



TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: March 21, 2019

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: BFA Multidisciplinary Program Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the BFA Multidisciplinary at its March 8, 2019 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised James Dobbie (Program Review Coordinator),¹ Dana Cooley, and Jason Blum.

The review produced four documents:²

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received June 28, 2018.
2. External Review Report. Written by Rae Staseson (University of Regina) and Aleksandra Dulic (UBC Okanagan) based on a site visit of September 27-28, 2018 and received December 6, 2018.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received February 13, 2019.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Deric Olsen and Jacqueline Rice, Interim Deans of the Faculty of Fine Arts. Received February 27, 2019.

¹ Deric Olsen, the initial Program Review Coordinator, had to step off the Self Study Committee due to assuming the role of Interim Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts.

² All documents are available upon request.

Self Study Report

The Self Study Report summarized the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the BFA Multidisciplinary program:

- Strengths:
- Faculty teaching in the program are high-caliber artists and scholars.
 - Many faculty members support the program.
 - Graduates have gone on to professional practice and graduate studies.
 - The program has excellent facilities and infrastructure.
 - Flexible program requirements allow students to develop a custom curriculum.
 - The program is delivered within the capacity of other Fine Arts programs and so is labour and resource neutral.
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- Weaknesses:
- The program lacks governance, leadership, and curricular oversight by an academic unit.
 - The program has not been revised to include course offerings in New Media as areas of studio practice and/or academic coursework.
 - There is no consensus about whether the flexible nature of the program is desirable.
 - The program does not have distinct recruiting, marketing, or communication efforts.
 - Because the program does not admit a consistent number of students, and program requirements are flexible, program advising is difficult to provide.
 - Faculty members in Fine Arts often have little knowledge of the program.
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- Opportunities:
- The program can highlight and embrace the U of L's philosophy of liberal education.
 - The program provides an alternate admission route for students into other Fine Arts programs. It has no portfolio or audition requirement and admits students in the fall and spring.
 - With greater marketing and communication, the program can help provide more sustainable enrolment in the Faculty of Fine Arts.
 - Revitalizing the BFA multidisciplinary can align it with the development of a multidisciplinary major in the MFA/MMus, which was recommended in the quality assurance review of that program.
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- Threats:
- As no portfolio or audition is needed for admission there is the chance that students will be admitted that have little preparation or aptitude for studio or academic work.
 - There is no target enrolment or capacity limit for the program; large cohorts of students could be admitted, straining Faculty resources.
 - The program has the potential to graduate students that do not have a high level of experience or proficiency.
 - The lack of a well-defined vision for the program makes it vulnerable to being perceived as a "safety-net" or "second-option" degree.
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The following additional concerns were noted in the body of the report:

- For graduation the program does not require students to present a minimum 2.50 GPA in the discipline of their degree. This is required by all other Fine Arts degree programs.
- When students take Music as their first stream all 13 courses are prescribed, which removes program flexibility.
- The required courses in the first streams have not been vetted for years.
- There is no required Multidisciplinary course.

The report had six suggestions for future initiatives to improve the program:

1. Develop a steering committee/ advisory committee to improve governance and leadership of the program and to boost coordination between departments regarding the program.
2. Develop a vision and mission statement for the program.
3. Update the program to include course offerings that are currently not in the program, such as New Media and Cinema courses.
4. Explore the possibility of a Fine Arts multidisciplinary course or selection of courses that would be required for Multidisciplinary majors.
5. Consider setting enrolment targets for the program, and develop a recruitment strategy that aligns with the Faculty of Fine Arts' recruitment priorities.
6. Determine how the program can be a foundation for graduate study.

There were eight questions for the External Reviewers:

1. Should the program continue to encourage breadth and flexibility?
2. Should all Fine Arts disciplines be offered as areas for study in the program?
3. Should the program include a common Multidisciplinary experience, like a course, to create a cohort?
4. Should there be an enrolment target and enrolment maximum for the program?
5. Should the program admit more students?
6. How can marketing and recruitment be improved?
7. How can governance, leadership, and coordination between departments be improved?
8. Would the program need to change for it to provide a good foundation for graduate study?

External Review Report

The report identified the following program strengths:

- The program has immense potential for the Faculty and the University and could be developed into a destination program that emphasizes skills and professional experiences to prepare students for the cultural and media industries.
- The BFA Multidisciplinary acts as a feeder program to other programs in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Fall and Spring intakes allow students to apply without having to wait until the next Fall to enter the Faculty. This flexibility is important for students.
- Resources are abundant, learning spaces are high quality, and there is physical space for program expansion.
- There is much faculty expertise in cross-disciplinary practices.
- The Faculty of Fine Arts has many regular events, such as the Visiting Artist series.

Several weaknesses and challenges were identified in the external review:

- The program is not successful or supportive for students unsure of what they want to study.
- Enrolment is small and student retention is a challenge.
- There is no cohort experience, which does not help in recruitment or retention.
- The program is uneven and the curriculum has had little attention.
- Faculty and staff are often unaware of the BFA Multidisciplinary students in their classes and so they cannot fully support these students.
- There is too much duplication of core courses that teach basic skills and foundations.
- There is a lack of advising related to career planning.

- The program has no vision statement or goals.

The External Review Report had the following specific recommendations for improvement:

1. Create a feeder program that is a bridge to other Fine Arts programs that will support students with undeclared majors.
2. Revise the program so it can address workplace and creative challenges in the cultural and creative industries in a multidisciplinary manner.

