OntarioTech
UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED:

Recommendation ☐
Decision ☒
Discussion/Direction ☐
Information ☐

DATE: **28 January 2020**

FROM: **Undergraduate Studies Committee**

SUBJECT: **Program Review 18-Month Final Assessment Report –Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media Studies**

COMMITTEE MANDATE:
In accordance with Articles 8.10 (a)(b) of By-law Number 1, the Academic Council "holds delegated authority from the Board to establish academic standards and curricular policies and procedures of the University and to regulate such standards, policies and procedures, including

 ii) To determine and regulate the contents and curricula of all courses of study".

And, "Academic Council may appoint committees and authorize them to exercise its powers under this section".

Under the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) Terms of Reference, USC is to "to approve Final Assessment Reports (FARs) and action plans arising out of the cyclical review of undergraduate programs and report to Academic Council on…the implementation of recommendations from previous reviews".

MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION:

That, pursuant to the recommendation of USC, Academic Council hereby approve the 18-Month Final Assessment Report for the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media Studies Cyclical Program Review.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:
Eighteen months after the completion of a program review the Faculty is asked to report on the progress to date for all items outlined in the Final Assessment Report and Action Plan. The 18-Month Final Assessment Report (18-Month FAR) notes any items which

have been completed and those that are still in progress, and provide a rationale and/or revised timeline for items which may be behind schedule from the timeline noted in the original Action Plan.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:
The Faculty's plans to address any remaining resource needs are outlined in the 18-Month FAR. Information and support will be required from various areas of the University in order to implement the plan as originally agreed.

COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY/LEGISLATION:
The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council), established by the Council of Ontario Universities in July 2010, is responsible for oversight of the Quality Assurance Framework processes for Ontario Universities. The Council operates at arm's length from both Ontario's publicly assisted universities and Ontario's government. Under the Quality Assurance Framework, academic programs must undergo a cyclical review at least every eight years following their implementation. The purpose of the cyclical program review is to critically examine the components of a program with the assistance of outside reviewers with the goal of continuous improvement. A program review's purpose is not solely to demonstrate the positive aspects of the program, but also to outline opportunities that will lead to improvements for the future.

NEXT STEPS:
- Following the approval of Academic Council the 18-Month FAR will be presented to the Board of Governors for information and posted to the University's website

SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:
- Program Review 18-Month Final Assessment Report

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
October 4, 2019
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communication and Digital Media Studies
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
18-Month Follow-Up
Dean: Dr. Peter Stoett

Under Ontario Tech University's Quality Assurance Framework, all degree programs are subject to a comprehensive review every eight years to ensure that they continue to meet provincial quality assurance requirements and to support their ongoing rigour and coherence. Program reviews involve several stages, including:

1. A comprehensive and analytical self-study brief developed by members of the program under review.
2. A site visit by academic experts who are external to and arm's length from the program who prepare a report and recommendations on ways that it may be improved based on a review of the program's self-study and supporting material, and a two day site visit involving discussions with faculty, staff and students and a tour of the facilities.
3. Development of a plan for improvement by the program and proposed timelines for implementation.

All programs that undergo a review must provide a report eighteen months after the completion of the review to gather information on the progress that has been made implementing the agreed upon plans for improvement.

In 2016-2017 a program review was scheduled for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Communication and Digital Media Studies, with a site visit on September 28 and 29, 2017**.** The program has submitted to the Provost's Office a comprehensive chart outlining the progress they have made made relative to the action plans resulting from the review. A summary of this progress is provided on the following pages. The summary report is reviewed by the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council, and is subsequently reported to Academic Council and the Board of Governors.

Next Scheduled Program Review: 2023-2025

Action Items	Process Status	Comments
With respect for the university's financial autonomy, it is highly recommended that the existing faculty complement be expanded by a minimum of one, and ideally two hires. This would include one new hire, and the replacement of the last faculty member who left. The requisite replacement position is critical to the ability of the program to be sustainable and to adhere to its social justice mandate.	*In Progress*	The CDMS program annually requests a replacement hire. While recognizing the limits of the University and Faculty's budgetary constraints, the program will continue to request a replacement hire, as this increase to the faculty complement is integral to the program's excellence in digital media studies research and teaching.
It is recommended that the program consider decreasing the number of required courses, especially courses in the Faculty's other programs. This way, CDMS could open up its curriculum to include a wider range of electives and special topic courses in communication studies.	*Complete*	The CDMS program reviewed the CDMS curriculum with the goal of decreasing the number of required courses in other programs and increasing CDMS elective options. However, it was not possible to decrease the number of required courses from other programs due to a Faculty-wide "common first year" being a FSSH BA degree requirement. Nonetheless, the CDMS program map is flexible, and it enables students from across the FSSH and University to enroll in numerous CDMS courses. Also, each year, the CDMS program runs a platter of elective courses, and learners in the CDMS program, as well as those in other FSSH programs and faculties and programs across the University, enroll in these.
It is recommended that CDMS dedicate significant time to considering the development of a graduate program.	*In Progress*	With the support of FSSH Dean Peter Stoett and FSSH Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, Andrea Slane, the CDMS faculty members continue to work with Legal Studies and Political Science toward the development of a tripartite interdisciplinary graduate degree centered on the interrelations of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Law and Politics/Public Policy. The FSSH Strategic Plan clarifies this graduate program will be developed between 2018 and 2020 and then implemented between 2020 and 2023.
It is recommended that the program ensures that all course descriptions include learning expectation (LE) statements that align with the program's overall learning expectations.	*Complete**	LE statements were integrated into numerous core CDMS courses, CDMS faculty members are regularly reminded to update LE statements, and reviews of CDMS course outlines-LE statements continue to be a program priority. Also, the CDMS program director works with new hires/sessional instructors to ensure they craft and include LE statements in their course outlines.
It is recommended that the program, and the Faculty, continue with its recruitment efforts and place additional emphasis on improving the translation of offers to registration.	*Complete**	The CDMS program continues to enhance its recruitment efforts with support from the Registrar, Recruitment Services, FSSH Recruitment Committee, and Academic Advisors; it continually strives to improve the translation of offers to registration/enrollments in the CDMS program.

It is recommended that the institution, in collaboration with the program, re-assess the technology available to faculty and students to better satisfy the 'technology enriched' pedagogy outlined in the institution's mission as well as the 'digital media' component of the program.	*Complete**	The CDMS program applied to the Dean's Innovation Fund, but funds were not available. Nonetheless, some requests for classroom technology were met (e.g. clocks). To augment the 'technology enriched' pedagogy of the university and the CDMS program, CDMS faculty members regularly interweave digital technology and freely available software into their courses. For example, shareware image and video editing programs, blogging sites such as WordPress, and social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are 'blended' with traditional modes of teaching and learning.

*The Faculty deems this action item as a priority requiring ongoing review and consideration.