

Final Assessment Report

Dramatic Arts Undergraduate Program (reviewed 2015/16)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on November 25, 2015.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Susan Bennett (University of Calgary), Jenn Stephenson (Queen's University) and an internal reviewer, Michael Winter (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 13-15, 2016.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 12, 2016.
5. The Department's response was received on June 15, 2016.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on May 5, 2016.
7. The Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on August 31, 2016.

The academic programs offered by the Department of Dramatic Arts which were examined as part of the review were:

BA in Dramatic Arts (including Co-op programs)
Concurrent BA/BEd in Dramatic Arts
Certificate in Drama in Education and Applied Theatre

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

The reviewers assigned the program an outcome category of "Good Quality".

Outcome Categories:

Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
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B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers stated:

The primary strength of the program is its faculty and staff who are very well qualified and exhibit a devotion to the wellbeing and learning opportunities of the students and to the success of the program. There is a strong sense of mission here. Faculty and staff seem to be collegial and supportive of each other's efforts.

The incredible diversity of curricular offerings, encompassing Performance, technical Production and Design, Theatre Praxis (history, theory, literature) and Drama-in-Education and Applied Theatre, is impressive and a strength of the program. Students are exposed to a very wide range of ideas and skills. The ability to offer courses, for example, in a range of acting styles from commedia and improvisation, to clown and "Shaw" style is a boon to students. Similar breadth of content offerings feature in all areas of instruction.

Although, disappointingly, we didn't get a chance to see one of the mainstage productions, it seems clear that these projects display a high-calibre in terms of their production values. Significant resources are being invested in the productions and they appear to create valuable experiences for the students and offer quality work to the community.

Undoubtedly, the new Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts building is a cornerstone of the strengths of this program. The building has been thoughtfully designed and is well equipped for both the study and practice of dramatic arts. It is a warm and inviting space in which to support learning and to build community.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation 1

Convert the current LTA and ILTA into continuing faculty positions.

In its response, the Department stated that they accepted the recommendation. The Department noted that the “eventual conversion of the current LTA is dictated by currently existing contractual constraints and that we expect such a conversion to occur as a matter of procedural course”; that the conversion “will be fundamental and obligatory for the Department’s continued success”, and; that advocacy by the Department Chair with the Dean will be ongoing.

The Faculty Dean stated:

Given the University’s ongoing deficit mitigation measures, it is not possible for the Dean to be bound by this recommendation. Replacements of faculty positions are subject to budgetary approval and the approval of the Provost. Proposals for positions will need to identify a niche that Brock can fill, and demonstrate the both the potential and the reality for increased enrolments.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee’s jurisdiction. It is expected that the program will proceed through normal channels of advocacy regarding the faculty complement.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 2

Arrange for a workload audit of DART and lead discussions for a go-forward plan with faculty and staff.

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation, referencing the existing provisions regarding workload under the Collective Agreement and ongoing discussions within the Department on this issue. Nonetheless, the Department committed “to the ongoing review of workload within the contractual framework of the university”, and suggested that factors which should be taken into consideration include the small size of the Department, unrecognized time spent on Department activities and comparators with other Departments.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean encourages the Department to assess its workload issues within the framework of the NWS [Normal Workload Standard] and AWP [Annual Workload Report] processes as outlined in the Collective Agreement, and looks forward to working with the Department on workload.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee’s jurisdiction. The Department is encouraged to assess workload issues as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 3

Establish better mechanisms for tracking alumni and use that data to prepare graduates for a broader vision of employment opportunities (i.e., beyond theatre and teaching).

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation but also stated that:

The Department agrees that the establishment of better mechanisms for tracking alumni and the use of that data to prepare graduates for a broader vision of employment opportunities (i.e., beyond theatre and teaching) is a reasonable and advisable objective. The Department shares the objective but rejects the assumption that the Department is best or properly tasked to accomplish this work by adding it to the workload of the faculty of the academic program and the one existing administrative assistant.

The Department gave examples of existing efforts to achieve this objective and made suggestions on possible ways to move forward on this issue.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean recognizes the work that the Department has been doing to keep in touch with its alumni, and has also been working with the Office of Alumni Relations and the Office of Marketing and Communications to showcase the jobs held by Humanities graduates.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. Although the Department chose to reject the recommendation, there is evidence that it is working with the Office of Alumni Relations and the Office of Marketing and Communications.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for resources:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 4

Attend promptly to the variety of geographical challenges listed in [Reviewer Report Section] 6 above and meet with faculty, staff and students mid-way through the Fall Term (2016) to assess success or otherwise.

In its response, the Department stated that it accepted the recommendation but:

with caveat that the Department does not generate, provide or deliver students services such as mentioned above. The Department commits to advocating and lobbying for improved services (library, transit, advising and counseling, residence/meal plan access and exclusions) when appropriate, also coordination of the university schedule, by working with the departments and offices responsible for this work. The Department also maintains that DART students at the MIWSFPA remain Brock students and should be fully engaged with services and opportunities offered on the 1812 campus just as they should be engaged with the learning and experience community on the 1812 campus.

The Department made suggestions on possible ways to move forward on this issue.

