Final Assessment Report

Visual Arts
Undergraduate Programs
(reviewed 2015/16)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on December 16, 2015.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Sally Hickson (University of Guelph), Sue Lloyd (University of Toronto) and an internal reviewer, Jeff Boggs (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on February 28-March 1, 2016.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 31, 2016.
5. The Department's response was received on April 29, 2016.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on April 22, 2016.
7. The Interim Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on May 25, 2016.

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

BA in History of Art and Visual Culture
BA in Studio Art
Concurrent BA/BED – Visual Arts

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

In supporting their decision to give the Visual Arts programs the Outcome Category "Good Quality" the reviewers stated:

> The program is strong and is well-positioned to become even stronger.
> -The program shows vigour and continuing student demand.
> -The program is progressive.
> -The program produces good quality graduates.
> -The program will maintain its place as a standard program of the University, if attention is given to the minor issues outlined in the recommendations.

They further stated:

> ...the greatest strengths of the program are its faculty and its new facilities. Students spoke of how highly they valued the instruction they receive, and to the dedication of faculty and staff. Faculty were instrumental in the facility redesign and many have been seconded to administrative positions throughout the larger Faculty of Humanities program matrix, a tribute to their excellence and dedication. Many faculty have very rich research profiles, impressive records of research funding, and there has been a concentrated effort to enhance the curriculum through the integration of faculty research strengths. The committee also notes the dedication of long-term sessional faculty who contribute impressive expertise to the program across all areas. This faculty strength, combined with the new facilities of the MIWSFPA combine to create a high-quality programme of enviable strength and breadth in both Studio Art and History of Art and Visual Culture.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided 15 recommendations:

Recommendation 1

a) All VISA majors be required to take both of these Winter courses [VISA 1P95 (Intro to Digital Images and VISA 1P97 (Studio Now)], along with VISA 1P96 (Foundation Studio) – only the latter is now required for all students. The completion of these three courses would provide each student with a broad and interdisciplinary foundation from which to diverge into selected media practices, or from which they can merge into inter-media practices, later in the program.

b) In their upcoming curriculum discussions, the faculty consider what media are not represented in course offerings and whether or not courses in these media might in some way be offered, to be accommodated within the present facilities. The faculty might consider meeting with students or student representatives in order to get a sense of what media students feel they do not have the opportunity to work with.

In its response, the Department stated:

> The majority of the faculty members in Visual Arts are supportive of these suggestions, and many feel that eliminating actual and/or perceived barriers is a positive thing. As one faculty member noted, this "perceived dichotomy is a false one as there are no purely analog practices (i.e.: you still need digital images to represent your work) and there are no purely digital practices (i.e.: those in the "digital stream" also draw and make objects)."

> However, there is some opposition to this recommendation within the department. The primary opposition to this recommendation is that if we follow this plan, students will have too many first year courses. We are planning an in-depth curriculum review for later this year (spring/summer 2016), and this will be an issue we will be exploring at that time. Furthermore, we do agree that getting student feedback on these issues is important as part of the curriculum review process. Students will be polled concerning the recommendation "to get a sense of what media students feel they do not have an opportunity to work with."

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean agrees that minimizing barriers is a good thing, and encourages the Department to consider this suggestion in the upcoming curriculum review.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) stated:

> A comment was made at the UPC meeting (on April 18, 2016) that, depending on how the recommendation was implemented, an increase in the number of core courses might result, at a time when decreasing the number of core course requirements is being mooted at Senate.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. In addition to the curriculum review planned for spring/summer 2016, the Committee encourages the Department to undertake an <u>ongoing</u> process of curriculum review and revision.

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

Recommendation 2

VISA develop clearer 3rd-year course paths.

In its response, the Department stated:

> We are planning an in-depth curriculum review for later this year (spring/summer 2016), and this will be an issue we will be exploring at that time.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The planned curriculum review will, it is hoped, result in clear progression paths for students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the curriculum review referenced in response to Recommendation #1 will also address course pathways, with a view to improving the student experience.

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

Recommendation 3

VISA make a tenure-track hire for a specialist in photographic practice with a focus on contemporary photography.