Several recommendations, while not being explicitly marked as such, were embedded in the body of the report:

- Reimagine the program as an open, creative, and experimental practices program.
- Develop a structure for the program that includes the following components: core classes that support a cohort experience; mentorship program; community engagement; co-op and internship opportunities; and a capstone course.
- Engage with cultural industries, institutions, and businesses to identify the interdisciplinary skills they need in employees. Use this intel to revise the curriculum.
- Explore the inclusion of traditional and contemporary Indigenous art practices in the curriculum.
- Consider developing the Multidisciplinary program as a Faculty unit, which will require a governance process, terms of reference, lines of reporting, representation on committees, etc. As part of this, consider developing a Coordinator or Director position.

Program Response

The Program Response addressed the explicit and implicit recommendations from the External Review Report:

Create a feeder program that is a bridge to other Fine Arts programs that will support students with undeclared majors.

The "feeder" aspect of the BFA Multidisciplinary has been overemphasized. More needs to be done to enhance the internal perception of the program as a viable standalone multidisciplinary degree in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

Revise the program so it can address workplace and creative challenges in the cultural and creative industries in a multidisciplinary manner.

The Faculty of Fine Arts should establish a committee, comprised of representatives from all four departments, that has a mandate to critically review the BFA Multidisciplinary program and propose changes that align with Faculty and University strategic plans.

There is no cohort experience, which does not help in recruitment or retention.

Students would benefit from a cohort experience, but this is a challenge when the students in the program have disparate interests and goals. The Faculty has to explore how to create a sense that multidisciplinary study is more than the sum of the various disciplines, and also has to investigate what multidisciplinary even means.

The program is uneven and the curriculum has had little attention.

The program must be restructured to include programming that was introduced in the Faculty after the BFA Multidisciplinary was developed. The rigid structure of the Music stream must be relaxed.

<p><i>There are no placement, co-op, or internship opportunities.</i> <i>There are no vision and goals for the program.</i></p>	<p>The Faculty must develop vision and goals for the program and then identify the place of experiential learning within it.</p>
<p><i>Faculty and staff are often unaware of the BFA Multidisciplinary students in their classes and so they cannot fully support these students.</i></p>	<p>Awareness of the Multidisciplinary students must be increased among the teaching faculty and technical staff.</p>
<p><i>There is much faculty expertise in cross-disciplinary practices.</i></p>	<p>Renewed awareness of the program will hopefully encourage faculty participation in discussions on the future of the BFA Multidisciplinary.</p>
<p><i>There is too much duplication of core courses that teach basic skills and foundations.</i></p>	<p>The Self Study Committee does not agree that duplication of core courses is an issue.</p>
<p><i>The program could be reworked to train students to work as producers of projects, events, exhibitions, etc.</i></p>	<p>The Self Study Committee is also excited at the possibilities of reworking the program. The Faculty of Fine Arts must explore this in depth.</p>
<p><i>Revise the program so it can address workplace and creative challenges in the cultural and creative industries in a multidisciplinary manner.</i></p>	<p>The program can be strengthened by increasing the awareness of it plus revising the structure and content, and addressing the program's identity, direction, and governance.</p>
<p><i>Develop a structure for the program that includes the following components: core classes that support a cohort experience; mentorship program; community engagement; co-op and internship opportunities; and a capstone course.</i></p>	<p>The Faculty will consider how to proceed.</p>
<p><i>Engage with cultural industries, institutions, and businesses to identify the interdisciplinary skills they need in employees. Use this intel to revise the curriculum.</i></p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p><i>Research and create a mapping of faculty who can develop and teach multidisciplinary courses. Also, create multidisciplinary teaching classrooms.</i></p>	<p>Understanding faculty resources is important, as is exploring the renovation of space to support multidisciplinary studies.</p>
<p><i>Explore the inclusion of traditional and contemporary Indigenous art practices in the curriculum.</i></p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p><i>Expand the program to a graduate program.</i></p>	<p>Exploring graduate studies should be tabled until the Faculty develops plans for the BFA Multidisciplinary.</p>

<i>Consider developing the Multidisciplinary program as a Faculty unit, which will require a governance process, terms of reference, lines of reporting, representation on committees, etc. As part of this, consider developing a Coordinator or Director position.</i>	More active oversight of the program is needed but the details will have to be discussed.
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<i>Consider building the program as a unit or area composed of the core faculty from New Media who teach and research experimental media.</i>	This would entail a major overhaul of the Faculty of Fine Arts.
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Deans' Response

The Deans' Response addressed some general themes from the External Review Report:

Theme:	Response:
Space, workload, and resourcing	There are several misconceptions in this area, and many of the related recommendations are not feasible to implement as this would happen at the expense of other Fine Arts departments. But the issue of how to properly resource the BFA Multidisciplinary is important and complex.
Curriculum structure and strengths	The degree structure should be flexible to incorporate all Fine Arts courses. However, changing the structure of the degree may require Ministerial approval. Resources that are reallocated to the BFA Multidisciplinary could be underused if enrolment targets are not met. Program expansion must be done strategically.
Strategic planning	There is an opportunity to establish an Assistant Dean position to oversee the strategic growth of the program. The program could be separated from its role as a feeder program by establishing a new BFA General Studio admission route.
Administration and governance	The program needs an administrative and governance structure within Fine Arts. There should be a new Assistant Dean position whose portfolio includes leading the BFA Multidisciplinary, coordinating internships, and facilitating Fine Arts involvement in the Calgary campus and the International Centre. The Assistant Dean should be an active faculty member with a course release similar to a department chair.

The Deans' Response concluded with three main recommendations:

1. Include all Fine Arts courses in the program and allow the three areas of the degree be any of the four areas offered in Fine Arts. Ensure advising and recruitment understand the benefits of this.
2. Establish a committee to develop a vision, mission, and goals for the program.
3. Ensure the committee considers ways to increase program resources, including the use of existing resources and the development of new resources. The committee will provide these recommendations to the Dean for implementation.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the BFA Multidisciplinary academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,



Alan Siaroff

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)