Final Assessment Report

Studies in Arts and Culture
Undergraduate Program
(reviewed 2015/16)

A. Summary

1. The Centre's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on January 13, 2016.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Randi Warne (Mount Saint Vincent University) and David Cecchetto (York University) and an internal reviewer, Sheridan Houghten (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 2-4, 2016.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 23, 2016.
5. The Centre's response was received on April 21, 2016.
6. The Interim Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on April 28, 2016.
7. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on May 5, 2016.
8. The revised Centre response was received on Sep 14, 2016.
9. The revised Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on Sep 19, 2016.

The academic program offered by the Centre for Studies in Arts and Culture which was examined as part of the review was:

BA in Studies in Arts and Culture

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

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers found the following to be strengths of the program:

- Flexibility: STAC's flexibility means it can be responsive to changing trans- sectoral contexts. For example, a number of courses include assignments that cross disciplinary boundaries and that develop social engineering skills that emerge in actual, "on the ground" work in the cultural sector. Moreover, the extensive cross-listing of courses means that STAC students and faculty alike are equipped to engage cultural questions in manners that are situational and equal to the complexity of our contemporary moment. Both students that we interviewed identified STAC's responsive flexibility as a key reason for enrolling in the program, and also as a key contributor to their satisfaction; as one of the students remarked, this feature makes STAC "the future of arts programs."

- The proposed Sound Studies stream—which would be the first of its kind in Canada, and which would leverage the tremendous potential of a particular cultural moment to register STAC on the national and international scenes—is a prime example of what can come of the general flexibility of the program. Specifically, the development of this stream will allow Brock to leverage its flexibility in combination with Brock's proximity to New York State (a significant historical setting for Sound Art) and local expertise. As such, this represents a major opportunity to further internationalize STAC (and the School more generally) in an area where there is an identified global need.

- The combination of practice-inclusive learning and arts management skills: STAC is differentiated from comparator programs at other universities because of its proximity to and inclusion of creative practice-inclusive learning. This strength is supported by the inclusion of creative professionals as course directors, who have admirably showcased STAC student's practical abilities in real-world assignments and opportunities. In this, students are prepared for the exigencies of life as cultural practitioners, and also develop transferable skills. In particular, the program takes advantage of a weakness of more conventional studio-based programs by allowing students to develop skills in concert with their own particular strengths and interests, and also by demanding strong writing skills of its students; this latter attribute is an important transferable skill beyond the classroom, and is also a hallmark (in its extension to sound argumentation) of quality humanistic education.

- Students in this program learn a tremendous amount about cultural processes, their politics, social dynamics, and practical embodiments in a range of circumstances. These skills are obviously transferable. Having instructors who are active in their several professions and artistic environments adds to the theoretical knowledge in which students are engaged. Specific skills that might be generated out of this environment are institutional organization; project management; personnel management, financial management, human relations, and program/project planning. Refined entrepreneurial skills are a further possible outcome.

- Rodman Hall: Rodman Hall is a key contributor to the program as it presently exists, and also extends the robust local community engagement of faculty and students to national

and international contexts. Rodman acts as a touchstone for student and faculty recruitment, a bridge to contexts beyond the classroom, a resource for important faculty research, and an avenue of growth for the program (and for the University as a whole). Rodman also supports STAC's flexibility by affording instructors the opportunity to develop responsive assignments.

- Students and student profiles: STAC's students were consistently described by instructors and other stakeholders—many of whom teach in multiple programs— as smart, capable, driven, and in touch with the world outside of the classroom. STAC students are also characterized by their strong writing skills. Students are a strength of the program—rather than just of the individual students—because STAC specifically cultivates a student body that both accommodates non- traditional students (in that many STAC students might not excel in other programs) and amplifies the efforts of those students who are self-driven. In this, the program balances feasibility (by providing a venue for a broad swath of students) while still affording the opportunity to excel to the highest degree to those students who are most driven and capable.

- Dedicated stakeholders: STAC is an extremely efficient program in large part because it is populated at all levels by stakeholders who consistently provide in excess of what is demanded of them. For example, a number of Sessional Instructors demonstrated deep investment in the program at the planning level, as well as offering their research—for which they are not compensated—as a resource to the program. Similarly, the lone full-time Faculty member regularly leverages her friendships (and the program's importance) to bring nationally important policy makers into the classroom to speak with Arts Management students. Likewise, the administrator and adviser both work beyond their job descriptions and hours without complaint. And, of course, the students understand themselves as engaged citizens rather than simply students. All of these efforts—along with the openness of Rodman Hall to student ventures and Faculty research— demonstrate the commitment of stakeholders to the program, and this commitment in turn breeds further commitment to the program as a full- fledged community, thereby extending the value of the students' degrees (and increasing the likelihood of alumni investment of all kinds).

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided 8 recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Replace outgoing full-time faculty member.

In its response, the Centre stated:

> STAC fully endorses hiring a full-time instructor. STAC also strongly endorses Professor [name withheld] to be given a permanent cross-appointment immediately, and has proceeded to make a recommendation to the Dean in support of this becoming permanent.

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 to address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan
Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 2

Plan future program directorships to consist in two consecutive three-year terms.

In its response, the Centre stated:

> We support the recommendation of having a three-year term for the directorship of STAC. We plan to undertake future exploration of governance that establishes consistency over longer periods.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean agrees that the norm of a three-year term for a Centre Director, as recommended by the *Collective Agreement between Brock University and the Brock University Faculty Association*, is ideal. In accordance with Article 27.03.a of the *Collective Agreement*, the Director should be a tenured, full-time faculty member.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. The appointment and renewal of the Program Director is governed by the Brock University/Brock University Faculty Association collective agreement.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 3

Hold regularly scheduled social events three times per year to strengthen student engagement and sense of cohort.