The Faculty Dean stated:

While this recommendation is beyond the scope of the external review mandate, the Dean encourages continued engagement with various service offices (e.g. Library, Student Development) on the 1812 campus, and supports initiatives to provide services at 15 Artists' Common that parallel those offered on the hill.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department and the Dean will proceed through normal channels of advocacy to address the geographical challenges raised by the reviewers. It was noted that the Faculty of Education faces similar geographical challenges with its Hamilton campus and that a joint discussion might be worthwhile.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 5

Senior administration/university-level planning and guidance to provide appropriate support (leadership, funding) for further enhancement of DART's contributions to the social and cultural life of St. Catharines.

In its response, the Department stated that they accepted the recommendation. The Department noted that existing outreach activity by DART faculty is already significant and exemplary for such a small unit and that continued and additional support for these existing and ongoing activities would be welcome.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean and Budget Officer will continue to work with the Department and all units of the MIWSFPA to ensure that the submitted budgets take into account the real costs of all necessary activities.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources. The Department is encouraged to include this issue as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 6

Review the budget options for the operation of venues within the School, to take account of rapidly increased materials costs.

In its response, the Department stated that they accepted the recommendation. The Department expressed gratitude for existing production support and noted that they will continue to work with the Chair and the Dean to manage production-related expenses and budgetary needs.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean and Budget Officer will continue to work with the Department and all units of the MIWSFPA to ensure that the submitted budgets take into account the real costs of all necessary activities.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the Department will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these resources.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 7

Appoint a Webmaster to provide leadership for the School and to chair a committee concerned with promotion of events, marketing and fund-raising initiatives.

In its response, the Department stated that they accepted the recommendation. The Department gave examples of existing efforts to achieve this objective and made suggestions on possible ways to move forward on this issue.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean encourages the use of all possible venues for promotion, including (but not limited to) an effective web presence for all units in the MIW, and appropriate use of social media. The Dean agrees with the Department that this is too large a project for a faculty member to take on as voluntary service. Funding is in place for a part-time position or co-op student to support communications from the MIW office.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to have two parts.

- a. The Committee considers the recommendation to appoint a Webmaster to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

- b. The Committee considers the recommendation to improve promotion and recruitment through various initiatives to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for resources:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2016/17

Recommendation 8

Appoint an undergraduate program officer, supported by a one-course teaching release per year over a three-year term.

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation as stated, noting:

Such a task cannot be undertaken by the Department before the framework for the position is established by the Dean's Office, possibly involving collective bargaining at the university-level.

The Department noted that they will work with the Chair and the Dean to discuss non-academic staffing resources.

The Faculty Dean stated:

Many departments have faculty members serving as Undergraduate Programme Officers as part of departmental service. Course release is not provided.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 9

Undertake a curriculum review, led by the undergraduate program officer, to examine ways to streamline current offerings, increase class sizes modestly so as to reduce the number of sections for some courses, and to achieve a more holistic view of curriculum that represents the experience of the majority of students in DART's undergraduate program.

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation, "because the recommendation is dependent upon the creation of a position that the Department is not authorized or resourced to undertake".

The Department nonetheless committed to undertake "extensive discussion on the subject of curriculum and degree patterning" and to address specifically the issues raised by the reviewers at the Department retreat at the end of the summer.

The Faculty Dean stated:

This recommendation is contingent upon the previous one, and so cannot be accepted on the terms stated. That said, the Dean is aware that the department is committed to ongoing surveillance of curriculum and class sizes.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) stated:

In Section 5.3, Curriculum, the reviewers note that "within the 20 credits for a 4-year honours degree, 14 credits are required for DART, 2 more are breadth requirements (Sciences context credit and Social Sciences context credit), leaving only 4 credits of electives." UPC does note that while students currently have a fair amount of choice among DART courses, decreasing the number of core course requirements is being mooted at Senate.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to undertake a curriculum review to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The commitment to undertake a curriculum review is acknowledged by both the Department and the Dean. Such a review should take place regardless of whether it is led by an undergraduate program officer, but more importantly that it involve all faculty contributing to the programs.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for resources:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Department, Dean of Humanities
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2016/17

Recommendation 10

Appoint two faculty members (as part of their service load) to develop and design seminar-based 3P97 and 3P98 courses, to be brought to the Department for approval.

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation, noting the curricular diversity of the courses from year to year and the amount of work required. Nonetheless the Department affirmed that, "We need to have further discussions as a Department at this year's retreat about how to continue to best deliver the Advance Project in Dramatic Arts I & II courses".

The Faculty Dean stated:

The independent study model currently in place for these courses satisfies the needs and interests of students. The Department is committed to examining the support structure of the courses, in order to manage the workload more effectively.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. The Department is encouraged to assess workload issues as part of the curriculum review referenced in its response to Recommendation #9.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 11

Develop Departmental policies for more transparent day-to-day management and sharing of information among all constituencies within DART.

In its response, the Department stated that they rejected the recommendation, noting that policies and procedures are already in place. Nonetheless the Department committed to “continue to work to achieve transparent day-to-day management and sharing of information as appropriate”.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Department already has good systems in place for the effective management of departmental business and sharing of information.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as existing departmental policies exist which should be circulated and reviewed by members annually.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 7, 9

Second Priority:

Recommendations 3

Not accepted:

Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11