UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Executive Summary
January 2018
Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media Studies
Dean: Peter Stoett

Under UOIT'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:

On the completion of the program review, the self-study brief together with the reviewers' report and the assessment team's response are reviewed by the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council, and are subsequently reported to Academic Council, the Board of Governors and the Quality Council.

In 2016-2017 a program review was scheduled for the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media Studies degree. This is the first external review for the program and the internal assessment team is to be commended for undertaking this assignment in addition to an already challenging workload and within very tight deadlines. The following pages provide a summary of the outcomes and action plans resulting from the review, identifying the strengths of the program as well as the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement. A report from the program outlining the progress that has been made implementing the recommendations will also be put forward in eighteen months' time.

External Reviewers: Mary Francoli (Carleton University) and Sandra Smeltzer (The University of Western Ontario)
Site Visit: September 28-29, 2017

The CDMS program is committed to holistic, professional and critical, social justice-oriented and interdisciplinary research and teaching about communication and digital media. Although the program curriculum draws from the well-established disciplinary traditions, theories, and methods of Canadian and trans-national mass communication and media studies, it also links and connects with the pedagogical priorities and research interests of many sub-fields in Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines.

Significant Strengths of the Program
- Overall, the program is consistent with the university's mission.
- The reviewers found that the CDMS program aligns with provincial degree level expectations and learning outcomes are aligned with the course offerings.
- The CDMS program contributes to the university's research mission.
- The program contributes to the university's teaching mission.
- The program has developed a strong recruitment and publicity campaign.

- CDMS students are well supported by faculty and staff.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement
- There is a need to increase the core faculty complement to replace a faculty position that was lost.
- A number of classes are taught by sessional instructors without doctoral-level or significant professional credentials.
- The Teaching Assistants are often lacking knowledge and skills specific to the discipline.
- The reviewers noted that the program is too highly structured and rigid.
- The reviewers found that the program is not resourced sufficiently to provide a superior technology-enriched learning environment.

The External Review
The external review of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media Studies (CDMS) was conducted by Dr. Mary Francoli, Associate Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, and Dr. Sandra Smeltzer, Associate Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario. Drs. Francoli and Smeltzer visited the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) Downtown Oshawa location on September 28-29, 2017 where they toured the UOIT facilities and met with various stakeholders.

Summary of Reviewer Recommendations and Faculty Responses

The external reviewers made 6 recommendations. The faculty have reviewed them carefully and will take appropriate steps to implement the recommendations within the limits of the Faculty's budgetary and human resource constraints.

Recommendation 1:
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.".

Response:
The CDMS program's turn to digital media studies was predicated on the prospect of two tenure track hires. Only one came to fruition, but the professor who was hired, a specialist in digital media, departed after only two years. The program is in agreement with the assessment that the CDMS program needs a replacement hire for the core faculty member who left. For the past three years, the CDMS program has presented a clear rationale for a replacement hire to the FSSH's leadership. But, no new hire(s) have materialized. In November 2017, the CDMS program submitted a request for a replacement hire to the FSSH's new Dean. The CDMS program is encouraged by the FSSH's Integrated Academic Plan's request for "several tenure-track and teaching faculty hires over the next four years" and notes that one of these hires might "enhance digital studies research and teaching in CDMS." The CDMS program will continue to request a replacement hire, as this is indeed critical to the program's success in digital media studies research and teaching. Dean Stoett has planned a tenure track hire request for CDMS for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Recommendation 2:

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. This would serve the interests of students and faculty: the program would be less rigid; it would allow students to take courses of interest, and likely improve their GPAs; it would allow faculty to teach courses that reflect their expertise; and it would provide an opportunity for the program to better incorporate 'digital media' offerings in its curriculum.

Response:
Over the past four years, the CDMS program has revised its curriculum to loosen up a rigid curricular map so that a wider range of digital media studies offerings, communication studies electives and special topic courses could be made available to students and faculty. The program removed cumbersome restrictions from more than half of the CDMS courses and enhanced or added over eight courses to reflect the digital turn. In doing so, the CDMS program encouraged more student choice and flexibility, enabled professors to teach to their research expertise, and facilitated cross-faculty enrollment in CDMS courses. The CDMS program agrees with the reviewers that the CDMS program map is still too rigid, and that a decrease in the number of required courses in the other programs and an increase in CDMS electives would be positive. However, the CDMS program does not currently possess the autonomy to decrease the number of required non-CDMS courses due to a Faculty-wide "common first year" being a FSSH BA degree requirement. Currently, all FSSH students in every program must complete a platter of 1st year courses from Criminology, Legal Studies, Political Science and Psychology programs. The faculty agree that the CDMS curriculum needs improved flexibility and sees the need to offer more elective courses. The program also recognizes that any changes must reflect overall FSSH BA requirements. Pending a change to the common first year, the CDMS will program will undertake a review and revision to loosen of its curricular map.

Recommendation 3:
It is recommended that CDMS dedicate significant time to considering the development of a graduate program. An MA degree would provide the program with TAs trained in communication studies who could support undergraduate students, and would make available to faculty members graduate-level research assistants. A graduate program would also bring greater prestige to the program, which in turn would attract additional undergraduate students, and likely stymie faculty attrition. However, the faculty complement would need to expand to ensure the program has sufficient supervisory capacity.

Response:
The program is in agreement with the recommendation to develop a graduate program, and for all of the reasons stated. Dr. Gary Genosko and Dr. Aziz Douai are currently on a FSSH committee with a mandate to develop an interdisciplinary graduate program in Communication, Law, and Policy that will draw upon the scholarship and research expertise of the CDMS, Legal Studies, and Political Science programs. The FSSH Strategic Plan states this graduate program will be developed between 2018 and 2020 and then implemented between 2020 and 2023.