In its response, the Department stated:

> On this point there is unanimous agreement among the faculty members in Visual Arts. We feel that there is an important opportunity for the MIWSPFA [MIWSFPA] to specialize in this area given our new facilities. We also are all in support of the connections being made across the curriculum between photography courses in our Studio program in and HAVC courses, given the areas of expertise of the faculty members in the Department. The addition of a tenure-track colleague in contemporary photography allows this aspect of the program to grow and flourish in a way that a succession of part-time contracts can not. Given that the facilities already exist for photographic practices (something that sets us apart from many other comparator institutions), the lack of a tenure-track position in this area is a glaring omission.

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. That said, it is clear that very few universities are as well-positioned as Brock now is to offer concentrations in black-and-white analogue photography.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration, but realizes that it lies outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the program will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for faculty resources.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 4

VISA complete a program application for a BFA.

In its response, the Department stated:

> Once again, on this point there is unanimous agreement amongst the faculty members
> in the Department of Visual Arts. The stumbling block at this point is the
> administrative ability to make this happen. We are a small department and have not
> been at "full strength" for quite some time now due to the fact that retiring faculty
> members are not replaced and that many of us have been seconded to administrative
> positions in recent years. The reality is that collectively this Department has been
> staggering under an abnormally high administrative load for the past several years, and
> it is unrealistic that this recommendation can be accomplished without additional
> support in the form of another tenure-track hire.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean encourages the completion and submission of the BFA proposal, as it has great
> potential to increase the visibility of Brock's programme.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation
ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the
Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward with
this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (3rd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 5

The university administration clarify, as soon as possible, the future relationship between MWISFPA [MIWSFPA] and Rodman Hall.

In its response, the Department stated:

> Again, we have unanimous agreement from the faculty members in the Visual Arts Department on this point. To be quite frank, it is imperative that we have clarity about the future of Rodman Hall as soon as possible. Rodman Hall is essential to many of the core activities in the Department, and a lack of clarity around the future of Rodman Hall is negatively impacting upon our ability to plan future courses and research projects.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> Some members of the Department are members of the Rodman Hall Advisory Committee and the on-going restructuring Task Force formed by that committee, and so have access to information and the opportunity for input into the process.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. The Committee understands that the university is exploring options for the future of Rodman Hall. 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

> VISA consult with Brock's Center for Pedagogical Innovation to guarantee consistency of learning outcomes across the program during VISA's planned curriculum review in 2016-17.

In its response, the Department stated:

> Again, we are all in agreement about the necessity of conducting a curriculum review and it makes sense to consult the CPI as part of this process.

> As previously noted, the department is undergoing an extensive curriculum review this spring/summer. Part of that process will include devising a strategy to clearly define learning outcomes throughout both the Studio and HAVC programs of study.

> The core HAVC faculty members have already begun meeting to discuss and review curriculum, to propose new or adjust course descriptions that reflect research strengths, and to anticipate how HAVC courses may be rotated once all three core HAVC faculty members are back to teaching a full 2/2 load in the 2017/18 academic year. Again, having faculty members from this unit seconded to administrative roles has negatively impacted the ability to offer optimal consistency in course offerings (too many courses have been taught by part-time instructors in recent years).

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean supports the recommendation that Learning Outcomes within the HAVC stream be made consistent, and so encourages the planned curriculum review to undertake this task.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee understands that the recommendation is closely related to Recommendations #1 and #2 and the Department's responses to them.

Implementation Plan (1ˢᵗ Priority)

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

Recommendation 7

VISA 1Q98 (Intro to Visual Culture) and VISA 1Q99 (History of Western Art) be offered in face-to-face format.

In its response, the Department stated:

> This is something that the HAVC faculty members have already been discussing at length. The problems we see with these introductory courses have less to do with delivery methods and more to do with the fact that our own majors make up the minority in these classes. These are currently offered as large context credit courses and the majority of the students who take them come from all across the university. We are very aware that our own students feel somewhat "drowned out" because of the large size of these classes. One of the options we are considering is having smaller, face-to-face version of these classes for VISA majors, and the larger, online classes for everyone else in the University to take should they want to pick up VISA 1Q98 or 1Q99 as an elective. This is something we will continue to discuss as we go through our detailed curriculum review later this year.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> This recommendation seems to have two points: 1) to use methods of course delivery that give the students the best results and most satisfactory experience and 2) to make more effective use of VISA 1Q98 and 1Q99 as gateway courses for potential majors. The Dean supports both of these goals, and looks forward to the results of the planned curriculum review.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Department is best-positioned to determine appropriate strategies to address the delivery of these courses.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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

Recommendation 8

VISA expand the curatorial component of the HVAC [HAVC] program.

