommendations, identifying follow-up actions, and providing clarification or corrections, as appropriate. The Senate Program Development Committee (PDC) Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan (April 2024) considered all the above documentation. The Executive Summary and Implementation Plan, along with any response from the area on the final recommendations, were submitted to Senate in May 2024.

Final Recommendations and Implementation Plan (in priority order)

Final recommendations were arrived at by the Program Development Committee, following a review and assessment of the External Reviewers (ER) report, the response from the Department of Communication, Media, and Film, and the response from the Dean of the Faculty.

Recommendation 1: That the Department forge clearer distinction from SoCA's Film Production and Media Arts. In doing so, the area should consider and report on the appropriateness and feasibility of:

- a) moving the BFA in Film Production exclusively to SoCA and having CMF focus on Film Studies (BA and BAH).
- b) renaming the department to Communications, Media, and Film Studies.
- c) incorporating a broader range of multimedia/digital content production (eg, podcasts, short clips, social media videos, etc.) within the curriculum, resources permitting. This wider scope of content production can come in two forms within "studies" courses: research creation (where the research is expressed through a creative media content) and digital media content creation. [ER Recommendation 2]
- d) offering a new course in content production (as opposed to film production) which utilizes the resources and skills of the film production professors, but combining these with a more practically-oriented, communications-based professional methodology, thus delivering a course less limited to the artistic production of film. Or, alternatively, offering a modular co-taught course in the first year with instructors who have strengths in production, in writing, in programming/curation, etc., while mobilizing the skills and capacities of senior students and MA students through content-creation workshops.

[ER Recommendation 1]

Agents: AAU Head, AAU Council, SoCA Council, faculty members

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 2: That CMF report on efforts to build stronger and sustainable relations with other Departments/Faculties, such as Business and Gender Studies, including working with these areas to make a case for a Black or Indigenous hire who would be joint-appointed, as Black and Indigenous studies of media and communication are essential to robust critical and creative contributions to society. [ER Recommendation 3]

Agents: AAU Head, Dean of the Faculty

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 3: That the Department report on efforts to develop more of a research culture, including forging a stronger relationship with the Office of Research and Innovation Services (ORIS) and finding opportunities to develop applications for tri-council funding, MITACS and a collaborative CFI with the SoCA colleagues. [ER Recommendation 4]

Agents: AAU Head, Dean, faculty members, Office of Research and Innovation Services

Completion by: Fall 2026

Recommendation 4: That the Department explore reframing the graduate program and potentially renaming it to MA in Communication (or Communication Studies). [ER Recommendation 5]

Agents: AAU Head, AAU Council

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 5: That the Department consider offering a graduate program course-based option that includes a field placement (internship or practicum, including self-directed field placement, whereby students design their own field placement course based on their current work experiences or opportunities) that would allow students to complete the program in one year; and that the thesis option be removed, thus leaving the options as course-based or course + major research paper. [ER Recommendation 6]

Agents: AAU Head, AAU Council

Completion by: Fall 2026