Recommendation 4:
It is recommended that the program ensures that all course descriptions include learning expectation statements that align with the program's overall learning expectations.

Response:

Over the past three years, the CDMS program developed clear program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and worked toward aligning course description outcomes with the program's overall PLOs. The digital media component of current courses represent critical and creative approaches, and these can be made more visible in course titles and descriptions. The program will launch a comprehensive review of CDMS course titles and descriptions to ensure that this LE alignment is consistently realized in practice. For example, core faculty members will collectively review CDMS courses to ensure that each course reflects the program's overall LEs and the critical and creative digital media studies component of the degree. To better foreground the substantive digital media focus of the courses that form the core of the CDMS program's curriculum, the CDMS program may retitle courses and modify course descriptions. Core CDMS faculty members will also review course outlines as part of annual CDMS program meetings. Furthermore, the CDMS faculty member on the Sessional Hiring and Mentorship Committee will work with contract instructors to ensure that their course outlines are consistent with the program's LEs.

Recommendation 5:
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.

Response:
Four years ago, the CDMS program did not have a customized recruitment or publicity strategy. Over the past three years, the CDMS program worked with the FSSH and Registrar to design and launch a multi-pronged recruitment strategy that includes: the first program-specific website at UOIT; UOIT/CDMS branded posters and postcards; a Twitter account; increased visibility in area high schools through on-site visits and a CDMS director-to applicant email campaign. These efforts improved program visibility to both prospective students and the wider public and resulted in an increase in applications to the CDMS program. Although more students are applying to the CDMS program, the program now needs to improve "the translation of offers to registration" and they will continue to work with the Registrar, Recruitment Services, FSSH Recruitment Committee, and Academic Advisors to improve the offer-to-registration ratio and turn offers into improved student numbers. In November 2017, the CDMS program director and the FSSH Dean met with Charlie Berger, Manager of Recruitment Services, and proposed a number of innovative recruitment strategies such as informing Durham region guidance counsellors about the CDMS program, matching high-school programs and courses to the CDMS program, and arranging more targeted inbound/out-bound high school visits.

Recommendation 5:
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.

Response:
Each year, for the past three years, the CDMS program requested new educational technology (hardware and software) "to better satisfy the 'technology-enriched' pedagogy outlined in the institution's mission as well as the 'digital media' component of the program." Reviewer observations about the outdated technology in the classrooms on the downtown campus requires new university commitments to hardware, software, and physical infrastructure development. The FSSH is currently discussing how to address some technological infrastructure shortcomings. The CDMS program does not have a budget for program-specific technology and does not make procurement decisions about UOIT's technological infrastructure. But, in November 2017, the CDMS program submitted a request to the Dean's Innovation Fund for new CDMS technology. They have requested new classroom clocks,

interactive whiteboard projectors, classroom media players, adobe creative cloud licenses, and cross-campus tele-presence technologies. Dean Stoett has begun this process with requests to the Capital Campaign funding cycle and he has also committed to a pedagogical technology review and analysis to take place over the 2018-2019 year.

Plan of Action

The table below presents a timeline of the actions planned to address the recommendations from the external report.

	Proposed Action	Timeline	Person/ Area Responsible
Recommendation 1	The CDMS program has already submitted a request for a new hire to the Dean of the FSSH. The program will continue to request a new hire, as this increase the faculty complement is integral to the program's excellence in digital medial studies research and teaching.	2017-2021	UOIT Provost, Dean of FSSH, Budget and Planning Officer, CDMS Program Director, CDMS Faculty
Recommendation 2	The CDMS program will review the CDMS curriculum with the goal of making changes that infuse "greater flexibility and choice into the curriculum" by reducing non-CDMS requirements, increasing CDMS elective options and ensuring all course titles, descriptions and substance reflect program learning expectations (LEs).	Winter 2018-Spring 2018: program meetings to discuss and propose curriculum changes Fall 2018: curriculum change documentation prepared and submitted to CC, Faculty Council Winter 2019: curriculum change document carried by FSSH curriculum head to University CC Fall 2019-Winter 2020: curriculum changes appear in Academic Calendar/implemented by program	CDMS Faculty, CDMS Program Director/ Curriculum Committee Member, FSSH Curriculum Committee

Recommendation 3	The CDMS program will develop an interdisciplinary graduate degree with Legal Studies and Political Science.	2018-2020: program development 2020-2023: program implementation	Dean of FSSH, Graduate Studies Dean, Graduate program development committee (Dr. Slane, Dr. Genosko, Dr. Douai, Dr. Fernando), CDMS faculty members
Recommendation 4	The CDMS program will review all CDMS course outlines to identify those lacking LE statements. Core faculty members responsible for teaching these courses will craft LE statements. Sessional instructors will be required to include LE statements in course outlines. The CDMS program will incorporate course syllabi quality reviews as part of CDMS program meetings each year.	Winter 2018/ongoing	CDMS core faculty members and sessional instructors
Recommendation 5	The CDMS program will continue to work with the Registrar, Recruitment Services, FSSH Recruitment Committee, and Academic Advisors to learn more about why so few offers translate to registration and offer concrete recommendations for turning offers to enrollments.	Winter 2018/ongoing	Registrar, Recruitment Services, FSSH Recruitment Committee, CDMS Program Director, CDMS Faculty Members
Recommendation 6	The CDMS program has submitted a request for a technology upgrade to the Dean of the FSSH (Dean's Innovation Fund). The CDMS program will also review courses to identify digital media courses that require a technology upgrade, and make recommendations to the Dean.	Fall 2018-Winter 2019	CDMS Faculty

Due Date for 18-Month Follow-up on Plan of Action: July 2019
Date of Next Cyclical Review: 2023-2025