

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
UNIVERSITY PROGRAM REVIEW (UPR)
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: DRAMATIC ART
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
January 2024

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the School of Dramatic Art'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 programs in the School of Dramatic Art.

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 School of Dramatic Art 2021-2022 Self-Study, submitted to the Office of Quality Assurance on March 30, 2023, included: 1) a summary recommendations and actions from the last review; 2) descriptions and an analysis 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, information on University Players, the School's recruitment review and plan, the School's retirement and hiring plan along with the hiring grid and RTP criteria, student and alumni satisfaction surveys data.

The School of Dramatic Art programs were reviewed by Ana Cappelluto, Department of Theatre, Concordia University; and Jure Gantar, School of Performing Arts, Dalhousie University; and Bonnie Stewart, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor. In addition to assessing the Self-Study, the Review Team conducted a two-day site visit on April 27-28, 2023 which included meeting with faculty, technical and administrative staff, and students, BFA Acting Program Committee, BA Programs Committee, the Director of the School of Dramatic Art, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and the Associate Vice-President Academic. Following the site visit, two one-hour virtual Zoom meetings were conducted with additional faculty on May 2 and May 4, 2023.

In their report (June 26, 2023) the Review Team confirmed that undergraduate admissions requirements, program requirements, and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate, and aligned with degree level expectations. Assessment methods were also noted as being appropriate and effective and in alignment with the learning outcomes. The programs are delivered by dedicated faculty and supported by committed technical/production and administrative staff, with the reviewers' emphasizing that the School's emphasis on the quality of undergraduate education is commendable and reflects its commitment to providing an exceptional undergraduate experience. The Review Team further noted that, compared to many other institutions, the School is exceptionally well-resourced, both with financial allocations and with excellent, high-quality facilities and production staff.

While the reviewers acknowledged that the BFA program in Acting, in particular, was innovative and competitive in the past, and that it had a great reputation in the professional community, they noted with concern that the School has experienced a decrease in enrolments of approximately 200% over the last decade, indicating that significant change is needed. Specifically, the Review Team identified the need to expand the focus of the BFA program, branch away from the traditional canon of content and productions, and diversify and enhance recruitment efforts with a greater focus on its BA programs. They proposed a number of recommendations to enhance enrolment and strengthen programs and make them more attractive to prospective students, including embarking on an extensive curriculum review exercise and pursuing collaborative and interdisciplinary opportunities in order to develop,

reinvent, and modernize the School undergraduate program offerings. Any new hires would then align with these new/revised programs and priorities. The reviewers encouraged collaboration and interdisciplinarity as key to building on existing strengths and developing strong, innovative, and vibrant programs that will attract students.

The Director of the School of Dramatic Art and Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences submitted their responses to the External Reviewers' Report (October 24, 2023 and November 21, 2023, 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 (January 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 March 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 School of Dramatic Art, and the response from the Dean of the Faculty.

Recommendation 1: That the School undertake a comprehensive curriculum review exercise, with a view to developing, reinventing, and modernizing its undergraduate program offerings, making them more relevant and attractive to students. As part of this curriculum review, the School should consider and report on:

- a) the results of substantial and far-reaching discussions about the future direction of the BFA Acting program, specifically revising the program to a BFA in Screen and Stage Acting. [ER Recommendations 4.1 and 4.2]
- b) the feasibility of offering a stream in Musical Theatre performance to the BFA Acting or its revamped BFA in Screen and Stage Acting. [ER Recommendation 4.4]
- c) efforts to revisit the University Players' repertoire, branching out from the traditional canonical classical and well-known modern plays with a focus on plays that relate to broader social issues and contemporary topics, to ensure that it is relevant to potential new audiences. Leveraging its research strength and industry connections with the theatre for young audience and designating a play for young audiences as a regular addition to the University Players' repertoire could also attract new students and patrons and should also be considered. [ER Recommendation 4.5 and 4.6]
- d) efforts to either clarify the differences between the Concurrent General Drama/BEd degree and the Honours BA in Drama in Education and Community or to bring them closer together and present them as two comparable alternatives rather than as two separate options. [ER Recommendation 4.8].
- e) initiatives to rename the BA in Drama in Education and Community to something simpler and more elegant. [ER Recommendation 4.8]
- f) the development of a new first-year service class, or revisions to existing first-year or second year courses open to non-Majors, with a primary objective of attracting undecided students to one of the Schools' programs. [ER Recommendation 4.9]
- g) efforts to revive the Minor in Drama, if deemed feasible and appropriate. [ER Recommendation 4.10]

Agents: Director, School Council, faculty members

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 2: That the School report on the strategies it has developed, in consultation with central University services such as the Office of the AVP Student Experience and Student Counselling Services, to respond to alumni concerns expressed in their responses to the survey, particularly in the common areas of mental health, career preparation, arts administration curriculum, and EDI-ID. [ER Recommendation 5.1]

Agents: Director, faculty members, AVP Student Experience, Student Counselling Services, other central University services

Completion by: Winter 2025

Recommendation 3: That the School develop an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity and Decolonization (EDI-ID) plan, clearly articulating its EDI-ID objectives and identifying concrete steps to achieve them. [ER Recommendation 2.2]

Agents: Director, School Council

Completion by: Winter 2025

Recommendation 4: That the School report on its plan to continue focusing on the excellence of the undergraduate experience, including but not limited to: [ER Recommendation 2.1]

- a) efforts to involve as many students as possible, within (and, if feasible, outside) the School, in the University Players' productions. [ER Recommendation 2.3]

Agents: Director

Completion by: Fall 2024

Recommendation 5: That the School increase and diversify its student recruitment efforts including:

- a) developing a more intentional and consistent social media strategy, which should include greater utilization of social media on which contemporary high school students rely extensively; [ER Recommendation 3.1]
- b) revamping its Recruitment Plan, with the assistance of the Office of Enrolment Management, including reviewing its practices relating to the BFA Acting, and prioritizing and accentuating existing alternative programs using a more comprehensive range of recruitment processes. [ER Recommendation 3.2]

Agents: Director, faculty and staff, AVP Enrolment Management

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 6: That the School entrust advising responsibilities to one faculty member only (e.g., an Undergraduate Chair/Advisor), thereby streamlining the process and developing institutional knowledge, ensuring consistent advising for all students, and bringing advising practices in line with the rest of FAHSS.[ER Recommendation 5.2]

Agents: Director

Completion by: Fall 2024

Recommendation 7: That the School report on efforts to ensure that supervision of independent study projects is distributed more evenly.

Agents: Director

Completion by: Winter 2025

Recommendation 8: That the School review its criteria for promotion to Full Professor to ensure that it is not overly onerous for associate professors who are at a career stage to apply for Full Professorship. [ER Recommendations 7.4 and 7.5]

Agents: Director, School Council

Completion by: Fall 2024

Recommendation 9: That the School report on efforts to lobby the Windsor University Faculty Association to recognize the School's unique position and allow it to explore alternative approaches to hiring practices for guest directors, as long as these ensure fairness and equity.[ER Recommendation 2.4]

Agents: Director, Dean

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 10: That the School be alert to new learning and teaching opportunities and approaches provided by contemporary theatre and live performance, as well as best practices in screen acting. [ER Recommendation 8.1]

Agents: Director, faculty members

Completion by: Fall 2025

Recommendation 11: That the School report on the feasibility of establishing a computer lab with relevant design software to deepen students' technical skills and widen their range of career opportunities through fundraising or other such activities, given that FAHSS does not have the resources to support such an initiative. [ER Recommendation 6.1]

Agents: Director

Completion by: Fall 2024