

FOR INFORMATION

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OPEN SESSION

TO:	UTSC Academic Affairs Committee
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DATE:	October 12, 2023 for October 19, 2023
AGENDA ITEM:	5b

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Review of Academic Programs and Units, UTSC
b) Major (Joint) in New Media Studies

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Under section 5.7 of the Terms of Reference of the University of Toronto Scarborough Academic Affairs Committee (UTSC AAC) provides that the Committee “shall receive for information and discussion reviews of academic programs and/or units consistent with the protocol outlined in the *University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process*. The reviews are forwarded to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs for consideration.”

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. UTSC Academic Affairs Committee [For Information] (October 19, 2023)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

- Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P), February 16, 2023 [For Information]. The Committee was satisfied with the Dean’s Administrative Response. A 1-year follow-up report was requested in Spring 2024.
- Academic Board, April 27, 2023 [For Information]. The Board was satisfied with the Report from AP&P.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The *Cyclical Review Protocol* “is used to ensure University of Toronto programs meet the highest standards of academic excellence” (UTQAP, Section 5.1). The *Protocol* applies to all undergraduate and

graduate degree programs offered by the University, and the University's full complement of undergraduate and graduate degree and diploma programs are reviewed on a planned cycle. Reviews are conducted on a regular basis, and the interval between program reviews should not exceed 8 years.

- The external review of academic programs requires:
- The establishment of a terms of reference;
- The selection of a review team;
- The preparation of a self study;
- A site visit (conducted remotely during the pandemic);
- Receipt of a report from the external review team;
- The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs' formal request for an Administrative Response;
- The formal Administrative Response, combining responses from the Dean and Vice-Principal Academic; and
- The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

In accordance with the *Protocol*, an external review of the Major in New Media Studies (administered by the Department of Arts, Culture and Media (ACM), and a joint program with Centennial College) was commissioned for the 2020-21 academic year; due to pressures during the pandemic the review was deferred until the 2021-22 year. During a remote site-visit held on November 5 and 12, 2021, the review team met with a wide array of stakeholders, including UTSC and Centennial College senior academic administrators, the Department Chairs, and faculty, staff from both institutions, and students in the program. The reviewers praised the program as “highly successful by nearly every measure”. They noted that the mix of practical and theoretical education in the program is unique and highlighted excellent faculty and media resources for students at both campuses.

In their report, the reviewers recommended:

- Increased clarity around the program's technical competencies and support for students lacking these competencies.
- Considering incorporating the related Centennial Certificate component as a program requirement.
- Strategic consideration of whether to adjust program enrolment requirements.
- Increasing visibility of students' projects in the capstone course.
- Exploring options for providing greater stability for the program including new tenure-stream faculty playing a role in teaching in the program, highlighting concerns that the joint program is “dependent on non-permanent faculty” and that the retirement of two key leaders on each campus has left a gap in program knowledge.
- Undertaking strategic consideration of whether to grow the program and identifying resources necessary to sustain growth.
- Encouraging further collaboration between program faculty on both campuses to enhance integration with the larger UTSC Media Studies program.
- Exploring the pursuit of advancement initiatives related to the program.

In response to these recommendations, program leadership in the Department, alongside colleagues at Centennial, will:

- Establish a list of core competencies which will form the basis of a communication plan for students.
- Re-design the curriculum so that Year 1 and 2 will be held at UTSC and students will acquire foundational competencies such as communication skills, ethics, and core technical skills.
- Set up a pre-start “boot camp” course as preparation during the summer term, and introduce MDSA12H3 Writing for Media Studies as a program requirement in Year 1
- Integrate aspects of the Certificate into a revised curriculum for the program.
- With a planned restructuring of the Media Studies program, allow Media Studies (MDS) courses to be listed as options for the New Media Studies joint program.
- Focus on retention of students by implementing a skills diagnostic to identify areas where students need further training.
- Re-establish the Coding Club at ACM and further leverage the existing mentorship program in the department to create community amongst students.
- Encourage students to take advantage of resources at UTSC such as Academic English Health Check and Reaching and Writing Excellent programs and leverage the Pedagogies of Inclusive Excellence (PIE) fund to support discipline language workshops.
- Provide showcases for student work in the ACM Undergraduate Research and Creative Practice Symposium and the 3rd floor hallway of the Arts and Administration building and room AA319.
- Develop experiential learning opportunities and a practicum for the program, in the absence of capacity for the program to obtain work placements for all students.
- Work with the UTSC Development and Alumni Relations Office to develop an alumni engagement plan for ACM, including the New Media Studies program.
- Seek a new tenure-stream position in New Media Studies, and a teaching-stream position for a recent faculty retirement, through the Faculty Complement Committee cycle.

Additionally, the Dean and Dean’s Office will:

- Support the Department’s planned redesign of the program structure, diagnostic assessment, and mentorship opportunities.
- Support the planned integration of skills development into the curriculum, which align the program’s goals with UTSC’s strategic plan, Inspiring Inclusive Excellence.
- Assess enrolment targets for the program as part of strategic enrolment planning.
- Plan for the Department’s future space in the future Centre for Literature, Arts, Media and Performance (LAMP).
- Work with the Department and Centennial to consider infrastructure and capacity needs for New Media Studies and the Joint Programs to enable future growth.

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) requested a one-year follow-up report given that the program will be undergoing a significant redesign. The Dean’s Office will support the Department in preparing this report and monitor the implementation of recommendations through ongoing meetings with the Chair. A brief report to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, midway between the

November 2021 site visit and the year of the next site visit, will be prepared. The next external review of the program has been scheduled for 2027-28.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no net financial implications to the campus' operating budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is presented for information only.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

1. Review Report (February 17, 2022)
2. Provostial Request for Administrative Response (July 15, 2022)
3. Chair's Administrative Response (November 30, 2022)
4. Dean's Administrative Response (December 19, 2022)
5. Request for Follow-up Report (April 24, 2023)
6. Provostial Final Assessment Report and Implemental Plan (January 12, 2023)