In its response, the Department stated:

> While, in theory, there is strong support for this across the Department of Visual Arts, the practical reality makes this very difficult to achieve at present. First of all, much of this depends on the future of Rodman Hall. Until the status of Rodman Hall is clarified it is next-to-impossible to even begin to plan for this. Secondly, this would involve a hire in the area of curatorial studies. None of the current faculty members in the Department have enough expertise in this area to consider expanding the curatorial stream to be a more robust part of the Department. We would certainly like to see this develop, but the reality is that without Rodman Hall and without a permanent hire in this area, this is not something that can happen.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> Fulfilling this recommendation is not feasible at this time. Perhaps STAC is a more plausible home for this sort of venture.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside the jurisdiction of the Committee. The Committee understands that the recommendation is closely related to Recommendation #5.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 9

VISA and IASC offerings be examined and coordinated to reduce repetition and duplication.

In its response, the Department stated:

The faculty members in the Department of Visual Arts are in agreement with this recommendation. This will be considered when we conduct our in-depth curriculum review later this year. This will involve consultation with IASC.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean agrees that duplication across units should be eliminated if possible, and encourages VISA to consult with IASC to eliminate overlap.

UPC stated:

It would have been helpful had the Reviewers listed the courses with perceived overlap. UPC cannot comment without this information.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the curriculum review referenced in response to Recommendation #1 will also address repetition and duplication.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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

Recommendation 10

VISA consider conducting Writing and Creative Practice workshops out of the Learning Commons.

In its response, the Department stated:

> This was started as a pilot project this year. We do not yet have any data about how well this resource was utilized.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean is in favour of partnerships with the Learning Commons on the main campus and the A-Z Learning Services in order to make writing (and other academic) support available to students in the MIWSFPA.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be already in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Department will monitor progress on this initiative and make improvements as necessary.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

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

Recommendation 11

The university and city improve directional signage to the MIWFPA [MIWSFPA] on Highway 406 and the downtown core.

In its response, the Department stated:

We are all in agreement with this recommendation.

The Faculty Dean stated:

This is beyond the scope of the Dean's Office.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. ARC expects that the Department and MIWSFPA will work through available channels of advocacy to implement this recommendation.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 12

Temporary parking passes be kept on hand for program-specific short-term parking.

In its response, the Department stated:

> This already exists. If one needs a temporary parking pass they should contact the Administrative Assistant or the Facilities Management team at the MIWSFPA.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> Already in place.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be current policy. No further action is required.

Implementation Plan No further action is required.

Recommendation 13

VISA faculty actively integrate the Walker Cultural Leader Program into their pedagogy.

In its response, the Department stated:

> We are already doing this.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> Already in place.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be current policy. No further action is required.

Implementation Plan
No further action is required.

Recommendation 14

Creation of an MFA programme.

In its response, the Department stated:

> In theory, there is support for this idea, but, again, this is next-to-impossible to even begin to plan this without additional resources in the form of tenure-stream positions.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> While this is a laudable aspiration, resources are not yet available to make this happen.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted at this time. The Committee understands that the possible establishment of the BFA would come first and that the graduate degree would be a future consideration.

Implementation Plan
Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 15

One of the factors keeping the VISA Program from being rated as "Excellent" in quality is that it does not currently have either a national or international reputation. With its new facilities, its current strong faculty in both studio and HAVC, and with the recommendations identified by the reviewers, we feel that with the support of the university, the VISA program is well-positioned to promote and recruit in a more national and/or international scale.

In its response, the Department stated:

> We agree with this. We would like to see more support from the University's Marketing & Communication team in terms of getting the word out about exhibits, class activities, alumni successes, faculty research, etc. Simply put, we are doing excellent work in the Department of Visual Arts (in spite of the aforementioned challenges!) and yet we feel that sometimes this work goes unrecognized because those who make the decisions about which aspects of the University to promote may not fully understand or appreciate the work being done in VISA.

The Faculty Dean stated:

> The Dean encourages even closer collaboration with both Marketing & Communications and Recruitment & Liaison to broaden the scope of the department's profile and recruitment pool.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers this recommendation to be a comment. The Committee encourages the Department to build on its strengths and work towards national and international recruitments for its programs.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:
   Recommendations 1,2,6,7,9

Second Priority:
   Recommendation 10

Third Priority:
   Recommendation 4

Not accepted:
   Recommendations 3,5,8,11,14,15

Not requiring further action:
   Recommendations 12,13