In its response, the Centre stated:

> STAC approves the sentiment of this recommendation, and we commit to initiatives that strengthen student engagement and sense of cohort. Furthermore, an engaged student cohort is central to the successful communication and promotion of the opportunities of STAC to first year BHE students seeking to declare their major program.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean's Office supports, within budget limits and policy guidelines, the idea of regular social events for STAC students and faculty as a means of building a learning community.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) stated:

> This recommendation was made, in part, due to the comment on p. 4 that "the lack of a perceivable core… inhibited the students forming the kind of cohort that vitalizes a program and helps it grow and develop as student generations move through it". We note that students in the STAC program do have significant core requirements (only two elective credits in Year 3 of the program) that are selected from a broad range of identified courses.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and will build on current practice. The Committee agrees with UPC comments and encourages the Program to examine the curriculum with the intent of identifying core courses in all years to reinforce and build a sense of community.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Dean of Humanities, Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2016/17

Recommendation 4

Hold program faculty meetings at least once per term. Include all program instructors in these meetings.

In its response, the Centre stated:

STAC accepts this recommendation and we have proceeded with a bi-weekly meeting schedule.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the recommendation that the Centre Committee meet at least once is each of the Fall and Winter terms, in accordance with Article 27.01.m of the *Collective Agreement*. In accordance with Article 16.02.b of the *Collective Agreement*, the Centre Committee has the right to determine its own membership.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to hold a faculty meeting at least once per term to describe current practice as found in the Collective Agreement. The Committee notes that the Centre has the right to determine its own membership in these meetings.

Implementation Plan

No further action required.

Recommendation 5

Continue to leverage Rodman Hall as a key and effective component of the program.

In its response, the Centre stated:

STAC agrees entirely with this recommendation. Cultural events, program-related learning and research activities at Rodman Hall are integral to several STAC courses. Some STAC courses are even taught *in* Rodman Hall. Their syllabi are founded upon Rodman's programming, and depend heavily upon the expertise of the professional curatorial and administrative leadership of Rodman Hall.

We cannot stress enough the fact that students in arts and culture need regular access to high quality contemporary art museums such as Rodman Hall, and Rodman Hall is the only such facility in Niagara.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the continuation of teaching and research by Brock faculty and students at Rodman Hall Art Centre.

UPC stated:

The External Reviewers made clear their view that "STAC is a fresh and exciting program". They were also clear in their disappointment, first that Rodman Hall was not included in their tour, and second in what they describe as "the withholding of significant information regarding the status of Rodman Hall". The Reviewers evidently felt that evaluation of resources available to/used by the program was hindered by a lack of information regarding Rodman Hall. UPC encourages Departments/Centres to ensure that tours are scheduled of all facilities described in the Self-Study document as being important to the student experience. Additionally, a perception of a lack of transparency from any individuals with whom external reviewers meet is not beneficial to their view of Brock as an institution.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee wishes to confirm that all available information regarding Rodman Hall was made available to the reviewers during the review. The Committee understands that the university is exploring options for the future of Rodman Hall, and that key to this will be maintaining artistic, curatorial and research services to faculty, students and the community moving forward.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 6

Implement sound studies stream as outlined in Self Study.

In its response, the Centre stated:

> STAC agrees with the initiative for innovative program development that integrates the Music Department. We welcome the recommendation but can proceed only after the appointment of a full-time faculty member who teaches and researches in the field of sound studies.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Office of the Dean welcomes creative ideas on curriculum development, subject to budgetary constraints and policy guidelines. Bearing in mind the University's deficit mitigation measures and the impact these have upon the addition of permanent faculty positions, we do encourage Departments and Centres to consider carefully their future staffing needs and keep the Dean apprised of these plans.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration, but understands that it is dependent on resources which are not yet available to the program.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 7

Consult with art and design Universities (namely OCADU, NSCAD, and Emily Carr) in order to be able to bring alternate labour categories to the bargaining table in future contract negotiations between the Faculty Association and the employer, specifically "permanent part time" designations that allow for instructors who maintain arts practices beyond their work for the University.

In its response, the Centre stated:

> STAC welcomes alternative strategies to enrich and augment the learning opportunities for students in the program.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The expansion or alteration of the "categories of labour" in a unionized environment such as Brock remain matters for negotiation with the various unions on campus

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the Committee's jurisdiction. Any such changes would be a matter of negotiation between the university and its labour partners.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 8

Expand the program's visibility to prospective students by ensuring that it is prominently featured in all arts related advertising.

In its response, the Centre stated:

STAC accepts the recommendation to make its program more visible in advertising and promotions.

STAC has collaborated to prepare the new Viewbook specific to the MIWSFP[A], positioning STAC as a significant and unique interdisciplinary Centre of study among the three Departments of Dramatic Arts, Music and Visual Arts.

The recent hiring of a new Recruitment Officer for the MIWSFPA is a major initiative to promote successful recruitment outcomes with direct benefits for STAC. Complementary social media support by the new Humanities Social Media Coordinator brings increased visibility through the reporting of program-related activities and student success at STAC.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean is confident that the Office of the MIWSFPA will continue to promote all of the programs within the School appropriately. The Dean's Office itself continues to work with Marketing and Communications on promotions and publicity for all units in Humanities.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The program is encouraged to work with the Communications Director of the MIWSFPA to ensure that the profile of STAC is communicated externally and internally.

Implementation Plan (1ˢᵗ Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Program
Responsible for resources:	Program
Responsible for implementation:	Program
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2016/17

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:
Recommendations 3, 8

Not accepted:
Recommendations 1, 2, 5, 6, 7

Not requiring further action:
Recommendation   4